



THE ULTIMATE

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS PLAYBOOK

YOUR PATH TO SOFT SKILLS TRAINING SUCCESS

 **upskillist** Pro

Table of Contents



Introduction



Chapter 1

What makes soft skills training needs analysis different?



Chapter 2

Preparing for a training needs analysis



Chapter 3

Conduct a soft skills training needs assessment



Chapter 4

Plan to correct gaps



Contact Us



Introduction

In May 2022, Upskillist released a report on the importance of soft skills training and how it can impact productivity. We looked at the top 10 soft skills currently in demand and explored how the development of each can improve the return on investment associated with training costs.

In our endeavour, we found irrefutable evidence that soft skills are essential to employee wellness and engagement as well as business growth. We discovered that though soft skills development is challenging, it is a priority for 51.4% of our L&D strategists, based on a recent survey, though this number is likely to increase. Inspired by this, with this ebook, we aim to provide the tools and guidance needed to conduct a training needs analysis, to effectively identify soft skills gaps. In addition, we strive to provide solutions on how to close those gaps by considering appropriate learning methodologies.

What is a

Training needs analysis?

Training needs analysis, also known as a training needs assessment, skills gap analysis, or skills audit, aims to identify existing skills gaps or training needs within an organisation, department or individual.

It's a process where the skills required to perform a specific function are compared to the existing or available skills. Any skill that is required, but not available is regarded as a skills gap and possible training need.

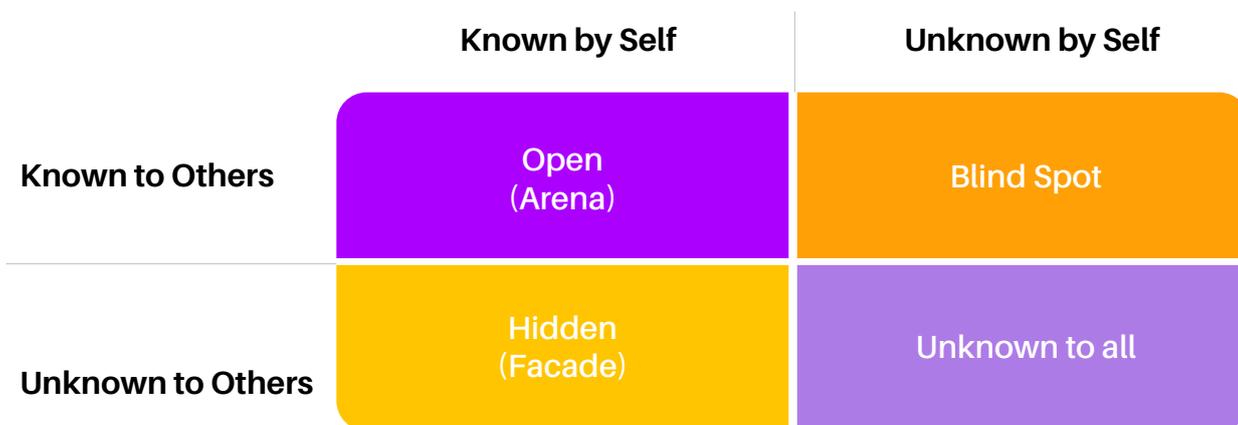
Training needs assessments help organisations streamline their training initiatives, manage budgets, prioritise critical needs as well as target specific needs. This in combination increases the potential return on investment and is an important step to support organisational growth.



Hard skills are described as quantifiable, verifiable and teachable, and a training needs analysis on hard skills can easily be conducted by checking facts and data.

Soft skills are regarded as subjective and intangible, or in other words, open to interpretation.

Deb Calvert reported in the article ‘Measuring Soft Skills In the Workplace’, that people with gaps in their soft skills are often blindsided the first time they hear that there’s a problem. Based on the Johari Window we can understand why. Some attitudes, behaviours, motivations and values are unknown or blind spots and having this brought to light, can unlock strong resistance or even denial and accusation



A person's perception of excellent versus poor soft skills is significantly impacted by the individual's exposure to soft skills and levels of excellence. Where a person is the best communicator within a group, for example, the person may regard his or her skills as good, excellent, or above average. In a different setting, amongst expert communicators, the perception may change and lead to a realisation that their skills are perhaps merely average.



The difficulty lies in that soft skills are subjective to both, the person being assessed and the person conducting the assessment, and so assessments of soft skills are often discredited as opinion.

For this reason, there is much criticism of the evaluation of soft skills, but the reality is that soft skills gaps need to be identified and brought to light to encourage personal and professional development.

The key to ensuring that a soft skills analysis inspires growth rather than resentment is in its methodology and execution.



To effectively assess soft skills the following must be in place:

- **The required skills and acceptable standards must be clearly defined per position**
Each position requires different skills and levels of excellence. It would be unfair to measure a team member's performance against the same criteria set for a team leader.
- **The methodology must allow for a reasonable assessment of the skill in question**
To accurately assess whether an individual can handle conflict, for example, the individual must be exposed to conflict, and the person responsible for the assessment must have witnessed the individual's involvement in the conflict.
- **An assessment checklist or rubric must predefine the parameters of the analysis**
Irrespective of the method used to evaluate skills, the skills must be rated against set criteria that clearly define what is regarded as good, average or poor performance. This not only benchmarks current skills but also provides insight into what improved performance would look like, and makes it achievable.



Popular methods to evaluate soft skills include



Group exercises

Any activity as a group, whether discussions, problem-solving, group learning initiatives or even obstacle courses can reveal valuable soft skills.



Role-playing exercises

Role-playing exercises give great insight into an individual's ability to think on their feet and perform under pressure. In addition, it provides a setting where communication and listening abilities, sincerity, empathy and several other soft skills can be measured effectively.



Peer 360 reviews and surveys

With feedback surveys, individuals are able to evaluate their performance as well as the performance of colleagues. In addition, companies can evaluate employee performance from the customers' perspective.



Skills-based assessments

Skills and knowledge tests can be compiled to assess current skills and measure the development of skills and knowledge.

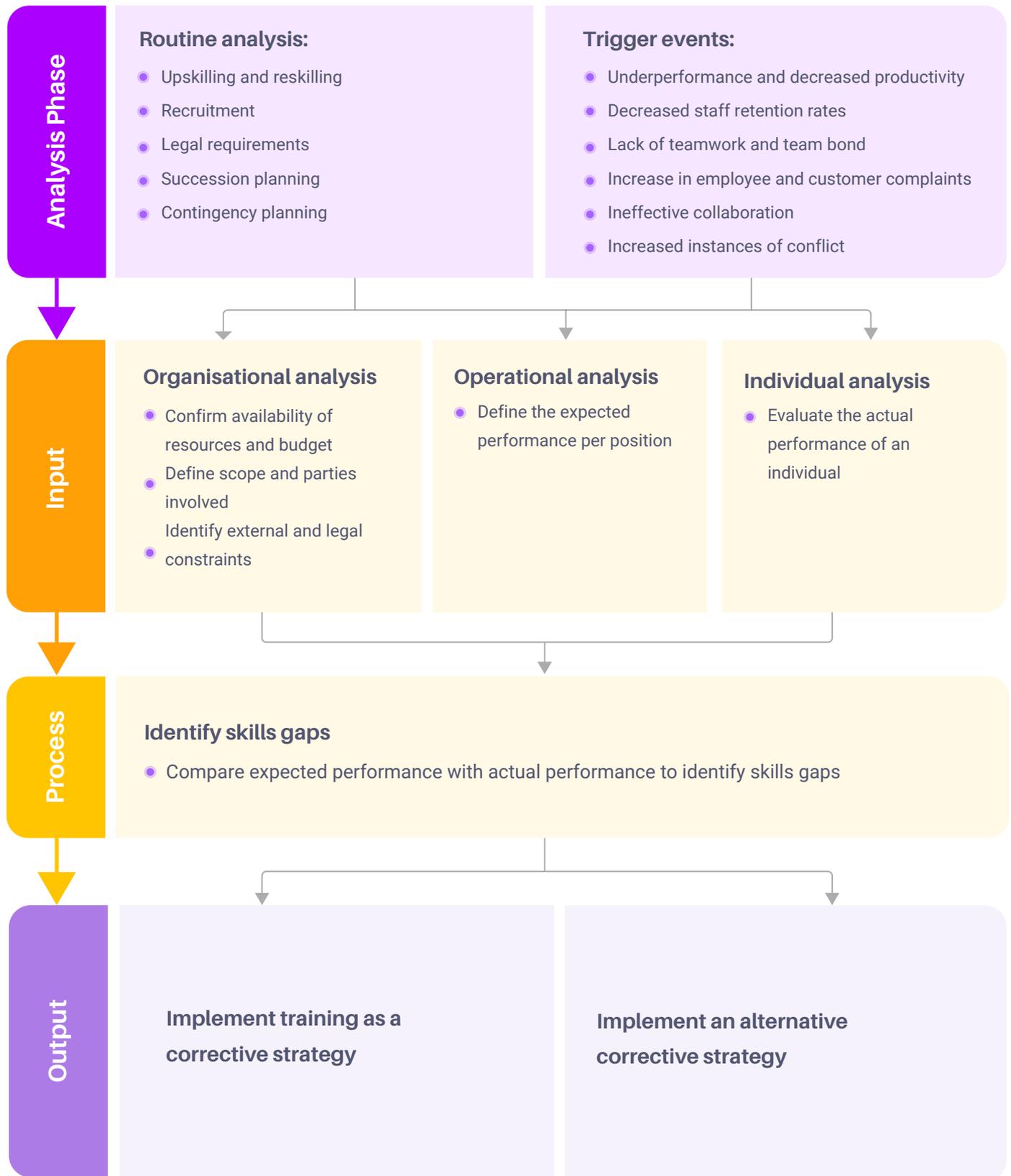
For instance, the Upskillist Learning Platform makes provision for aptitude tests, completed to effectively assess training needs prior learning. These results can be compared to the final assessment to confirm the successful transference of knowledge.



Chapter 2:

Preparing for a Training Needs Analysis

Training needs analysis can be conducted on a routine basis, once or twice a year, or in response to trigger events. Thanks to Blanchard & Thacker's Training Needs Analysis Framework, a training needs assessment can now follow a seamless process.



The following checklist can be used to clarify the scope and organise the resources required for your training needs analysis.

	Description	Questions to ask
Step 1:	<p>Organisational support Identify stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who will oversee this project? Who will assist in completing this project?
Step 2:	<p>Organisational analysis Align analysis with organisational needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the desired outcome of the project? What is the timeline for completion? Does this project involve the organisation, a department or selected individuals?
Step 3:	<p>Requirement analysis Plan the analysis process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the assessment scope? Which methods would best identify needs? Who will be involved in the assessment process? When should assessments be conducted and results evaluated? What is the protocol if something goes wrong?
Step 4:	<p>Job analysis Benchmark expected performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What knowledge, skills and abilities are required for the employee to be successful in the specific position? What is the expected standard of knowledge, skills and abilities for each task? Which activities can be used to evaluate knowledge, skills and abilities? Is there mandatory training required per task? What is the best correction strategy per task?
Step 5:	<p>Organisational support Identify skills gap</p>	<p>Use performance checklists and rubrics to evaluate each individual's knowledge, skills and ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there common areas of underperformance across the group? What are the specific areas that require attention per individual?



Chapter 3:

Conduct a soft skills training needs assessment

Upon completion of the checklists, it's time to conduct individual skills assessments. This entails the evaluation of an individual or group's performance by another person or multiple persons or even a self-evaluation of performance, using an assessment rubric such as this.

 Time management				
Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Stress management and prioritising	Easily frazzled by change and takes time to adapt	Identifies stressors but unable to reduce its impact on daily activities	Identifies stressors, and reduces its impact on daily activities	Identifies stressors, and reduces its impact on daily activities
Planning and goal setting	Easily frazzled by change and takes time to adapt	Plans tasks but fails to prioritise in order of importance	Prioritises tasks and mostly achieves completion	Prioritises tasks and successfully plans for completion



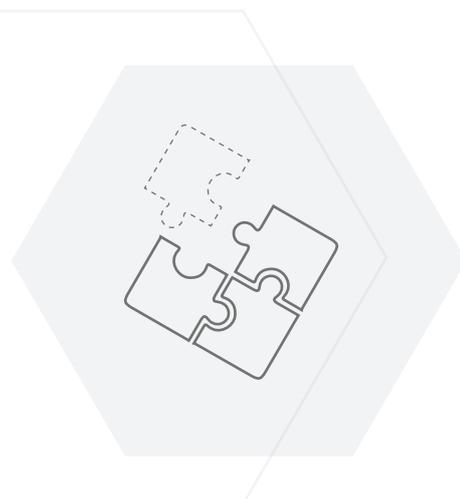
Communication

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Verbal and written communication, Presentation	Communicates only to inform and does not demonstrate communication for other purposes	Communicates only to inform or instruct	Communicates to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade	Effectively communicates to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade on multiple occasions using both verbal and nonverbal communication



Adaptability

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Self-management, Optimism, Calmness, Analysis, Self-motivation	Rarely displays a positive attitude and fails to persevere	Shows a positive attitude but struggles to persevere	Displays a positive attitude and mostly perseveres to meet end goals	Consistently displays a positive attitude and perseveres to meet end goals





Problem-solving

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Analysis, Logical reasoning, Brainstorming	Relies solely on the assistance from others	Relies mainly on the assistance from others	Demonstrates resourcefulness	Demonstrates resourcefulness and seeks assistance when necessary
Observation, Decision making	Does not take time to understand the problem and quickly jumps to conclusions	Does not take time to understand the problem, considers various causes but jumps to conclusions	Takes time to understand the problem and causes.	Takes time to understand the problem and causes, and analyses these facts to form a conclusion.



Teamwork

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Collaboration, Idea exchange	Does not participate in group activities	Participates minimally in group activities with prompting	Participates in group activities where required	Independently demonstrates cooperation to complete a task
Conflict management, resolution, mediation	Hinders collaboration by engaging in rude or off-task behaviours	Dominates discussions	Effectively deescalates heated discussions	Effectively deescalates heated discussions and continues to pursue resolution of pain points



Creativity

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Imagination, Mind-mapping, Innovation, Experimentation, Questioning	Let's others do the work and thinking	Rarely contributes ideas	Contributes to group activities	Consistently contributes and encourages others to contribute to group activities



Leadership

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Management skills, Authenticity, Mentorship,	Usually ignores the opinions and input of others	Listens to the opinions of others	Listens and considers the opinions of others	Seeks and considers the opinions of others
Cultural intelligence, Generosity	Shows little respect	Shows respect to all	Shows respectful attitude to all and helpful behaviour toward selected team members	Consistently demonstrate both respectful and helpful behaviour toward others





Work ethic

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Discipline, Dependability, Commitment	Rarely engages in learning activities	Sometimes engages in learning activities	Engages in learning activities	Independently engages and initiates learning activities
Responsibility, Professionalism, Confidence	Chooses to blame rather than take responsibility	Focusses on who created the problem and fails to take responsibility	Takes some responsibility where at fault	Takes responsibility



Attention to detail

Criteria	Unacceptable	Needs improvement	Meets expectations	Exceeds expectation
Introspection, Critical observation	Never asks for help and does not accept correction from others	Occasionally asks for help but does not accept correction from others	Asks for help when needed and accepts correction with resistance	Asks for help when needed and invites correction from others





Chapter 4:

Plan to correct gaps

With the analysis of individual performances completed, skills gaps and training needs can now be identified and addressed through training.

At this point, to ensure responsible spending of budgets and management of resources, training priorities should be considered.

Priority 1

Company goals and growth

Where skills are marked as important for current and future growth, development should be prioritised.

Priority 2

Essential skills gaps

Employee skills gaps that are critical to the specific job and prohibit the employee from performing optimally should be addressed next.

Choosing the correct course is the second step in the correction process. To get the most out of every single learning initiative, including employee satisfaction and engagement, it's imperative to validate all proposed courses.

Check course objectives for relevance

Confirm that course objectives align with the identified training needs and address the skills gap directly or indirectly.

For example, a sales course can indirectly teach an individual about patience, perseverance, communication, resilience and many other valuable interpersonal skills.

Check for rewards and accreditation status if needed

Encourage learners to continue their learning journey by rewarding hard work with a certificate of completion.

Where legislative and compliance requirements need to be met, accredited courses with certification may be required.

Online learning providers, such as Upskillist, recognise, that it is important for employee engagement that all learning, even soft skills, be rewarded with certification.

Check for flexibility

Use a combination of long and short courses to keep employees engaged and prevent fatigue. Opting for online learning also allows students to plan their time and redo activities when and where needed ultimately adding to the enjoyment of upskilling.

Check reviews of learning providers

Conduct research when trying a new provider. By reading reviews specific to the courses of interest it's possible to evaluate the learning journey and overall student satisfaction. It's even better to, where possible, ask for a sample course to test the learning quality first-hand.

Check the learning methodologies

Individuals all learn differently and information can be lost simply because it is not presented in a manner that makes sense to the learner.

Some learn by doing, others by hearing, others by reading and others require a visual presentation. Make sure that the chosen learning programmes include a variety of learning methodologies to cater for all learning styles, for example:

- Videos and demonstrations with audio
- Summary notes or visuals to view and download
- Assessments and quizzes



To get started on correcting any skills gaps, here is a list of Upskillist courses to try, aligned with the targeted soft skill

Upskillist Courses	Duration	Accredited	Skills Development									
			Time Management	Communication	Adaptability	Problem-Solving	Teamwork	Creativity	Leadership	Interpersonal Skills	Work ethic	Attention to Detail
Blogging, Content Marketing & Vlogging	8 hours	Yes		X					X			
Building Resilience	32 hours	Yes	X		X							X
Coaching	32 hours	Yes		X					X	X	X	
Conflict Resolution	8 hours	Yes		X		X			X			
Data Analytics	16 hours	Yes				X						X
Diversity	8 hours	Yes						X	X	X		
Effective Communication	8 hours	Yes		X						X		
Financial Planning	32 hours	Yes			X							X
Graphic Design	32 hours	Yes						X				
Leadership & Management	32 hours	Yes							X		X	
Mindful Practice	32 hours	Yes			X	X						
Mini MBA in Business	32 hours	Yes	X									X
Presentation Skills	8 hours	Yes	X	X				X				X
Probability and Statistical Analysis	8 hours	Yes				X						X
Project Management	32 hours	Yes	X									X
Psychology of Organisations	32 hours	Yes							X		X	
Sales	32 hours	Yes		X						X		
Social Media Marketing	32 hours	Yes	X	X				X				
Writing for the Workplace	8 hours	Yes		X								X



Let's take

The conversation further

At Upskillist, we believe in **driving productivity through upskilling**. With our focus on delivering **online learning for real-world change in the workplace**, L&D and HR professionals are able to expertly manage learning pathways to promote organisation growth as well as **employee retention and well-being**.

Considering its importance, upskilling staff should be easy and most importantly, **cost-effective**.

The Upskillist Learning Platform is **intuitive and easy to use**. It offers a wide variety of **high-quality Soft Skills courses**. In addition, its impressive **training needs analysis features**, including skills assessments and reporting, will ensure that learning initiatives remain profitable and impactful. To test our platform contact us today.

Next?

Try the Upskillist Learning platform for free today!

Start for Free

