Training and development needs assessment: a practical model for partner institutes

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This article introduces a practical model of training and development needs assessment for partner institutes. A detailed description of the model's components is presented with a suggested implementation sequence in order to successfully overcome obstacles. The literature revealed no solutions for the unique problems faced by partner institutes when conducting training needs assessment exercises. The proposed model is competency-based, which allows for the incorporation of various data gathering techniques, the elimination of redundancies and role conflict, and therefore, the integration of the partner institute with member organization's infrastructure to systematically and effectively assess the actual training and development needs of the industry to which they belong.

Introduction

The development of human resources continues to be of great importance to the well-being of contemporary organizations. According to the ASTD president and chief executive officer, more than ever, business is investing in training. He contends that companies seem to realize that a well-trained workforce is the key to competitiveness (ASTD, 1996).

The more organizations seek excellence, the more employees' training and education becomes imminent. In contemporary organizations information dissemination by itself leads to little or no results. It is the ability of the organization to disseminate knowledge that leads to employee's skills and abilities development. What matters is converting technology through people into better organizational performance. One thing which is true about the twenty-first century is that the development of human resources is no longer an option but a must.

Since the 1960s, many industries have sought the establishment of a joint institute mainly responsible for the development of its human resources. Usually the newly founded institute is funded by firms belonging to the same industry. In return, this institute provides training, education and, in many cases, services on a fee basis to its member organizations.

The main challenge these institutes are confronted with is the question of how to determine the development (training, education, and research) needs of its member organizations, a task highly critical for successful operations. Impeding these efforts however, is the lack of access to these institutes by their member organizations. In fact member organizations usually retain within their infrastructure a functional training and development department, seemingly a duplication, although it is not. That is because the role and the type of development programme and/or methods provided by these institutes are usually different from those of the training and development department within each member organization.

Furthermore, it is usually the case that member organizations tend to use their training and development unit as a coordination body with the founded partner institute. The following make the training and development assessment efforts of these institutes even more difficult:

1. Each member organization usually has a different human resource development philosophy.
2. Member organizations retain different job and career structures.
3. Different training and development processes, techniques, and languages are used by each member organization.

Overcoming these obstacles and securing an effective training assessment system is a major challenge for these institutes. In this direction, this paper attempts to present a practical human resource training and development needs assessment model. The latter is specifically designed for what I term partner institutes. It should be noted that this paper uses the words “assessment” and “identification” interchangeably.

What is a partner institute?

The literature has always articulated “training” as an activity and/or service rendered by a functional unit existing within the organizational infrastructure. Ample models on training assessment, design and evaluation exist in the literature. To the author's knowledge, nothing has been written for training management operating and providing services from outside the organization being serviced. Even training consultants who operate from outside the organizational infrastructure find the models that are designed for training management operating within the organizational infrastructure, applicable and useful.

Training and development managers whose sole responsibility is to provide training services for other organizations require different techniques compared to those providing training for his/her own organization. The case whereby a training manager operates within the organization arises when a professional body is established to
provide several developmental services to a particular industry. Since the 1960s, various countries in the world have been encouraging their industries to form a formal entity, that is, a partner institute, to cater to the needs of developing the human resource infrastructure within the industry.

The statistics reflecting the number of partner institutes in the world are not available in the literature and an attempt has never been made to make them available. However, examples of such organizations are found almost in every country. In the USA, for example, the American Bankers Association and the Private Bankers Association are partner institutes operating to develop the banking industry. In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Bankers is a close example of a partner institute. In Asia, these institutes are found in India, Singapore and Malaysia. In the Middle East, several countries have established partner institutes. In particular, each country of the Gulf Cooperation Council has established a partner institute for their banking and financial industry.

The rationale behind such partnership based institutes lies on one or more of the following:

• Partner institutes allow for the achievement of economy of scale. In many cases member organizations within the industry are faced with high training and development costs. Such costs can be diffused by jointly forming an institute that provide such services with low cost.

• The cost of the transfer of technology especially in the developing countries is high. Keeping up-to-date with the new developments in technology could be very costly for each business to absorb/finance. Partner institutes allow for a shared cost and substantial savings while keeping the organization on the edge of the industry’s technology.

• The social responsibility in some cases is the reason why industries join together to form a partner institute, especially in some developing countries such as the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation countries. Organizations, regardless of the industry, are after all indirectly responsible for the development of the human resources infrastructure in the country they belong to. Such requirements can be fulfilled by forming a partner institute that facilitates the achievement of such social obligation.

• Research is vital for healthy industry, and it is not inexpensive. Partner institutes make it possible for its industry not only to monitor its health but most importantly achieve it efficiently. Research projects such as salary surveys, human resources inter-

industry migration trends, and customer satisfaction can be provided for member organizations with minimum cost.

The nature of partner institutes

Partner institutes are usually non-profit organizations. They render their services to their member organizations either on a free or minimum fee basis. A board of directors or trustees manages the partner institute. Board members are usually high ranking executives from the member organizations.

Partner institutes as compared to universities serve their industry rather than society. They must play the role of knowledge brokers and creators at the same time. The former is the function of matching the right knowledge to the right member organization and/or industry; whereas the latter is the function of creating new knowledge that might benefit member organizations and/or be industry specific. This dual role might only be achieved by a progressive organizational culture and infrastructure, which are highly technology sensitive, and intelligent.

Partner institutes are practice oriented. That is to say they are more interested in turning theory into practice. They must be able to convert knowledge into practical methods that ultimately improve the member organizations and/or industry performance. Therefore, partner institutes contribute minimally to the development of the theory of the field of knowledge. However, they contribute tremendously to the development of the practical knowledge of the field.

The partner institutes are situated outside their member organizations’ infrastructure. They belong to the industry. Such positioning imposes several characteristics:

• Partner institutes have no direct access to its member organizations. Usually, the human resources development unit within each member organization (e.g. training department) coordinates the activities with the partner institute.

• Since each member organization retains a human resource development unit, partner institutes might be viewed as an unnecessary duplication of functions. Top executives within member organizations might hold the view that the money spent on partner institutes is a waste. Member organization employees working in the human resources department, on the other hand, might view partner institutes as competitors since they render the same service to their clients (i.e. their organization).

• While partner institutes have no direct access to their member organizations, they
Training and development needs assessment for partner institutes

Contemporary organizations cannot do without some kind of training and development activities. The literature has long established that the extent to which the training decision is rationally justified is contingent upon the extent to which a rigorous training and development needs assessment (T&DNA) has been adequately performed to explain the actual why and how to carry out training activities, and whether training is, in fact, the expedient solution for the given organizational perplexity (Anderson, 1993; Camp et al., 1986; Goldstein, 1986; Nadler, 1982; Patrick, 1992; Roscoe, 1995). However, when it comes to partner institutes, the view is slightly different. Take for example Camp et al.'s (1986) perception of training needs assessment; they contend that needs assessment is the examination or diagnostic portion of the training system. It seeks to identify whether there exists a case of perceived performance deficiency. That is, is there a difference between expected and perceived job performance? (Camp et al., 1986).

Only the first portion of this view applies to partner institutes. That is to say, needs assessment in a partner institute is, in fact, a diagnostic effort, but it is not an attempt to detect a perceived performance deficiency because the partner institutes don't have direct access to employees' performance. Instead it is an attempt to establish an assumption of whether or not a perceived performance deficiency does exist. Partner institutes operate on the assumption that there is a continuous need, in the industry they serve, for training. Once this assumption is voided, partner institutes vanish. Or at least the training function of the institutes has to stop.

Goldstein (1986), on the other hand, defined needs assessment as an effort to analyse and diagnose the organization, task and person, to determine if a cure is necessary and what cure is most likely to produce the desired results. Again, partner institutes perceive the assessment of needs to be a diagnostic process, and yes, it is on an organizational level. However, they have no access to the task or the person, at least not directly. If this happened, it would be perceived by member organizations as interference in their affairs that could even lead to revealing confidential matters. There is usually a great resistance by member organizations to give access to tasks and persons because of the fear of exposing confidential matters to an institute that has access to and relationships with the member organizations' competitors.

Anderson (1993) and Roscoe (1995) emphasize that needs analysis is a systematic attempt to identify current and future organizational problems. With partner institutes, however, it is true that the problem is implicitly identified. That is to say, they assume that the member organization's needs are based on a problem, although it is usually not well identified or clear.

The difference between needs assessment in the partner institute context and the other context is that it is not a systematic process to identify a specific problem to find out whether training is the solution, but it is mainly for the purpose of arriving at an assumption that the problem exists and identifying what type and how, training is needed. Needs assessment for partner institutes is an attempt to arrive at an approximation of needs on an organizational level, and also an approximation of how to fulfill such diverse needs. Furthermore, it is based on an organizational, if not an industry level and does not necessarily address a specific task and/or person.

It therefore seems safe to define training and development needs assessment for partner institutes as a collaborative effort between the training and development management team in the partner institute and various departments within member organizations, to systematically collect, diagnose and analyze pertinent information that leads to the assessment of an approximation of the actual training and development needs of member organizations. What holds true for a partner institute is that the needs assessment is an analytical and diagnostic process to identify what kind of training is required and not necessarily whether training is required.

The importance of the T&DNA lies in the fact that it is necessary in order to develop a general road map for the subsequent training and development events. T&DNA provides the necessary understanding of training and development activities so that appropriate steps may be developed for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the training process.

However, partner institutes seem to avoid conducting T&DNA exercises. This might be attributed mainly to the lack of understanding of the importance of T&DNA, lack of information available to administrators on how to conduct T&DNA, and lack of availability of time to perform T&DNA, especially...
when no effective coordination exists between member organizations and the partner institute.

In addition, this avoidance might be attributed to the belief that since partner institutes are formed on the assumption that there is a continual need in the industry to develop the human resources, why, therefore, waste energy and time to perform a training needs assessment exercise? Of course that is not true, for knowing that there is a need, does not mean knowing what it is and how to fulfill it.

Training and development needs assessment model

T&DNA activities are an essential ingredient in any attempt to develop human resources by partner institutes. They result in the establishment of the institute’s training and development objectives and design of action plans which lead to the achievement of these objective(s). Specifically, the training and development needs assessment makes explicit the:

- training programmes required and, to a large extent, their contents;
- training priorities;
- assumptions behind the choices and priorities;
- resources required;
- timing of implementation; and
- expected rate of progress and returns.

Figure 1 depicts a practical model of T&DNA. Incorporated in this model is the author’s view of how partner institutes can effectively identify the training needs of their member organizations. The proposed model includes the following main elements:

1. Plan to plan. This includes all preparatory activities required in order to establish the T&DNA system within the partner institute.
2. Data gathering methods and procedure. Includes the development of tools and techniques for the collection of data and information pertaining to the training needs of the member organizations.
3. Develop data gathering cycle. This reflects the root of the steps by which the process is going to be implemented. It involves the partner institute and all other member organizations.
4. Implementation. This is the actual execution of the needs assessment process which includes, among other things, the allocation of resources, timing and scheduling.
5. Data analysis and plan development. This activity relates to the assessment of a suitable data analysis technique that could facilitate data interpretation and conclusions. It also includes the development of a training and development plan for the institute.
6. Evaluation and feedback. The assessment process should explicitly indicate how the outcomes are being evaluated in terms of whether the actual training and developmental needs and not wants have been identified. It also includes the proper feedback activities required for information dissemination within the system.

One important feature of this model, as it will become clear in the description below, is that it allows for the incorporation of various data gathering techniques, hence effectively measuring the training and development needs. This is achieved through the Human Resource Training and Development Committee system. The latter, although primarily using the questionnaire to identify the needs, is also an advisory and/or focus group available for the training manager in his/her endeavour. In addition, the members of the committees bring to the need analysis exercise direct information related to the employees’ job performance, therefore helping not only in identifying needs but also evaluating the training outcomes. All these possibilities make this model dynamic enough to identify needs and produce effective training and development outcomes.

Plan to plan

The first stage in the T&DNA process is related to setting of preparatory requirements and activities leading to the
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Training and development fields
Organizations are established with different purposes and functions. These functions are related to various bodies of knowledge and disciplines. For example, an organization that deals in automobile production is mainly concerned with the body of knowledge related to the science of electrical and mechanical engineering. Financial organizations, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with the financial field of inquiry. The first step in the plan to plan phase is to establish the training and development fields (T&DFs) according to an approximation of jobs found in member organizations. Under each field, training and development programmes and activities are then designed and offered (see Table I).

The T&DF comprises a set of related jobs and/or career paths normally found in the organizations operating within the same industry. For example, a T&DF of a partner institute operating in the banking industry, with a title “credit management”, might normally include job titles such as “loan officer trainee”, “junior credit officer”, “credit officer”, “senior credit officer”, and “manager credit department”. That is to say, T&DFs represent an approximation of jobs found within similar divisions and/or departments across all member organizations within the industry.

There is no doubt that the number of T&DFs differ from one industry to another, depending on various factors, chief among them are the nature of the operations as well as the size (i.e. number of organizations) of the industry. However, one has to note that too many T&DFs (over seven or eight) are not advisable, since they could generate uncontrollable volumes of paper work, require greater effort of coordination, be time-consuming and costly. It is also advisable to consider the following when establishing T&DFs:

- Avoid overlap between the fields to the extent possible.
- Separate organization’s operation and support functions in each field and avoid mixing them.
- Designate more organization’s core operations rather support related training fields to the extent needed.

Human resources training and development committees system

Once the fields are identified, for each one a committee of line managers from member organizations is formed. These committees are called human resource training and development committees (HRT&DC). Member organizations must nominate at least one experienced line manager for each. The size of the committee depends on the number of member organizations in the industry. The committee’s main objective is to enrich the activities related to the assessment of the real training and development needs of the member organizations. It is also instrumental in bridging the gap between the member organizations and the partner institute in all training and development matters (setting objectives, developing curricula and programme outlines, recommending speakers and participating as a trainer). These committees are the backbone of the entire needs assessment system.

The following must be considered when forming the committee:

- Members are chosen based on their experience and position. They should be senior line managers with extensive experience in the field.
- Members preferably should be professionals who keep current with the field’s development and have the ability to work in teams.

The importance of the HRT&DC is that it operates as the vein that feeds the partner institute with all related information leading to the training and development needs of the

Table I

T&DF of a partner institute serving the banking and/or financial institutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training and development fields</th>
<th>Examples of T&amp;D programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banking operations</td>
<td>Letters of Credit, basic banking, Letters of Guarantee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury operations</td>
<td>FX and money market, economic analysis, portfolios and mutual funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit and loan management</td>
<td>Financial and credit analysis, project financing, real estate management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management personal effectiveness</td>
<td>Supervisory skills, time management, creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing and business development</td>
<td>Customer care, selling skills, quality assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology and audit</td>
<td>Systems design and development, software quality assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking laws and regulations</td>
<td>Legal aspects of credit, introduction to banking laws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
member organizations. The role and responsibility of the HRT&DC includes but is not limited to the following:

- Assessment of training and development needs (not wants).
- Setting priorities on training needs.
- Participating in the design of training programmes by indicating the right target group, training objectives and delivery methods.
- Coordinating with the member organization's training unit in matters related to the training activities.

Administrative rules and regulations
In this stage the partner institute must engage in a process involving the establishment of a set of administrative rules and regulations in order to organize the committee's activities and ensure the desired outcome. This of course is done in coordination with the HRT&DC members during the meetings. Some of the most important matters that should be articulated include:

- The number of meetings each year.
- The duration of each meeting and dates if possible.
- General objectives of each meeting. For example, one meeting might be designated for discussion of training needs, another might be allocated for outline reviews and curriculum development, and/or training programmes review and evaluation.
- Establish general guidelines for recording of meetings' minutes and distribution.
- Define the coordination lines between the partner institute, the HRT&DC member, and the training department within the member organizations, in order to avoid any role conflict.

Data gathering methods and procedures
As indicated above, the prime purpose of this step is to develop the data gathering methods that will be used in collecting information pertaining to the actual training and development needs of member organizations.

Since the data that needs to be gathered is for the purpose of identifying the training needs, and since training is about improving performance, one has to concentrate on what are the competencies required for the jobs within the member organizations. Committees are then required to carry out a process of identifying the general competencies required to perform the job in the member organizations. Once this is done, the committees should develop the competency charts. Finally, based on the competency charts, questionnaires are developed to be used in data gathering.

**Develop competency charts**
A well-articulated definition of job competency was provided by Canetti (1995) at the 27th Annual Human Resource Management Conference. According to Canetti, competencies are the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attributes required for a job that should be possessed by an individual. A competency is linked to action and has to be identified and measured in the working environment. Who better than the line manager who is a member of the HRT&DC to identify the competencies required for the jobs in member organizations? During this stage, the HRT&DCs are required to develop a competency chart for each T&DF (see Table II). The chart is simply a list of competencies required for an approximate of jobs found in the member organizations. The aim is not to develop a precise chart of each job in the industry, but an approximation of the major competency required to better perform jobs that normally fall under each T&DF. Each member organization has, after all, different job designations and descriptions unique to its culture and management style.

**Questionnaire design**
A comprehensive questionnaire for each T&DF must be designed in order to collect data pertaining to the actual training needs of the member organizations. The HRT&DC will be responsible jointly with the human resource department in the member organizations for administering the

**Table II**
Sample of a competency chart for a marketing and business development training and development field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Product development and management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing product development process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating new product ideas and plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrective skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and product entry strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Pricing related competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costing products and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and controlling cost of performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C. Marketing strategy related competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods for competitive marketing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods and techniques for analyzing the industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calculating market share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market segmentation and product and service positioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D. Service quality related competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of service gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring service quality standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing service quality team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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questionnaires. Notice that since the HRT&DC member is a line manager within the member organization, his/her subordinate will have the chance to respond to the questionnaire. This will ensure a realistic outcome of the training needs assessment. Furthermore, and in order to ensure proper responses from employees, the line manager (i.e. the HRT&DC member) might consider an interview with the staff to facilitate adequate answering of the questionnaires.

For each HRT&DC, a questionnaire is designed based on its competency chart which is divided into four sections (see Appendix) – profile data; professional knowledge and skills; cross functional knowledge and skills; and other competencies. Only the second section (i.e. professional knowledge and skills) of the questionnaire differs from one HRT&DC to another. This section should reflect the committee’s concerned training field subject matter. The other three sections of the questionnaire are the same for each HRT&DC and therefore each T&DF should remain identical.

The profile data section of the questionnaire should include questions related to the personal and professional information of the respondent (e.g. name, organization, title, years of experience, etc.). The professional knowledge and skills sections of the questionnaire are designed to measure an employee’s level of knowledge and skills in relation to the technical aspects of his/her job. For example, a credit officer in a bank is usually expected to perform activities related to financial, credit, cash flow analysis, etc.

The cross-functional knowledge and skills section of the questionnaire attempts to measure an employee’s level of understanding of competencies related to the non-technical aspect of his/her job. The assumption being that there are various skills that are common and required in any job regardless of its area of specialization and/or organizational unit (that is why this section is identical in all HRT&DCs’ questionnaires). For example, a credit manager requires a strong background in credit operations, he/she also must have, among other things, good leadership and/or planning skills, marketing skills, computer skills and perhaps knowledge of the laws and legal aspects related to his/her job. Each HRT&DC needs to identify the non-technical knowledge and/or skills required for the job under their training field. So far the questions of each section are formed in order to measure an employee’s level of knowledge and skills.

The final section ensures the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire. The respondent is given the chance to indicate any other training needs that might not have been included in the rest of the questionnaire. Here one has to be warned about a very important issue in any training assessment activity, that is, the difference between an employee’s training needs and wants. The training needs are skills required to effectively perform the job, but are lacking in the employee, whereas training wants are skills that an employee believes they need and are not necessarily related to the job. Hence, it is important that the training assessment activities focus on identifying the training needs and attempt to defer the training wants.

Questionnaire format and measuring scale

Questionnaires are usually criticized as being time-consuming, lengthy, and complicated. To avoid such drawbacks, a unified approach to forming the questions and a measuring scale is a must. As indicated in the Appendix, each section of the questionnaire starts by asking the respondent to rate his/her level of familiarity with the listed competencies. A unified scale of seven points is given to the respondent to rate him/herself. A “not applicable” box is designated for each question to be used if the knowledge and/or skill does not relate to the employee’s job. Such uniformity of the questions and scale should minimize time required to respond, possible errors, and should increase possible accuracy.

Questionnaire maintenance

The questionnaire must be reviewed and updated every training year. This task should be accomplished in a participative manner, with the involvement of the partner institute, the member organizations and the HRT&DC members.

Develop training needs assessment cycle

Once the questionnaires are finalized or during questionnaire development, the partner institute, in cooperation with both training units within member organizations and the HRT&DC, should start developing an effective training needs assessment cycle. The latter are the steps involved in distributing and administering the questionnaire.

Figure 2 depicts a simple process that starts with the partner institute initiating the activity by sending the questionnaires to the HRT&DC members. In the second step the HRT&DC members administer the questionnaires, preferably through structured interviews. The questionnaires are then returned to the partner institute for analysis. The results are discussed with the HRT&DC members and a tentative list of programmes that covers the training needs of the member organizations is developed. This tentative list
is sent to the concerned training unit within the member organizations for study and prioritization according to the business plan of each organization. The list is then forwarded to the partner institute for final plan preparation and approval.

The partner institute should coordinate with both the training unit within the member organization and the HRT&DC members to implement the training assessment process. The responsibilities of the parties involved in the process are as follows:

**Partner institute**

Will retain the questionnaire, initiate the training needs assessment process, send the questionnaires to the HRDC members, collect back the questionnaires, analyze the data, prepare the results with the committee members and communicate the outcome to the member organization’s training unit. On the basis of their feedback the partner institute develops the final plan for necessary approval.

**Training unit**

The training unit within each member organization is responsible for receiving the tentative plan from the partner institute, studying it and making necessary prioritization according to the business plan of the organization.

**HRT&DC member**

Provides assistance in the development and updating of the questionnaire, administering the questionnaire in his/her department, which includes explaining the training assessment system to other managers/supervisors and helping them administer the questionnaire, collecting questionnaires, sending them to partner institute and discussing final results in order to develop the tentative training plan. To be able to perform this role, the HRT&DC member may need to be trained in order to develop a better understanding of training concepts and acquire the necessary skills, especially those related to training needs assessment, planning and evaluation.

It should be noted however, that the role of HRT&DC members must be designed not to conflict with the training units of member organizations, but to complement them and provide necessary professional and technical advise and support.

**Implementation**

This is the actual execution of the training needs assessment exercise. The detailed role and responsibility of each party involved in the process is defined within the training and development assessment cycle. However, a high level of coordination must exist between parties in order to succeed in the implementation phase. No single or two parties can operate in isolation of the other. The implementation phase will produce a lot of paper work that needs to be carefully handled. Other essential considerations include:

- The partner institute must take a leading and central role in the process.
- Sufficient time must be given for implementation, especially, if the member organizations are going through seasonal or peak operations (salary weeks, strategic planning exercise etc.) or holidays.
- Instruction sheets must be attached with the questionnaires in order to secure adequate response.
- Confidentiality of the response and the results must always be emphasized.

**Data analysis and plan development**

In this stage, the questionnaires are analysed in order to determine the training needs of member organizations. It starts with identifying the skills and topic that were most frequently chosen by respondents indicating low level familiarity on the scale. This means that there is a lack of knowledge among respondents vis-à-vis that particular skill or knowledge. These skills and topics are then logically and coherently integrated into a formal training and development event(s).

It is important to mention that the point on the scale chosen by the analyst to indicate lack of respondent’s knowledge, should be carefully designated. This point is called the training need point and it means that the staff...
who responded lack sufficient knowledge in this area and therefore need training.

The scale might be divided into levels showing the severity (i.e. priority) of the need in order to facilitate the analysis. For example, the scale might be divided into the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High priority</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium priority</td>
<td>3, 4, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/no priority</td>
<td>6, 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The training need point serves as a mechanism to identify the priority of the training activity. It must be carefully designated in coordination with the HRDC members. It should be annually reviewed and readjusted according to changing circumstances and events.

Data analysis also involves the development of the final training and development plan of the partner institute. This includes a list of training programmes required, the contents and the selection of appropriate curricula, training aids, target groups and programme duration.

Evaluation and feedback
No training assessment system is complete without an evaluation element. The main objective in this phase is to find out whether the actual training and development needs, not wants, were detected. It is also an attempt to pinpoint inadequacies in the needs assessment system, provide feedback to the concerned parties and to suggest corrections.

The partner institutes must develop an evaluation system that appropriately detects deficiencies. For example, a set of related questions can be included in the final questionnaire given to the trainees at the end of the programme. These might include questions such as:

- To what extent is the content of the programme related to your job?
- To what extent did the programme meet your actual training needs?
- What topics of the programme were irrelevant to your job?

In addition, periodical investigations during implementation by verbally asking people who are involved in the implementation could reveal inadequacies related to the execution period, the size of paper work generated, the clarity of the questions, etc.

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- To what extent did the programme meet your actual training needs?
- What topics of the programme were irrelevant to your job?

In addition, periodical investigations during implementation by verbally asking people who are involved in the implementation could reveal inadequacies related to the execution period, the size of paper work generated, the clarity of the questions, etc.

Training needs assessment information system
Undoubtedly the efficiency of this proposed training assessment system cannot be maximized without a rigorous information system. The latter should serve, among other things, the following:

- integration of the processes into a productive system;
- facilitation of a reliable flow of information among involved parties;
- minimization of excessive paper work; and
- facilitation of follow-up activities

The information system might easily be integrated with the training and development system. Employees' records will become more comprehensive since they will include not only the training programmes attended but also employees' training needs and thus enable both the member organization, as well as the partner institute, to trace the employees' career development.

Summary
Partner institutes are professional entities responsible for the development of human resources within a particular industry. These institutes have no direct access to their founder organizations. Operating from outside the client's infrastructure, training needs assessment becomes almost impossible. A practical model of training assessment for partner institutes was presented to overcome this problem. The model allows for the integration of the partner institutes with the member organization's infrastructure only to systematically make available information leading to the assessment of actual training needs; when, where, and how to meet them; why and for whom.

The proposed model can be easily modified to meet the circumstances of any partner institute, depending on the nature of its client's operations and industry. It is after all a conceptual framework subject to modification. However, in the heart of this framework is the belief that no training activity has potential for success without an adequate training needs assessment effort which narrows the gap between what is taught in the training sessions and what is required to improve job performance.

References
Appendix: a sample questionnaire for a marketing and business development HRT&DC

Section I. Profile data

Name __________ Current job __________
Since ____________ Supervisor _____________
Brief of job description
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

Previous training courses attended
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

All the following categories to be rated along the range

NOT FAMILIAR – VERY FAMILIAR
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

or

NOT APPLICABLE

Section II. Professional competencies

A. Product development and management
   - Managing product development process
   - Evaluating new product ideas and plans
   - Corrective skills
   - Time and product entry strategies

B. Pricing related competencies
   - Costing products and services
   - Planning & controlling of cost performance
   - Pricing strategies

C. Marketing - strategy related competencies
   - Negotiation skills
   - Networking
   - Methods for competitive marketing strategies
   - Methods & techniques for analyzing the industry
   - Calculating market share
   - Market segmentation and product positioning

D. Service quality related competencies
   - Assessment of service gaps
   - Measuring service quality standards
   - Managing service quality team

Section III. Cross functional competencies

A. General management competencies
   - Goal setting
   - Steps of the planning process
   - Setting priorities and scheduling
   - Leadership skills
   - Creative thinking

B. Computer Skills
   - Spread sheet applications
   - Word processor applications
   - DOS
   - Others (please specify)

Section IV. Other competencies

In the space below please indicate other training needs (competencies / knowledge and skills that were not mentioned above)