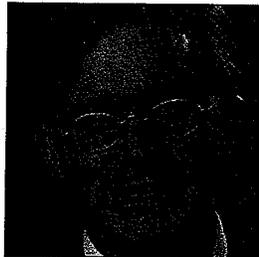


27

NEEDS ASSESSMENT READINESS CHECKLISTS

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Overview Needs assessment is a formal process that identifies needs as gaps in results between “What Is” and “What Should Be,” prioritizes those needs on the basis of the costs and benefits of closing versus ignoring gaps in results, and selects the needs to be reduced and eliminated (Kaufman, Oakley-Browne, Watkins and Leigh, 2003). It provides the grounds for selecting the appropriate solutions to the challenges and opportunities an organization faces, while at the same time building shared commitment to an organization’s future direction.

Prior to beginning a needs assessment, it is useful to conduct a quick audit to ensure that the necessary leadership is “on board” and that requisite information is available for review. The following two checklists provide an inventory of preconditions that should be met prior to conducting the assessment itself. The “preassessment” checklist helps ensure that the appropriate sponsorship and staffing are in place, while the “scoping” checklist helps make certain that project members and senior leadership reach consensus as to the purpose, use, and approach of the assessment.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT READINESS CHECKLISTS

PREASSESSMENT

- Top leadership has provided their sponsorship of the needs assessment.
- Top leadership can be expected to sustain their sponsorship over the course of the needs assessment.
- Leadership clearly understands the problem with the “status quo.”
- The assessment team will include internal clients (employees and associates) within the organization.
- The assessment team will include executives, leaders, and managers within the organization.
- The assessment team will include external clients (such as vendors and customers, as well as members of the surrounding community) outside the organization.
- Team members have sufficient power and authority to carry out their functions.
- Team members have a long-term commitment to the organization’s success.
- Team members have the technical expertise to carry out their functions.
- Team members have the authentic leadership skills and competencies necessary to carry out their functions.
- Unique roles and responsibilities for each team member are clear.
- Smaller teams will be created to carry out the major functions of the assessment.
- Project plans will be developed that clarify the project time line, individual and team roles and responsibilities, and major en route milestones of the assessment.
- The budget for the assessment is sufficient and certain.
- Staffing (or work release) for the assessment is sufficient and certain.

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT READINESS CHECKLISTS (CONT.)

SCOPING

- Leadership and all team members agree that the purpose of the assessment is to identify, prioritize, and select gaps in results for closure.
- "Needs" are defined solely as discrepancies between current and desired results (rather than deficiencies in processes or resources).
- The questions to be answered by the assessment are clear.
- Data regarding the current and desired results achieved by individuals and teams within the organization (such as deliverables, staff satisfaction, absenteeism, or accident rates) is available or will be collected.
- Data regarding the current and desired results that the organization accomplishes internally (such as return on investment, customer satisfaction, or merchandise defect rate) is available or will be collected.
- Data regarding the current and desired results that the organization delivers to external stakeholders and society (such as self-sufficiency, disabilities, or environmental sustainability) is available or will be collected.
- Hard data (objective and independently verifiable) will be collected during the assessment.
- Soft data (stakeholder perceptions that are not independently verifiable) will be collected during the assessment.

References

Kaufman, R., Oakley-Browne, H., Watkins, R., & Leigh, D. *Strategic Planning for Success: Aligning People, Performance, & Payoffs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2003.

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