



Training Needs Analysis

A step-by-step toolkit

A skilled workforce is crucial to the success of all organizations regardless of their size. But training costs businesses time and money - the investment must provide a good return. Having a clear focus on what training your business needs to be effective a simple but crucial part of business planning that is often over looked!

McCrudden Training
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About McCrudden Training

McCrudden Training Ltd is an award winning training, coaching and consultancy company based in the South East of England and providing services across the UK.

Our training services include off-the-shelf and bespoke training packages in:

- Statutory training including first aid, safeguarding, manual handling and food safety
- Personal development covering a wide range of topics including customer service, time management, confident public speaking and presenting and dealing with difficult people
- Leadership and Management which incorporates performance management, leading through change, leadership diploma programmes and project management

McCrudden Training also offers both one-to-one coaching and facilitation of Action Learning, and a range of consultancy services that includes training design for in-house delivery, training needs analysis, training evaluation services, team building, conference co-ordination or project management services.

For more information on any of our services, or to download our Directory of Service or key resources, why not visit our website www.mccrudden-training.co.uk?

For more information:

About this guide, using the guide or getting help to identify and fulfil your training needs, you can contact McCrudden Training in any of the following ways:

www.mccrudden-training.co.uk

0845 257 5871

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Section 1:

1.1 Introduction

“The way you treat your employees is the way they will treat your customers.”
Sir Richard Branson (Business Stripped Bare)

In order to survive and thrive in, the Campaign for Learning (CfL) believes it is essential that small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) maintain and develop their skills levels. In SMEs leaders/managers and staff may need to have a much broader range of skills and abilities than in larger organisations where there are so many staff, job roles are highly specialised.

The National Employer Skills Survey (a survey of 179,000 organisations mostly made up of SMEs) reported that an estimated 1.7million staff in the SME work force have a skills gap (the gap between the knowledge and skills that the people in the organisation currently possess and those that they need to meet the organisation’s objectives). If UK SMEs are to survive and thrive, that gap needs to be plugged.

In recent years SMEs have spent around £39billion on training. With such substantial amounts of money at stake, it’s essential that SMEs are funding the ‘right’ type of training -one that will genuinely have an impact upon the functionality of their business.

1.2 Aims of this guide

This guide is aimed at small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), specifically small organisations without an existing training plan or in-house Human Resources or Learning and Development specialists.

Although the guide is primarily designed for small businesses, and the word ‘business’ is used throughout the guide, the principles could equally be applied to any small organisation, including those in the voluntary and community sector.

The aim of the guide is to help those who have never completed a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to begin to understand the learning and development needs of those within their organisation. It could also provide a framework for those familiar with the process of TNA to document their training needs.

However, because of the diversity of activities undertaken by SMEs (and potentially voluntary groups) it is difficult to provide a single ‘catch all’ document that can be immediately used by every business. There may be questions or sections of the document that do not apply to your organisation. Please feel free to edit and customise this document to meet your own organisational needs.

If you would like any assistance completing the guide, please contact McCrudden Training on 0845 257 5871 or info@mccrudden-training.co.uk.

Section 2: Background

2.1 Why is training so important for SMEs?

“Organisational performance depends on having the right quality and quantity of human capital”

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

SMEs need highly skilled staff to survive. In a small organisation, there is very little scope to ‘carry’ someone who doesn’t have right the skills or knowledge to fulfil their role effectively. But very few potential employees have all the skills to meet your business needs. Even the best employees may need some form of development to ‘fit the bill’ completely, keep on top the latest industry developments or help them to increase their level of responsibility as your business grows.

As well as improving the ‘functionality’ of your business, there may be some training that is mandatory, or at the very least advisable to reduce the likelihood of claims against you (see box). Some training that is driven by legislation has to be completed on a regular basis - one-off is not enough. Making sure mandatory training is up-to-date is not just about complying with the law, it helps businesses avoid financial implications and adverse publicity if things do go wrong.

Depending upon the size and nature of your business you may need to ensure that staff receive training in:

- First aid
- Food hygiene / food safety
- Manual handling
- Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults
- Personal safety / lone worker training
- Responsibilities under the Data Protection Act

In 2009 the company behind a Sussex supermarket was fined £11,000 after ignoring advice to provide staff with essential food hygiene training.

In 2010, a Sheffield-based company was fined £60,000 for breaches of the Data Protection Act.

Add to all this, the knowledge that a well thought-out approach to training has been shown to:

- enable organisations to adapt to business challenges and the demands of customers,
- increase staff engagement, motivation and retention,
- attract the best staff to vacant positions¹, and
- be cost-saving in the longer-term

can you afford not to spend a little time planning your approach to training?

2.2 What is a Training Needs Analysis (TNA)?

Training needs analysis (TNA) is not a tool that is only useful for large organisations with HR departments.

TNA is simply a structured review of the learning and development needs of your business, yourself and staff within in your organisation. The outcome is a Training Strategy, which can be as simple or complicated as you choose to make it. Either way, having a clear focus on your organisations

¹ A recent Global Knowledge survey revealed that 72% of employees viewed training opportunities just as important as salary, when choosing their next job.

“a health check on the skills, talent and capabilities of the organisation”.

Definition of a TNA from the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD)

training needs is never more crucial than in times of limited budgets, restructuring and redundancies.

TNAs usually involve looking over the paperwork behind the business (the business plan, staff job descriptions and any reviews that you have conducted with staff), thinking about what statutory training needs the organisation might have, and asking those who work in the organisation about their needs (either through a questionnaire, or by talking to them).

After looking at the business paperwork and talking to those involved in the business, you should be able to compare the skills people already have with those you need them to have to excel now, and in the future.

This should help you to create a simple Training Strategy or an action plan that has identified and prioritised the training that you should invest in, making sure that you have sound business reasons for all the money you spend on training for your business.

2.3 The value of TNA

Research shows that SMEs tend to invest more money per head of staff in learning and development than larger organisations, with many SMEs spending between £1,000 - £3,000 per person on training. However, the most recent National Employer Skills Survey² suggests that less than half of SME’s have a Training Plan.

The higher spend might be because SMEs don’t have the luxury that larger organisations have of buying training en masse. However, it could also be because so few SMEs have a Training Strategy or action plan. Without a clear focus, organisations may take a ‘knee jerk’ response to buying training and book onto any course that takes their eye. Or they may be at the mercy of a talented sales person, convincing them that they need a certain type of training that may or may not help them reach their business goals.

“90% of all training is a waste of time according to one US study, either because the training is not transferred into the workplace or the training design / delivery is poor”

The Training Needs Analysis Pocketbook

At McCrudden Training, we believe that all SMEs can benefit drastically from a little time spent thinking about training. Even a basic Training Strategy or action plan developed with a little thought and business insight, can make sure you know what training will help your business survive and thrive, and will encourage you to think about the most cost effective way to improve the knowledge and skills in the organisation (see below).

2.4 Preparation

As with most things in business, there are many different approaches to conducting a TNA. Some simple, some detailed and lengthy. It is for you to choose the approach that best suits the size and complexity your organisation and the time you can invest in the process.

² The National Employer Skills Survey is undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council. It’s a bi-annual survey of around 79,000 businesses (excluding sole traders), with typically 9 out of 10 respondents being small businesses with fewer than 25 employees.

TNA can include:

- looking at the background and future plans of your organisation,
- reviewing job descriptions for staff,
- asking those working in the organisation to complete written questionnaires, take part in group discussions, or meet with you one-to-one.

Whatever approach you take it can be helpful to think about TNA at different levels:

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- **Business level:** considering your plans for maintaining or developing your business. What is your vision for the future, your business targets for the coming year(s), and when thinking about those what are the strengths and weaknesses of the business³. What skills and knowledge are needed to realise the vision, and do they exist in the business. You may also consider whether you have any plans for externally recognised good practice awards (for example Investors in People).
- **Team Level:** depending on the number of staff and the structure of the organisation, it can be helpful to think about the specific needs of teams. This is particularly important if new projects or approaches to the business will need teams to work in different ways, or to change their roles. Team level TNA also allows you to consider how well they work together and complement each other's skills. But remember - most people will be more comfortable being honest about their own skills gaps on a one-to-one basis, so the best approach to a team TNA might still be individual questionnaires or conversations.
- **People level** (including owners, managerial and individual staff members): considers the individual, knowledge, skills and competencies needed by yourself and your staff. Individual TNAs alone might suggest lots of skills gaps, but when considered collectively you may realise that skills mix within the team or organisation is fulfilling most needs.

A note about confidentiality: A lot of the information you collect during a TNA, especially in people level TNAs will be sensitive. If the process is going to help you reveal genuine training needs, people need to feel comfortable being honest about their skills gaps. Similarly, you may have noticed gaps in knowledge or skills that the staff themselves are not aware of. Raising this must be done sensitively if you want people to support the outcome of the TNA.

On the other hand, there may be times when you are conducting a TNA because you're planning changes in the organisation which you wish to keep confidential. A TNA must be handled sensitively to collect the information that the business needs to plan for it's future.

If you are at all concerned about leading a TNA for your organisation, why not get some professional advice? McCrudden Training has a number of TNA packages specifically designed with SME budgets in mind! Contact us to find out more: 0845 257 5871

³ Business strengths and weaknesses are usually evaluated via a SWOT analysis – contact McCrudden Training for more information.

Section 3: Questionnaires

3.1 Using the questionnaires

The following simple questionnaires provided by McCrudden Training are designed help you to take a step-by-step approach to thinking about the skills, knowledge and abilities that the organisations staff, managers, leaders and owners need now, and in the future.

However every organisation is unique and it is advisable for you to review and change the questionnaires to suit your particular organisation and the job roles within it. Please feel free to delete, skip or amend any sections to help to tailor the questionnaires to suit your organisation.

3.2 Business level self assessment TNA

If your organisation has a written business plan, or strategy it can be useful to have this in front of you when answering the following questions. If you are unsure about what training options might be available to you, or whether your organisation has any statutory training needs, McCrudden Training can offer advice on this.

The business owner or leader may choose to complete this questionnaire alone, or discuss elements of it with other managers, or team leaders. McCrudden Training can also offer a coaching service to help business leaders recognise and articulate the answers to these questions.

General business questions - current business position	
<p>1. How would you describe the current nature of the business?</p> <p>What do you produce or services do you provide? How do you sell, promote or market your organisation/product? What steps are involved in running your business? How many people are involved in the business?</p>	

2. Are there any specific issues that you are facing in your business at the moment?

Have there been any complaints from customers? Have staff raised any problems? Or have other challenges been noted?

STATUTORY TRAINING

3. Looking at the summary you have written above, are there requirements for statutory training?

- **Food Safety / Food Hygiene** (how many people in the business handle food)
- **Manual Handling**
- **Data Protection** (does your business collect, process, store or transfer personal information belonging to suppliers, customers or staff)
- **Health and Safety / risk assessments** (every business is obliged to undertake a risk assessment for activities that staff do. If the organisation has more than 5 employees, this must be documented. Do managers and staff know their health and safety responsibilities?)
- **Personal safety / lone worker**
- **Safeguarding** (does anyone in the organisation have regular contact with children, or vulnerable adults including those with physical or mental disabilities)
- **First Aid** (for more information, visit www.mccrudden-training.co.uk and download the first aid risk assessment template)
- **Fire Safety Awareness** (does everyone in the business understand how to reduce the risk of fire and their roles and responsibilities should there be a fire?)
- **Licence Trade** (does your business sell alcohol? Do all your staff understand their legal obligations when selling alcohol? Do you have door staff?)

4. Considering each aspect of statutory training mentioned above, are there any knowledge or skills gaps in the business relating to your statutory obligations?

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SKILLS TRAINING

5. Looking at your answers to questions 1 and 2, what skills, knowledge and attitudes need to exist in the business to:

- Win business, market and sell the product or service effectively

- produce and promote the product or service

Knowledge
(eg: knowledge of project management processes)

Skills
(eg: influencing other people, managing behaviour or teams)

Attitudes
(eg: attention to detail, importance of health and safety processes)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">- effectively recruit new staff (create employment contracts, advertise, screen, interview, appoint and induct employees).- manage and lead the people within the organisation, and deal with employment problems.- maintain /develop the business processes (for example accounts, strategic planning and quality management)?- make effective use of technology and IT solutions to manage business processes and streamline the business?			
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<p>6. Are there currently any skills gaps in the business in relation to question 5?</p> <p>Consider also when people are promoted from within the business: what support do they receive to develop their leadership skills?</p>	
<p>General business questions - future business position</p>	
<p>7. What is the vision for the future of the business? What are the key targets for the business over the next 2-4 years?</p>	
<p>8. How might these affect the need for skills and knowledge within the business? Including statutory skills (question 3) and the general knowledge, skills and attitudes needed within the business skills (question 5)?</p>	
<p>Training specific questions</p>	
<p>9. Does the business have up-to-date job descriptions for all staff?</p>	
<p>10. Does the business have a review / appraisal system in place for staff? If so, how often do these take place? Have those leading appraisals received training in performance management?</p>	

	<p>11. What experience has the business had of completing training in the last 12 months?</p>
	<p>12. If any training has been undertaken, was the return on investment evaluated by the business? If so, how?</p>
	<p>13. When are the busy and quiet times in your business year? (This should help to identify when it's possible to release staff to attend training.)</p>
	<p>14. Is there a budget for training already built into the business plan or cash flow forecast?</p>
	<p>15. Does the business want to work towards any externally recognised good practice standards in managing and developing staff? (for example Investors in People)</p>

Reviewing the answers given above, list any and all possible training needs that might exist for the business:

3.2 Owner / managerial staff self-assessment TNA

When considering the knowledge, skills and attitudes needs by those leading the organisation, it can be helpful to review individual job descriptions or person specifications. If you do not have these, McCrudden Training can provide advice and support to develop them.

The following questionnaire could be used to form a written questionnaire given to the leaders, or relevant questions could be discussed with managerial staff either one-to-one or in a group. Business owners interested in meeting other business owners to complete a TNA in a group setting (as part of an Action Learning Set) should contact McCrudden Training for advice.

Remember, some of the competences included in the following questionnaire may not be relevant to your business. As you read the sample questionnaire, you may think of things that are needed in your organisation that are not included. So, feel free to amend the questionnaire so that it best reflects the requirements of your organisation.

Using the questionnaire: First, consider each of the competencies identified in the table below and delete any that are not relevant to your role, or organisation. Then consider whether there are any competencies required in your role or organisation that are not listed here - add them in! Finally, take each competency in turn and rank your own ability, giving yourself a score from 1-5 as follows:

1. No knowledge or skill
2. A little knowledge or skill
3. Some knowledge or skill
4. Good level of knowledge or skill
5. Highly skilled, or excellent level of knowledge

Once you have completed the questionnaire about yourself, it can be helpful to ask other people in your organisation to give you their thoughts about your skills. Giving a blank copy of your questionnaire to other people in your organisation can give you a more rounded view of your current skills.

Business skills - the skills that make a business not just survive, but thrive					
	1	2	3	4	5
Understands the market the business operates in	1	2	3	4	5
Is aware of local / regional competition	1	2	3	4	5
Can develop a clear, focused and structured business plan	1	2	3	4	5
Long term financial planning skills	1	2	3	4	5
Seeks to reduce costs and improve profitability	1	2	3	4	5
Financial awareness and understanding of key components of financial reporting	1	2	3	4	5
Assesses the commercial implications of decisions	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies and monitors key business performance indicators	1	2	3	4	5
Puts forward well-planned proposals for business change/ improvement	1	2	3	4	5
Develops clear and efficient systems that ensure the quality of the organisation	1	2	3	4	5

Leading others - getting the support of others to accomplish your goals

Effectively communicates the vision for the business / organisation to others	1	2	3	4	5
Influences and motivates the team	1	2	3	4	5
Is a good role model for staff	1	2	3	4	5
Recognises and uses a range of appropriate leadership styles in different situations	1	2	3	4	5
Takes responsibility and is accountable for their actions	1	2	3	4	5
Provides effective feedback for others (positive and negative)	1	2	3	4	5
Makes tough decisions when needed	1	2	3	4	5
Knows the strengths and weaknesses of people in their team	1	2	3	4	5
Takes steps to build strong and effective teams	1	2	3	4	5
Understands how to teach, instruct and coach others	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional competencies - recognising and managing your own and others emotions					
Aware of personal strengths and areas for development	1	2	3	4	5
Sets targets for own personal improvement linked to business development	1	2	3	4	5
Manages own emotions even at times of high stress	1	2	3	4	5
Leads people effectively through times of organisational change	1	2	3	4	5
Seeks feedback from others	1	2	3	4	5
Understands the impact of actions on others	1	2	3	4	5
Builds rapport with people - staff, colleagues and customers	1	2	3	4	5
Deals with challenging behaviour in an effective and positive way	1	2	3	4	5
Networks within the organisation	1	2	3	4	5
Networks with other organisations	1	2	3	4	5
Able to speak confidently about the organisation in public	1	2	3	4	5
Communication - ensuring that meaningful information is shared and heard					
Understands the impact of different methods of communication	1	2	3	4	5
Selects the best method of communicating with others	1	2	3	4	5
Communicates effectively both verbally and in writing	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrates effective listening skills with colleagues, staff and customers	1	2	3	4	5
Manages meetings to achieve results	1	2	3	4	5
Manages conflict effectively	1	2	3	4	5
Negotiates and influences others	1	2	3	4	5
Challenges others views confidently, but without inviting confrontation	1	2	3	4	5
Innovation - ensuring your organisation adapts, improves and renews to stay current and effective					
Generates creative ideas with commercial benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Recognises creative ideas with commercial benefits	1	2	3	4	5
Challenges the status quo - replaces traditional approaches with new ideas	1	2	3	4	5

Looks at things from different perspectives	1	2	3	4	5
Encourages others to be creative in their thinking	1	2	3	4	5
Identifies inventive ways to solve problems in the business	1	2	3	4	5
Delivering results - getting the end results that the organisation needs					
Manages their time effectively	1	2	3	4	5
Sets realistic goals and objectives	1	2	3	4	5
Uses project management techniques to monitor progress and manage risks	1	2	3	4	5
Delegates effectively to achieve results	1	2	3	4	5
Prioritises tasks and resources	1	2	3	4	5
Anticipates problems and identifies contingencies	1	2	3	4	5
Technical competencies - use this section to add any industry specific knowledge, skills or attitudes your organisation needs					
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

A bit about psychometric testing: When assessing the current skills and abilities of senior managers, the use of psychometric ability tests can be extremely helpful. Tests can cover topics such as verbal and numerical reasoning, spatial awareness, and..... McCrudden Training is able to select tests appropriate to your needs, administer and interpret the tests, providing feedback on potential areas for development. For more information about low-cost psychometric testing contact McCrudden Training on 0845 257 5871 or email info@mccrudden-training.co.uk

1. Are there any obvious skills gaps that you need to address?
2. How quickly does that skills gap need to be addressed?
3. How do you most like to learn? *(based on experiences you have had before, do you prefer to read books, attend training, watch others - what ways have you found it easiest to learn new skills)*
4. What time / capacity do you have to undertake training?

3.3 Individual staff and team self-assessment TNA

The following questionnaires can be used as they are, or adapted to suit your organisations. They could be completed as a written questionnaire by individual members of staff, during the course of a discussion with their supervisor/manager, or in larger teams used as the basis for a group discussion about training needs. These TNA questionnaires could also be used with individual staff to address specific performance issues that have been identified or as part of a regular staff appraisal programme.

You might also decide to offer your staff the opportunity to complete a broader individual skills audit (visit www.mccrudden-training.co.uk to download a free Skills Audit). McCrudden Training can offer organisations advice on accessing and using personal skills audits - why not contact us for an no obligation discussion: 0845 257 5871.

General questions:

1. How long have you been in your current role?
2. Do you have a job description for your role? (If no, go to question 3).
 - a. If yes, are there tasks in the written job description that are no longer part of your job?
 - b. Are there tasks that you do, that are not reflected in your job description?

3. In the table below, make a list of all the tasks that are critical to doing your job, and then rate your current ability to do those tasks. This might include IT skills, dealing with customers, writing, public speaking and so on. *(Add more lines to the table as necessary)*

Tasks you currently do	Knowledge, skills or attitudes needed to do these tasks	Overall rating (1 = low, 10 = highly competent)

4. What equipment do you have to use in your job?

5. Answer the questions below:

Do you have access to people's personal information?	Yes / No	Do you work closely with children?	Yes / No
Do you handle food or drinks?	Yes / No	Do you work regularly with vulnerable adults?	Yes / No
Are you required to lift any heavy objects?	Yes / No	Do you make journeys or visit other people alone?	Yes / No

6. Do you work closely with other people as part of a team? If so, do you do the same work as other people in the team, or different? How well acquainted with the other members of the team are you?

7. What training have you had in the last 3 years? (This will help to identify if any training sessions that might need refreshing.)

8. Looking back at your answers to questions 1-6, what training do you think you still need to do your current job well?

9. What career aims do you have? Are there other roles in the organisation that you'd be interested in doing?

10. Thinking about any other roles you may be interested in, or ambitions that you have. List the key tasks of that job, the knowledge or skills you think you'd need to do these tasks and then rate your current ability in these. *(Add more lines to the table as necessary)*

Tasks that are part of jobs you are interested in doing	Knowledge, skills or attitudes needed to do these tasks	Overall rating (1 = low, 10 = highly competent)

11. How do you like to learn (going on a course, reading, e-learning)?

12. Availability (what days, times and locations might stop them being able to undertake training)?

Notes:

Section 4: Using the TNA results

4.1 Developing a plan

Collating the information collected from business and individual TNAs will give you a number of things, including a summary of the current knowledge and skills in the organisation and an opportunity to prioritise training needs.

Having completed the TNA across different levels, the next task is to decide which of the training you have identified are urgent, which can be delivered in the coming months / years and prioritising them accordingly. Use this to develop an action plan for meeting training needs that describes who in the business needs training, what the outcome of that training should be and how you might meet those needs.

You can use the template below to help you to plan your resources for training. The plan should be reviewed and up-dated regularly.

4.2 Prioritising training needs

Once you have identified training needs across the business, they need to be analysed and prioritised. Prioritising your training needs helps to ensure that investment in training focuses on the areas that will give the business the greatest protection from risk or the biggest benefit (return on investment).

Using the grid below can help to identify what priority each possible training activity should be given. When completing the grid consider:

- What impact will developing these skills have on the performance of the business?
- What would be the cost/benefit of investing in developing these skills - now or in the future?
- Which skills needs are the most important to our long-term success?

<p><i>How important is the knowledge /skill /ability to the success of the organisation?</i></p>	<p>Essential</p>	<p><i>Anything in this box is given top priority</i></p>	<p><i>Anything in this box is given moderate priority (consider when the training will need up-dating)</i></p>
<p>Desirable</p>	<p><i>Anything in this box is given moderate priority</i></p>	<p><i>Anything in this box is given low priority</i></p>	<p>Good</p>

Poor

How would you rate the current level of knowledge/skill/ability in the organisation?

4.2 Training needs action plan template

Once you have identified the most important training needs that will contribute to business development, record them in a way that is easy to follow and monitor!

Training Action Plan for: (Name of business)

Date plan starts:

Review date:

Current budget for training: *if you have a business plan or a cash flow estimate use these to identify how much money you can allocate to developing yourself or your team*

Priority	Description of the training need	List of people who need the training	How will the training be delivered?	When must it be completed by?	Budget allocated:	Completed: Y / N
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						

Section 5: Supporting advice

5.1 Ways of meeting training needs

There are many ways to meet people's training needs, most of them fall into one of two categories - on-the-job (work shadowing or informal instruction) or off-the-job (taking time away from everyday work tasks to complete learning activities). The methods you choose to meet the needs will depend upon how people prefer to learn, the number of people needing training, and your budget. Think also about any special needs people may have and how to support these, so that your training is equally accessible to all who need it.

On-the-job training can be more difficult for SMEs. Sometimes the new skills and knowledge required by an SME organisation simply don't exist within the business. Many SMEs are strong in delivering the primary aim of their business, but may well lack other key business skills - such as presenting and selling.

Even where the necessary skills do exist within an SME, the cost of teaching someone else (taking 2 or more people away from delivering the business of the company) can be very high. And unless the person delivering the on-the-job training understands how people learn, the quality of the teaching might not be effective.

There are a number of off-the-job training options available for SMEs to develop knowledge and skills within their business. The following is a short summary of the options:

- **Book a professional trainer to deliver training at your place of work** - this often works out most cost effective if you have 5 or 6 people who need training in a particular topic. This gives the advantage of the trainer being able to tailor a course to your specific business needs. Also, depending on the topic and the space at your venue, most trainers will accept around 12 people on a course. So if it's a topic that other organisations might need, you could always consider booking a professional to deliver training at your venue and 'sell' spare places to other local businesses.
- **Attend an open workshop, conference or event** (a course open to any member of the public or other businesses) - if you have a small number of people requiring development in a key area, an open course is often the most cost-effective approach. The information tends to be general rather than specifically tailored to your organisational needs, but this approach has the advantage of being able to network with other organisations, and learn from their experiences. McCrudden Training believes that open courses should be accessible (in terms of cost and availability of courses) to SMEs and offers discounted rates to small organisations.
- **Distance Learning and E-learning** (computer based learning) - this type of learning can be scheduled around work commitments and 'quieter times'. It tends to reduce the time spent away from the office and reduces the costs of travelling to a training venue. This mode of learning also allows people to work at their own pace, but does require a lot of self-motivation to complete the work. Those who aren't familiar with this type of learning can find it difficult and many people will miss the social interaction and learning from others that takes place in a group environment. It can also be frustrating if the internet connection is poor!
- **Coaching / Mentoring** (one to one) - a large number of SMEs have benefited from business management coaching. Coaches and mentors work with individual SME leaders to focus upon their particular development needs. Coaches or mentors usually work with an individual over a number of sessions, which are booked to suit the coachee. This regular contact allows the coachee and coach to build a relationship and tackle a wide variety of issues. However, coaching / mentoring can be costly and it's important to ensure a good match between the views/personality of the coach and the coachee.

- **Action Learning Sets** - bring together groups of people in similar managerial positions (either from different organisations, or from different parts of the same organisation) to share workplace issues, challenges or questions. It is a series of regular, facilitated discussions that offer group problem solving in a confidential setting. It's an opportunity to learn from the past experiences of others, however organising a series of meetings between busy people can be difficult! And sets need careful facilitation to make sure that everyone is benefiting from the discussions.
- **Reading** - there are a myriad of great publications that can help develop skills for SMEs, providing toolkits and models that can be adapted and used. Some people are particularly predisposed to learning through theory. For these people, reading is a very low cost option for acquiring new knowledge. However, most people need to ask questions, try things out and reflect on how to apply new knowledge. This is difficult if reading is the only approach to learning offered. And where a new skill is needed, for learning to be effective, people need to have the chance to practice the skill in a safe environment.
- **Internal Skills Sharing** - sharing skills from within your organisation can take many forms including formal presentations at staff meetings, job shadowing, secondments or coaching of colleagues from across different roles or departments. This approach can be very useful for sharing information from within the organisation, especially where the business has a 'unique' approach to activities. To enhance the effectiveness of internal skills sharing, consider sending key staff on train-the-trainer, or coaching training.

Internal skills sharing is crucial to business continuity, as it helps to protect the business if a key member of the team is off sick or leaves the organisation. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitation relying solely upon internal skills sharing is the absence of bringing new ideas or new knowledge into the business.

McCrudden Training can provide advice on accessing a range of learning opportunities and may be able to help access funding for training. Why not call us for a no obligation chat – 0845 257 5871.

5.2 Evaluation of learning

It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of any training you invest time and money in. Evaluation of learning will help in planning future training and learning activity that has shown itself to be effective. For example:

1. Ask learners how they felt about the training experience.
2. Assess what has actually been learnt i.e. so if the learning target was some essential health and safety information, find out exactly what they learnt. (This has the added benefit of encouraging learners to bring the information back to their conscious mind which helps commit new knowledge to the long term memory).
3. Look at the effect the learning intervention has on an individual's behaviour in their job. This could be assessed by reviewing changes in knowledge, skills and competence as part of the reviews and appraisal process.
4. Look at the impact of the training on businesses performance as a whole. Directly linking learning and development activity to overall performance is not always easy to do.

5.3 Further help

Bee, F. & Bee R. (2003). *Learning Needs Analysis and Evaluation*. 2nd Edition. London; CIPD

Donovan, P & Townsend, J. (2004) *The Training Needs Analysis Pocketbook*. Hampshire, Management Pocketbooks

Robson, F. (2009). *Learning Needs Analysis*. London. CIPD

Contact McCrudden Training on 0845 257 5871, info@mccrudden-training.co.uk for

- information and advice on conducting a TNA,
- support the interpretation TNAs,
- help producing a company Training Plan,
- individual Psychometric Testing to support recruitment of new staff and for assessing the skills gaps with existing staff, and
- a wide range of learning and development solutions!