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Assessing Training Needs : an Integral Part of Human Resource Development

par

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To design a training program, an organization requires a thorough understanding of the needs of its prospective clients. This presentation will examine the alternative approaches/processes used by the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) to assess the human resource training and developmental needs of both internal staff and external community groups such as NAIT program heads, Alberta Research Council technologists, Alberta Indian Bands, disabled people, and selected industrial areas such as Alberta Forest Industry.
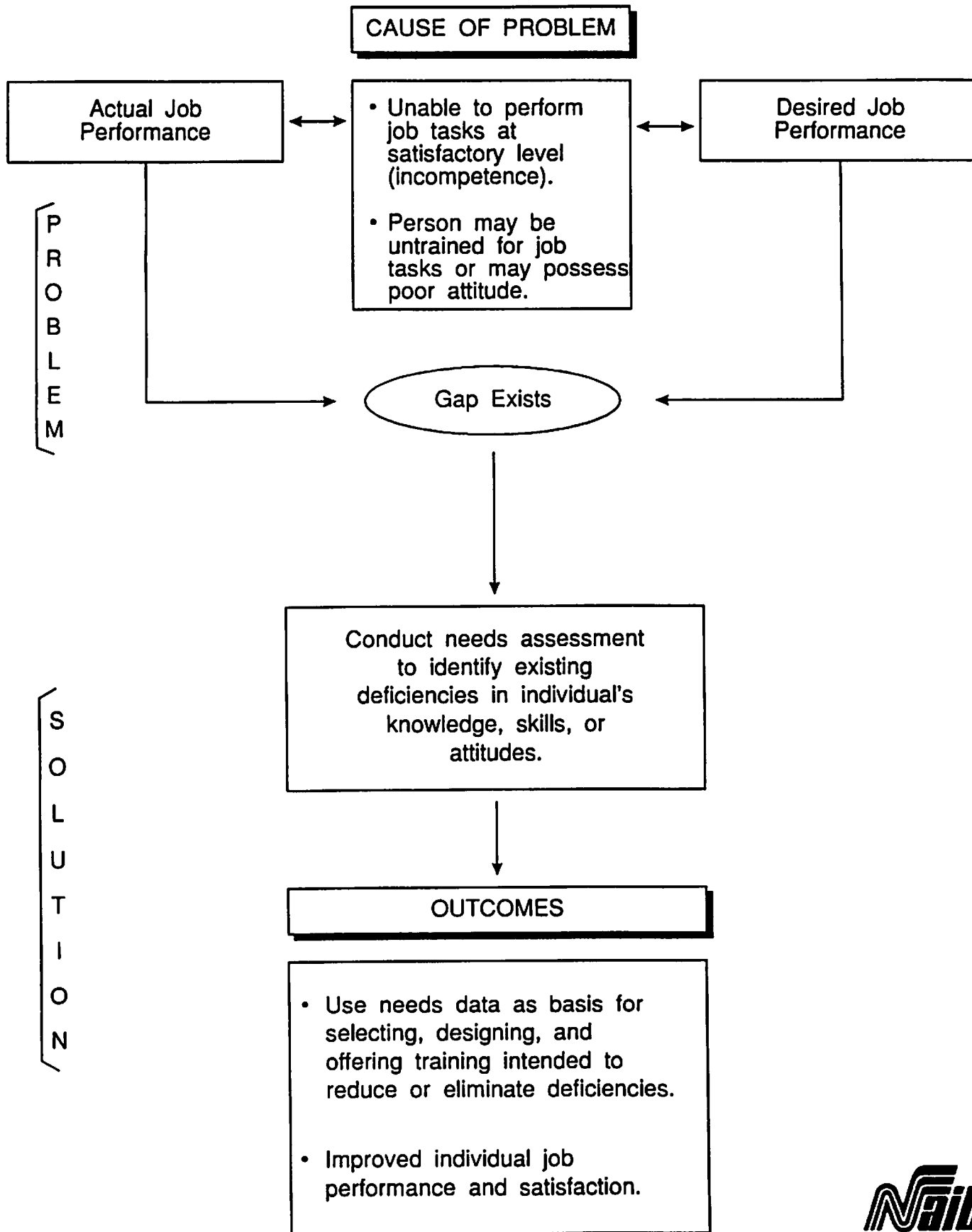
Successful operation and delivery of programs to students are dependent on a key person--the "Program Head." To develop resources in and obtain a better understanding of the complexities of this position, a series of Program Head Competency Profile Development workshops were conducted with NAIT Program Heads across four divisions. The results are being used to create a NAIT Program Head Competency Profile and develop a unique training program for existing and aspiring Program Heads.

Canadian institutions often err by establishing Aboriginal Management Training programs without understanding the real needs of band personnel. To develop an effective Indian Management Development Training Program for Alberta, NAIT conducted a major training needs assessment study among administrative staff and council members in 30 Alberta bands. This presentation will cover the methodology used to obtain precise band training needs and to develop four-year skill training "action" plans customized for each band and its staff.
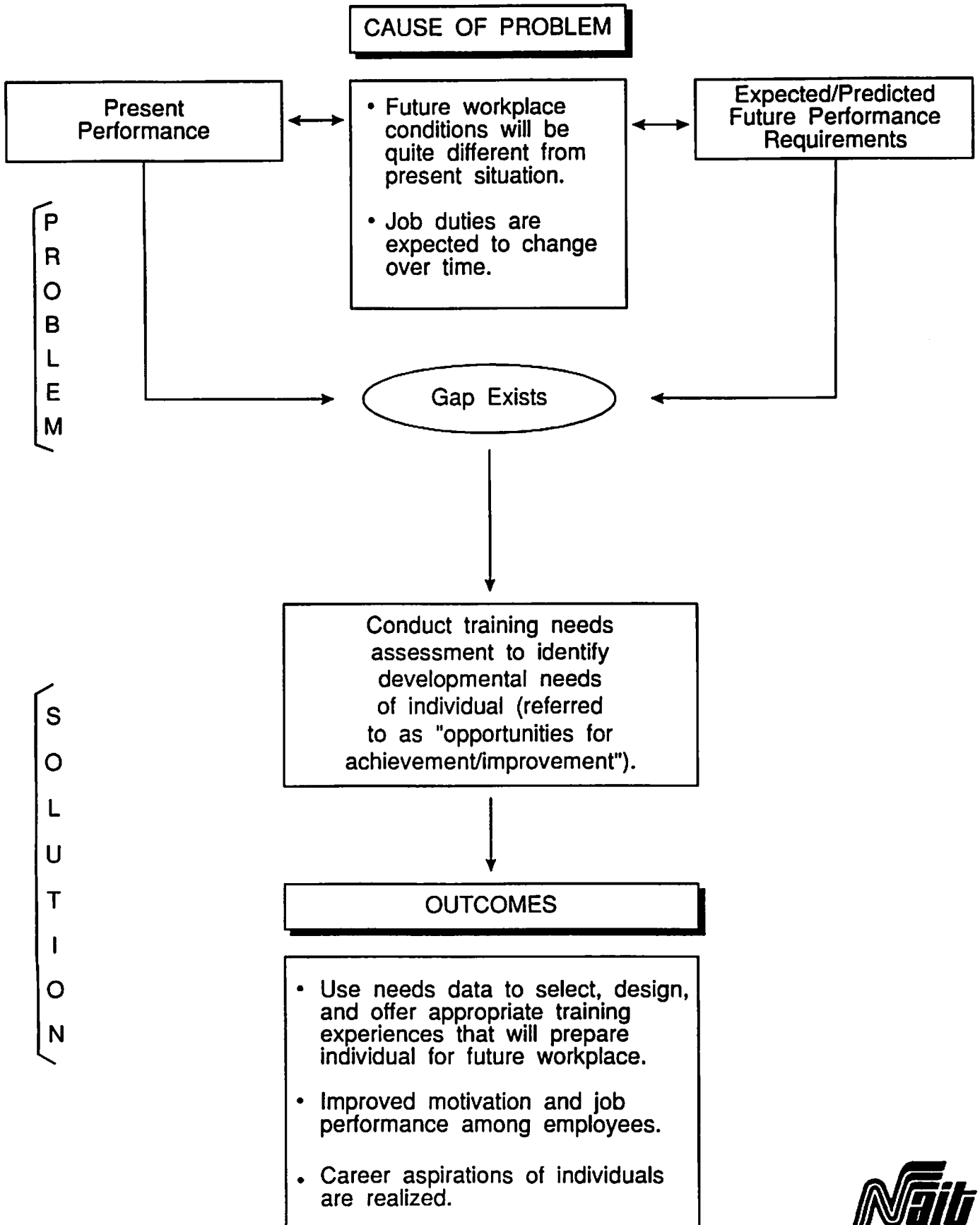
TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT: SOME GENERAL POINTS

1. A training need can be defined as a gap between actual and desired job performance that results from an individual's lack of knowledge, skill, or appropriate attitude. We can look at a need in two different ways:

   (a) as a <u>deficiency</u> in a person's current knowledge, skills or attitudes (see Figure 1)

   or

   (b) as an <u>opportunity</u> for an individual to improve/develop his/her skills and abilities and prepare for future job changes (called "opportunities for achievement") (see Figure 2).

2. Needs assessment is defined as the process of identifying the skill training/developmental needs of an individual/organization.

3. Needs Assessment is the first and probably most important step in the design of any HRD initiative.

4. The reason for this fact is simple. All subsequent steps in preparing instruction or developing training programs are based on the needs assessment outcomes.

5. If the training needs of an individual/organization are misidentified, then much time and effort will be wasted designing training that does not meet individual needs and does not result in improved job performance and satisfaction.

FIGURE 1: NEED DEFINED AS A DEFICIENCY

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  CAUSE OF PROBLEM   │
                        └─────────────────────┘

┌──────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
│  Actual Job  │◄────►│ • Unable to perform │◄────►│  Desired Job │
│ Performance  │      │   job tasks at      │      │ Performance  │
└──────────────┘      │   satisfactory level│      └──────────────┘
                      │   (incompetence).   │
                      │                     │
                      │ • Person may be     │
                      │   untrained for job │
                      │   tasks or may      │
                      │   possess poor      │
                      │   attitude.         │
                      └─────────────────────┘
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Gap Exists

Conduct needs assessment
to identify existing
deficiencies in individual's
knowledge, skills, or
attitudes.

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OUTCOMES

• Use needs data as basis for
  selecting, designing, and
  offering training intended to
  reduce or eliminate deficiencies.

• Improved individual job
  performance and satisfaction.

FIGURE 2: NEED DEFINED AS AN OPPORTUNITY

CAUSE OF PROBLEM

Present Performance

- Future workplace conditions will be quite different from present situation.

- Job duties are expected to change over time.

Expected/Predicted Future Performance Requirements

P R O B L E M

Gap Exists

S O L U T I O N

Conduct training needs assessment to identify developmental needs of individual (referred to as "opportunities for achievement/improvement").

OUTCOMES

- Use needs data to select, design, and offer appropriate training experiences that will prepare individual for future workplace.

- Improved motivation and job performance among employees.

- Career aspirations of individuals are realized.

TYPICAL TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS CONDUCTED BY NAIT

Group Surveyed	P U R P O S E : To Determine/ Identify the following:	Data Collection Method	OUTCOMES
1. Northern Alberta Indian Bands	(a) Job tasks actually performed by administrative and clerical Band staff. (b) Job tasks which individual has no/limited ability to perform. (c) Skills and knowledge individual values as being most important to future career development	● Personal interviews at each band location using detailed questionnaire.	● Human Resource Development Plans prepared for 30 Bands in five geographic areas (N. Alberta). ● Post-secondary institutions are designing workshops, seminars, & courses to meet HR training needs of individual bands and groups of bands.
2. Physically Disabled People and Broadcast Industry Employers	(a) Physically disabled individuals interested in working in Broadcast Industry and willing to take NAIT Radio & TV Arts Program. (b) Special concerns and needs of disabled applicants. (c) Attitudes of broadcasters towards training and hiring disabled people.	● Personal interviews with employers using questionnaire. ● Information sessions with disabled persons combined with completing questionnaire.	● Employers agreed to participate in cooperative training program for disabled applicants and hire more disabled people ● CEIC and NAIT adopted plan to support and train 3-4 disabled persons per year in 2 - year Radio & TV Arts Program
3. Alberta Research Council (ARC) Technolo-gists	(a) Competencies required by an ARC Research Technologist. (b) Gaps between recent NAIT graduate Technologist and experienced ARC Technologist.	● Competency Profile Development Workshops with ARC personnel. ● Gap analysis workshop with NAIT staff.	● Validated Competency Profile for ARC Research Technologist. ● Revised job description for ARC Technologist. ● Post - diploma training program being proposed to accelerate skill development of NAIT graduate to level of competent ARC Technologist.

Group Surveyed	P U R P O S E: To Determine/ Identify the following:	Data Collection Method	OUTCOMES
4. NAIT Program Heads	(a) Competencies required by a NAIT Program Head. (b) Personal development needs of Program Heads.	• Competency Profile Development Workshops with Program Heads. • Mail survey to 75 Program Heads using needs questionnaire.	• Validated Competency Profile for Program Head position in 4 divisions at NAIT. • Skill & Personal development needs of Program Heads identified & prioritized. • Certificate Training Program being developed for existing and aspiring Program Heads.
5. Alberta Forest Industry Employers	(a) Specific skill needs and training requirements of 5 major sectors (logging, sawmill, pressure treating, panel board, & pulp/paper operations).	• On-site, personal interviews using needs questionnaire.	• Based on findings, Action Plan developed by NAIT to respond to skill training needs of employers in ten areas (e.g. Logging, Power Engineering, Hydraulics, PLCs, etc.)
6. Employers of NAIT Graduates	(a) Entry - level competencies required of NAIT graduates for current & future workplace. (b) Competencies that are redundant/irrelevant in current program. (c) Highest priority competencies to be learned by students.	• Competency Profile Validation Workshop with industry reps. • Mail - out survey.	• Needed curriculum changes/revisions identified and approved by industry and administration. • Re-designed program. • Program implementation Plan and Resource Requirements Plan developed and approved.