

When You are Asked to Design Training: Crucial Questions to Ask  
By: Nanette Miner, Ed.D.

A needs analysis is the first step in the instructional design process. It helps you to assess whether or not you truly have a training need. More often than not, requests from training come from a departmental manager. Never take these requests at face value! The manager has his/her own perceptions of the problem. Probe and dig deeper to get a more rounded picture of the situation at hand, before you agree to create training that may not be warranted at all. It is important to maintain your credibility and effectiveness in the organization by taking on training solutions that are indeed solutions. Here are four crucial questions to ask of the manager and of the workers in the department you are asked to interact with.

**Questions to Ask of the Manager**

1. What leads you to believe that this (training request) is indeed a problem for your employees?
2. What type of feedback do you provide for poor-performing workers?
3. Is there a standard operating procedure for the task/job (and if the answer is yes, a further question: have all employees been trained on it or have access to it?)
4. Do workers have all of the tools necessary to perform their work?

**Questions to Ask of the Workers “in question”**

(Note: it is useful to speak with at least three individuals)

1. Do you understand what the expected output of your position is? What is it?
2. Do you believe you have been adequately trained to perform your job? If no, what do you need?
3. Do you have the information you need to do your job correctly?
  - How accurate is that information?
  - Do you receive the information with enough time to perform your job correctly?
  - What information are you missing?
4. Do you have all the tools necessary to perform your job correctly? If no, what do you need?

For more information on this topic and additional questions to ask, refer to **The Accidental Trainer: A Reference Manual for the Small, Part-Time, or One-Person Training Department**, Pfeiffer, ISBN 0-7879-8046-3