



## Needs Assessment

It doesn't make sense to conduct training programs when they're not needed. HR programs are too expensive – both in resources and in time lost to productivity. That's why needs assessment is a prudent first step. But how can managers find out what training is needed? The best answer is to measure levels of performance and focus on the areas where scores are low.

Many aspects of work are hard to measure – leadership, teamwork, interpersonal communication, sales, service, etc. In these cases, 360 feedback is the most effective way to assess skills.

### HOW TO SET UP 20/20 INSIGHT GOLD

Basically, needs assessment data are derived from aggregating the scores of individuals who received 360 feedback. The procedure is to identify and measure key behaviors of a significant sample of a population, then compare average scores. The areas with the lowest scores will be the first indication of a possible need for developmental programs. Whether the solution is training (which addresses knowledge and skill deficiencies) depends on why the scores are low.

**Subject.** Identify a group with a base of workplace skills in common – potential recipients of training. These are individuals who would benefit from 360 feedback. Enter their names as subjects.

**Respondent relationship types.** Typical respondent relationships include manager, peer, co-worker and customer.

**Surveys.** Any important workplace skill area could be selected. Check the Survey Library. Some common surveys are:

- Personal Leadership – self-leadership and communication behaviors
- Team Leadership – supervisory behaviors

For the purposes of a needs assessment, it may be useful to include more than a minimum number of items – e.g., instead of 30-40, you may want to have 80-100 items.

**Open-ended Questions.** One or two comment-only questions may supplement scores to determine areas that need improvement.

- What aspect of workplace performance does this person most need to improve?

**Scales.** The “Agreement” scale is frequently used because it gives a good indication of the degree of competence. The “Importance” scale can also provide a valuable basis for comparison.