



THE ULTIMATE

TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS PLAYBOOK

YOUR PATH TO SOFT SKILLS TRAINING SUCCESS



Introduction

In May of 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 also 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.



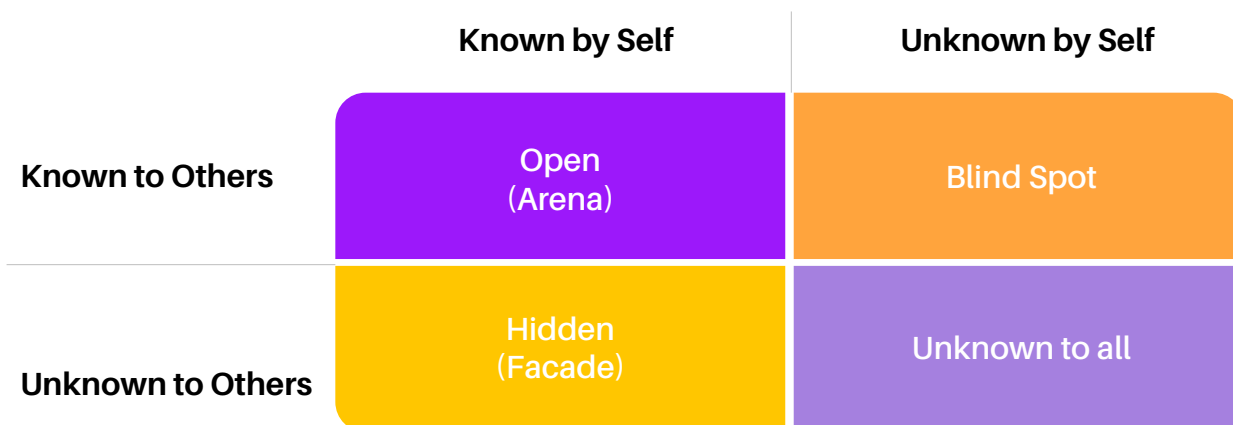
Chapter 1:

What makes soft skills training needs analysis different?

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 on the other hand 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 vs 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, understandably so, 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

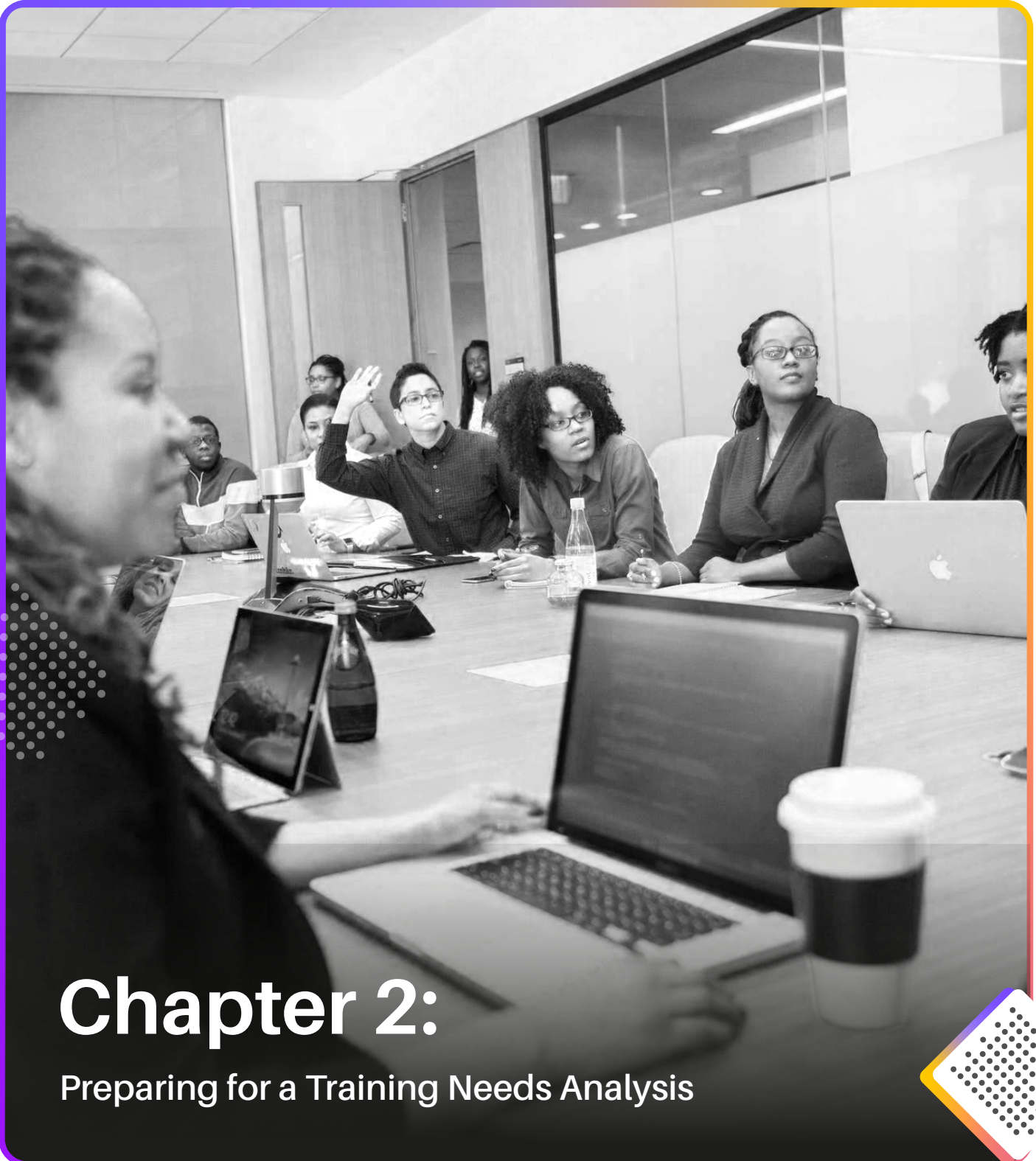
With feedback surveys, individuals are able to evaluate their performance as well as the performance of colleagues. Companies in addition can evaluate employee performance from the customers' perspective.



Skills-based assessments

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

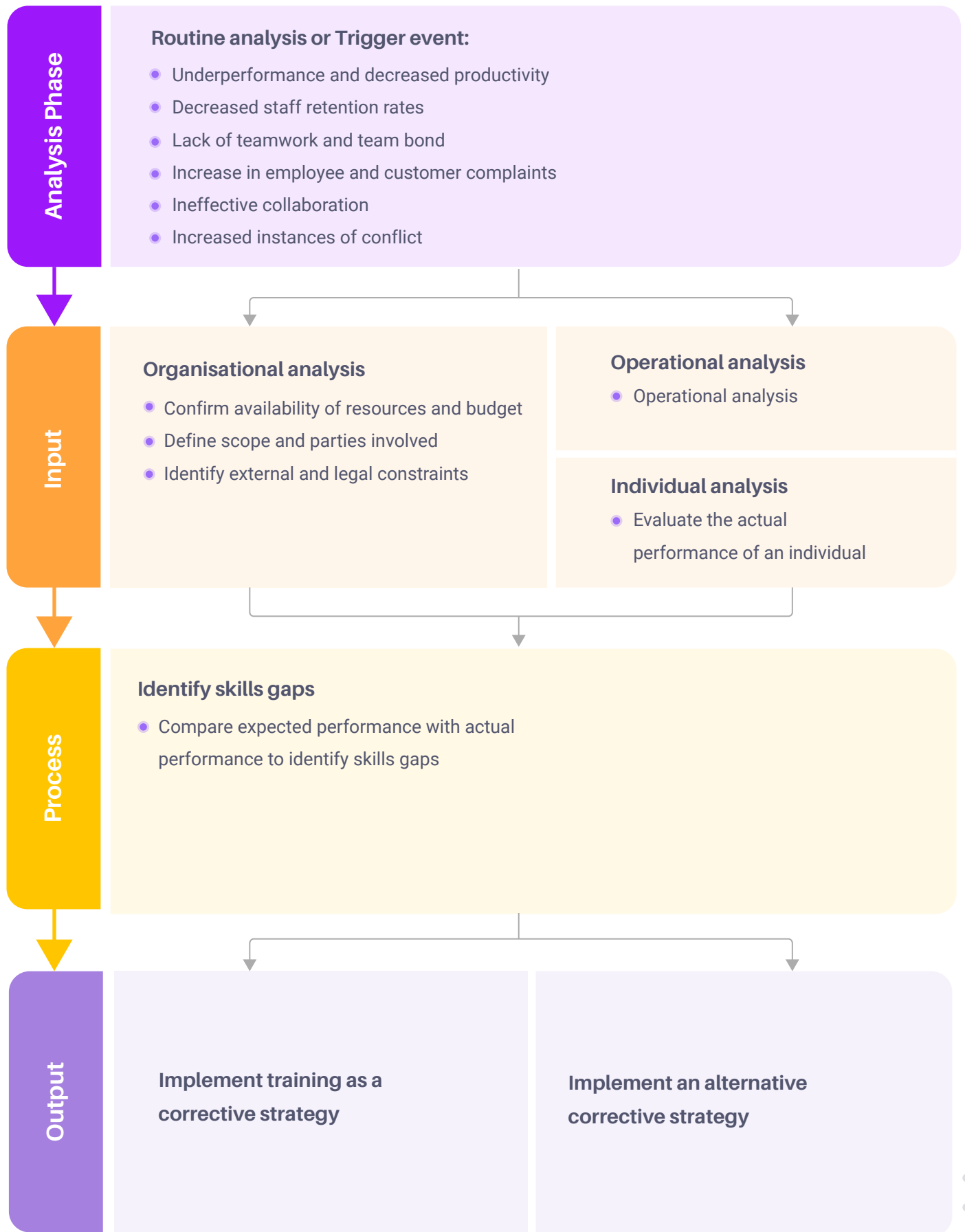
Upskillist Learning Platform makes provision for aptitude tests, completed to effectively assess training needs prior learning. These results can be compared to the final assessment to confirm the successful transference of knowledge.



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 Identify stakeholders</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 stakeholders</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?



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.

