Literature Review: Needs Assessment In Practices

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Introduction

In the field of human performance technology and instructional design, a problem is rarely defined by the mere absence of a solution; rather, it is defined by the presence of a gap. A "need" is strictly understood as the measurable discrepancy between current results and desired outcomes. Identifying and closing this gap is the primary objective of Front-End Analysis (FEA) and needs assessment, the critical, investigative phases that must occur before any instructional or organizational intervention is developed.

Whether the goal is to address systemic inefficiencies through a Lean Government Model, tackle complex educational challenges such as college attrition, or identify discrete performance gaps in student-athlete time management, jumping straight to a solution is a costly organizational reflex. FEA halts this reflex. Drawing upon foundational frameworks, such as those established by Harless, Mager and Pipe, and Kaufman, a rigorous needs assessment utilizes extant data and task analysis to separate actual performance barriers from perceived symptoms.

Too often, stakeholders default to training as a universal cure for any organizational shortfall. However, a thorough front-end analysis forces a critical pause to ask if an instructional intervention is even warranted, or if the root cause is environmental, motivational, or structural. By clearly defining the true nature of the performance gap, FEA ensures that the subsequent design and development phases of the ADDIE model are anchored in diagnostic reality rather than assumption. Ultimately, needs assessment is not just an administrative step; it is the strategic foundation that ensures resources are aligned with actual, verifiable human performance requirements.

Summaries and Analysis of Articles 1-4

Article 1: Lessons Learned While Completing a Needs Assessment of ITSS, Inc. Career Development Opportunities: A Case Study
Link: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/piq.21207

Summary

The Purpose of the Needs Assessment ITSS, Inc., a large IT solutions provider, experienced low participation (approximately 20% utilization) and mediocre employee satisfaction ratings regarding its internal career development programs (Aull et al., 2016). Organizational stakeholders initially assumed the underutilization was a human performance issue, specifically, that employees lacked the motivation or knowledge to use the available resources. Recognizing that employee skills are a competitive advantage, the organization commissioned a needs assessment to accurately identify the root causes of the problem rather than jumping straight to a training solution.

The Methodology The assessment team utilized a systematic, mixed-methods approach to evaluate the performance gap. The process involved:

- **Stakeholder Alignment:** Meeting with key leaders to clarify the organizational goals and define what a successful career development program should look like.

- **Data Triangulation:** Reviewing internal utilization reports, analyzing past employee engagement surveys, and conducting targeted interviews and surveys with multiple levels of the organization.

- **Iterative Analysis:** The team employed a combination of deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning to continuously sketch and refine the assessment framework as new, behind-the-scenes organizational dynamics were uncovered.

The Findings The front-end analysis proved the initial stakeholder assumptions wrong. The data revealed that the lack of utilization was not due to unmotivated or uninformed employees. Instead, there was a fundamental structural gap in how the career development program was designed and supported within the workplace environment. The findings shifted the focus away from "fixing the employees" and toward modifying the systemic and structural barriers preventing engagement (Aull et al., 2016).

Critical Analysis of the Approach

Strengths

- **Validation Over Assumption:** The greatest strength of the ITSS needs assessment was its refusal to accept management's initial diagnosis. By systematically investigating the performance gap, the team prevented the company from wasting capital on ineffective motivational campaigns or redundant training.

- **Systemic Perspective:** The researchers looked beyond the immediate symptoms (low logins and poor survey scores) and evaluated the broader organizational ecosystem, ensuring the final recommendations aligned with ITSS's strategic goals.

- **Transparency of Process:** A unique strength of this specific case study is its reflective nature. It details the "messy" reality of conducting an assessment, choosing informants, navigating corporate pushback, and adapting data collection methods, which provides a highly practical blueprint for real-world application.

Weaknesses

- **Resource Intensive:** Comprehensive, mixed methods needs assessments are heavy investments. Gathering surveys, conducting interviews, and continuously refining the analytical framework requires significant time and specialized expertise, which can delay rapid intervention.

- **Political Friction:** Uncovering structural flaws in a program that an organization has already heavily invested in can trigger defensive reactions from internal stakeholders who championed the original design.

- **Generalizability:** Because the assessment was highly tailored to the specific corporate culture and internal infrastructure of a single IT firm, the exact survey instruments and findings may not translate directly to differently structured organizations.

Comparing and Contrasting Approaches

When viewing the ITSS case study alongside broader needs assessment methodologies (such as Allison Rossett's Training Needs Assessment, Thomas Gilbert's Behavioral Engineering Model, or Roger Kaufman's Organizational Elements Model), several themes and unique distinctions emerge:

Common Themes Across Methodologies

- **The Gap Analysis Foundation:** Every credible approach centers on quantifying the discrepancy between the "current state" (what is happening) and the "desired state" (the standard required to meet strategic goals).

- **Emphasis on Extant Data:** Whether operating in healthcare, the military, or corporate IT, front-end analyses consistently leverage existing organizational data (IT logs, HR records, utilization reports) as the baseline before initiating new surveys or observations.

- **Mitigating Bias:** All structured approaches strive to separate objective performance barriers from subjective managerial assumptions.

Unique Methodologies and Distinctions

- **Performance vs. Training Assessments:** Traditional training needs assessments operate under the deductive assumption that a knowledge or skill gap exists and focus primarily on what curriculum to develop. The performance approach used at ITSS, and in models like Gilbert's, assumes nothing. It explicitly looks at environmental factors, tools, incentives, and structural design, recognizing that human behavior is often a product of the system.

- **Proactive vs. Reactive Triggers:** The ITSS assessment was highly reactive, it was triggered by an existing crisis of low utilization and poor feedback. In contrast, models like Kaufman's Mega-Level planning are proactive, focusing on continuous environmental scanning to identify future societal or organizational needs before internal systems fail.

- **Rigid Frameworks vs. Agile Reasoning:** Many textbook models present needs assessments as strict, linear checklists. The ITSS approach contrasts this by highlighting the necessity of abductive reasoning, the ability of the performance team to fluidly adjust their data collection and hypotheses as the realities of the organizational culture reveal themselves in real-time.

Article 2: Learner Analysis Framework for Globalized E-Learning: A Case Study
Link: https://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/954/1892

Summary

The Purpose of the Needs Assessment As educational institutions and corporate organizations rapidly expand into globalized e-learning, traditional instructional design models often fail to account for cultural influences on learning. The purpose of this study was to explore strategies for expanding "learner analysis," a core component of front-end analysis, to develop a culturally competent framework. The goal was to figure out how to assess cultural variables before instruction is designed, preventing miscommunication and disengagement among diverse learner populations.

The Methodology The researcher utilized a qualitative, multiple-case-study approach. Instead of surveying learners, the study analyzed the actual needs assessment practices of eight experienced instructional designers from varied educational and business backgrounds (including the US, UK, and India) who develop cross-cultural distance learning. The data collection involved in-depth coding of designer interviews, cross-case exploration, and meta-analysis to identify which cultural variables designers actively look for during their front-end analysis and where their current frameworks fall short.

The Findings The study found that traditional front-end learner analysis is inadequate for cross-cultural instruction. It identified critical factors that are routinely missed during standard assessments, such as language semantics, technical adaptability, cultural taboos, and etiquette. Saxena (2011) proposed a new front-end framework requiring joint deliberation between management, instructional designers, and learners to systematically evaluate these cultural dimensions before any design or development begins.

Critical Analysis of the Approach

Strengths

- **Focus on the Human Element:** Standard needs assessments can become overly focused on structural metrics. A major strength of this approach is its heavy anchor in educational psychology, ensuring that the front-end analysis treats the learner as a complex individual rather than just a data point in a performance gap.

- **Practical Foundation:** By leveraging the real-world experiences of practicing designers rather than relying solely on abstract theory, the proposed framework provides actionable variables that can be directly integrated into existing instructional design workflows.

- **Proactive Problem Solving:** The framework strongly advocates for preventative analysis. By identifying cultural barriers to e-learning at the very beginning, organizations avoid the costly mistake of having to retrofit courses after they fail to resonate with a target audience.

Weaknesses

- **Risk of Stereotyping:** A significant danger in assessing cultural variables during a front-end analysis is the reduction of complex human behaviors into generalized cultural profiles. Applying rigid cultural expectations can inadvertently lead to stereotyping learners.

- **Cognitive and Design Load:** Attempting to accommodate every cultural variable identified in the assessment could overwhelm the instructional designer. Trying to build a single course that adapts to too many diverse needs simultaneously risks violating cognitive load principles, making the instruction overly complex or convoluted.

- **Limited Generalizability:** The study relied on a small sample size of only eight instructional designers. While qualitative depth was achieved, the resulting framework may not universally apply to all organizational structures or highly specialized training environments.

Comparing and Contrasting the Approaches

When contrasting this educational case study (Saxena) with the corporate performance case study, several overlapping themes and distinct methodological differences emerge.

Common Themes

- **Challenging Assumptions:** Both articles highlight front-end analysis as a tool to defeat assumptions. The ITSS study (Aull et al., 2016) proved management wrong about employee motivation, while Saxena's study (2011) proved that standard, culturally neutral design assumptions fail diverse learners.

- **Qualitative Depth:** Both methodologies heavily relied on qualitative, real-world data collection, interviews, focus groups, and case studies, during the front-end phase, demonstrating that surveys and quantitative IT logs alone are rarely enough to uncover the "why" behind a gap.

Unique Methodologies and Distinctions

- **Reactive vs. Proactive Triggers:** The ITSS analysis was strictly reactive. It was triggered by an existing organizational crisis, low program utilization and poor feedback.
    - Saxena's framework is proactive. It is designed to be utilized as a standard step in the ADDIE process to anticipate and prevent instructional failure before a course is even launched.

- **Performance Engineering vs. Learner Analysis:** ITSS utilized a broad Performance Engineering approach. They assessed the entire work environment, looking at tools, managerial support, and structural incentives, concluding that the system, not the instruction, needed fixing.

    - Saxena utilized a targeted Learner Analysis approach. The methodology assumes an instructional intervention is taking place, an e-learning course, and focuses entirely on adapting the content to fit the cognitive and cultural realities of the audience.

- **Locus of Control:** In the ITSS corporate environment, the organization had the power to change the actual work environment to close the gap. In the globalized e-learning environments studied by Saxena, designers have no control over the learners' remote environments; therefore, the front-end analysis must focus entirely on making the instruction itself as adaptable and culturally competent as possible.

Article 3: Design Justice and Critical Reflection in Instructional Design: A Single-Case Study of Team Development
Link: https://edtechbooks.org/jaid_14_2/skutmwzxlm

Summary

The Purpose of the Needs Assessment An instructional design team responsible for employee educational programming within a complex higher education organization discovered a severe gap: despite utilizing standard human-centric and universal design models, their training programs were failing marginalized employee populations. Employees facing intersecting barriers of race, language, age, and socio-economic status could not access or benefit from the instruction. The purpose of this assessment was to transition away from traditional front-end analysis, which often relies on the "perceived needs" dictated by organizational leadership, and instead implement a "Transformative Needs Assessment" (TNA) grounded in the framework of Design Justice to uncover the "actual needs" of the learners (Lowe, 2025).

The Methodology The researcher conducted a qualitative single-case study over six months, following an instructional design team, a program manager and two full-time professionals, as they integrated critical reflection and design justice into their analysis phase. Rather than relying solely on standard surveys, the team utilized innovative data-gathering approaches. This included deep observation of learner behaviors in the learning environment, direct engagement to center marginalized voices, and rigorous internal team reflection to identify and dismantle their own institutional design assumptions. Data was collected via team discussion transcripts, individual reflection forms, and pre/post-intervention surveys.

The Findings The study found that integrating critical reflection and a Transformative Needs Assessment significantly altered the instructional design process. By acknowledging power dynamics and focusing on lived experiences, the ID team successfully shifted from designing “for” learners to designing “with” them. The team developed a much deeper empathy and was able to accurately capture the learners' actual needs, which were subsequently incorporated into iterative design practices to create culturally responsive, equitable, and highly transferable learning experiences (Lowe, 2025).

Critical Analysis of the Approach

Strengths

- **Addresses Power Dynamics:** A major strength of this approach is its willingness to confront the inherent power imbalance in traditional instructional design, where a dominant group often dictates the learning parameters for a marginalized group. It actively prevents the perpetuation of harmful or exclusive design outcomes.

- **Focus on "Actual" vs. "Perceived" Needs:** By integrating direct observation and critical reflection into the front-end analysis, the methodology bypasses the surface-level demographic checkboxes that often masquerade as "learner analysis," forcing designers to address the real-world barriers learners face.

- **Fosters Team Development:** The process acts as both a needs assessment for the project and a professional development exercise for the design team, transforming their mindset and collaborative culture.

Weaknesses

- **Resource Constraints:** The study explicitly notes that discovering deep, systemic actual needs can be frustrating if the organization lacks the funding, resources, or institutional will to actually support those needs once they are uncovered.

- **Time and Emotional Labor:** Conducting a Transformative Needs Assessment is highly qualitative and iterative. It requires significant emotional intelligence, vulnerability, and time from the instructional design team, which may conflict with rapid-development corporate timelines, like agile learning design.

- **Subjectivity:** Because the methodology relies heavily on qualitative observation, critical reflection, and team discourse, it lacks the hard quantitative metrics that some executive stakeholders might demand before approving a budget for a proposed solution.

Comparing and Contrasting the Approaches

Despite operating in entirely different environments, these articles reveal three universal truths about conducting an effective front-end analysis:

- **Rejecting the Initial Diagnosis:** None of the methodologies accepted the surface-level problem presented by leadership. ITSS rejected the idea that employees were unmotivated; the global framework rejected the idea of a "standard" learner; and the design justice team rejected the assumption that universal design is inherently accessible. The core purpose of the assessment in all three cases was to defeat organizational assumptions.

- **Qualitative Rigor Over Quantitative Metrics:** All three studies demonstrate that quantitative data, like low participation rates or completion times, is only useful for

identifying that a gap exists. To uncover the why, all three approaches relied heavily on deep, qualitative human engagement, interviews, observations, and deep listening.

- **Systems-Level Thinking:** None of the approaches blamed the end-user for the performance or learning gap. Instead, they all evaluated the broader ecosystem. They recognized that human behavior is a product of its environment, whether that environment is a corporate infrastructure (ITSS), a cultural background (E-learning), or societal power dynamics (Design Justice).

Unique Methodologies and Contrasts

Where the approaches diverge significantly is in how they position the analyst, what they are trying to fix, and when the assessment takes place.

1. The Locus of Intervention (What is being fixed?)

- **Fixing the Environment (ITSS):** This approach assumes the instruction or the people might be fine, but the workplace is broken. The methodology focuses on auditing external factors like tools, incentives, and management structures.

- **Fixing the Content (Global E-Learning):** This approach assumes the instructional designers cannot change the learner's remote environment. Therefore, the methodology is entirely focused on adapting the instruction itself to fit the learner's cognitive and cultural reality.

- **Fixing the Process (Design Justice):** This approach turns the lens inward. It assumes that the designers themselves and their institutional processes are the primary barriers. The methodology focuses on changing how the design team operates and shares power.

2. The Role of the Analyst

- **The Objective Investigator (ITSS):** The performance team acts as neutral, third-party auditors gathering data to maximize business return on investment.

- **The Cultural Translator (Global E-Learning):** The instructional designer acts as a bridge, utilizing the front-end analysis to translate core learning objectives into culturally competent formats.

- **The Reflective Co-Designer (Design Justice):** The instructional designer is not objective. They are actively vulnerable, critically evaluating their own biases and utilizing the needs assessment to design “with” the learners rather than “for” them.

3. Agile Adaptation vs. Rigid Frameworks

- The **Global E-Learning** methodology aims to establish a somewhat standardized checklist or framework of cultural variables to assess every time.

- Conversely, both the ITSS and Design Justice methodologies highlight the need for abductive reasoning, the ability of the team to abandon their original assessment plan and pivot their data collection methods fluidly as new, complex organizational realities are uncovered in real-time.

Article 4: Results of a Military Family Medicine Scholarly Activity Training Needs Assessment
Link: https://academic.oup.com/milmed/article/188/1-2/e374/6259371

Summary:

The Purpose of the Needs Assessment In the armed forces, scholarly activity and medical research are critical components of operational medical readiness, ensuring physicians can address emergent health threats. However, military family medicine physicians often lack the specialized skills required to conduct and publish research. Before blindly designing a blanket "research skills" training course, developers needed to identify the precise, prioritized instructional needs of these physicians across different branches (Army, Navy, Air Force) and career stages to ensure the resulting training modules would be effective and relevant.

The Methodology Unlike the highly qualitative approaches seen in the previous articles, this study utilized a rigorous, quantitative framework. The researchers deployed an adapted version of the Hennessy-Hicks Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire, a validated psychometric instrument (Deiss et al., 2023). Through an online survey, 124 military physicians were asked to evaluate 20 specific research-related tasks. For each task, respondents had to rate two factors on a numeric scale:

1. How important the task is to their job.
2. How well they currently perform that task. The gap was quantified by calculating a "priority score" (Importance multiplied by the inverse of Performance) to rank the exact deficits.

The Findings The assessment successfully isolated the most critical gaps. It revealed that basic clinical research skills were not the primary barrier. The highest priority training needs were heavily administrative and environmental: obtaining funding/grants, navigating the system to access research resources, and managing time. Based on this data, instructional designers were able to pinpoint seven specific needs that could be effectively resolved through targeted, asynchronous training modules, rather than wasting resources teaching broad research theory.

Critical Analysis of the Approach

Strengths

- **Scalability and Standardization:** By using a validated quantitative instrument like the Hennessy-Hicks questionnaire, the assessment can be easily scaled to hundreds or thousands of personnel across different military branches without the massive time investment required by interviews or direct observation.

- **Objective Prioritization:** The mathematical calculation of a "priority score" removes subjective guesswork. It gives instructional designers and command leadership a clear,

data-driven hierarchy of what needs to be built first, which is vital when development budgets or time are restricted.

Weaknesses

- **Reliance on Self-Reported Data:** The core weakness of this approach is that it relies entirely on the learners accurately assessing their own competence. Psychological phenomena, like the Dunning-Kruger effect, often cause novices to overestimate their skills and experts to underestimate them, potentially skewing the data.

- **Misses Systemic Solutions:** Because the survey asked what training was needed, it presupposed an instructional solution. While it identified "accessing resources" as a gap, a purely quantitative survey cannot fix the environmental barrier of why those resources are hard to access in the first place.

Comparing and Contrasting the Approaches

When reviewing this military medical case study alongside the ITSS Corporate, Global E-Learning, and Design Justice articles, we see how the environment dictates the methodology.

Common Themes Across All Four

- **The "Importance vs. Current State" Gap:** Every single methodology, whether quantitative or qualitative, is anchored by the same core mechanic: defining what is required for success and measuring how far the current reality is from that standard.

- **Targeted Resource Allocation:** All four assessments prevented waste. They stopped stakeholders from building unnecessary, generic training by pinpointing the specific, nuanced barriers preventing success.

Unique Methodologies and Distinctions

1. Quantitative vs. Qualitative Dominance

- The Military Medical approach is heavily Quantitative. It relies on structured, mathematical psychometric scoring to rank deficits across a large, distributed population.

- The Design Justice and Global E-Learning approaches are heavily Qualitative. They reject standardized surveys, arguing that true needs, especially regarding culture, equity, and hidden biases, can only be uncovered through deep observation, interviews, and discourse.
- The ITSS Corporate approach is Mixed-Methods, using data logs to find the "what" and interviews to find the "why."

2. The Assumption of the Solution

- The Military Medical and Global E-Learning models operate as Training Needs Assessments. They assume that an instructional product, a training module or an e-learning course, is the ultimate goal, and they use the front-end analysis to figure out what content should go into it.

- The ITSS Corporate model operates as a Performance Needs Assessment. It assumes nothing. It actively looks for non-instructional solutions, like fixing broken software or changing management structures, before recommending any training at all.

3. The Role of the Learner

- In the Military Medical study, the learner is an informant, they fill out a survey, and the designers take that data away to build a course.

- In the Design Justice study, the learner is a co-designer, the assessment process brings them into the fold to actively shape the instruction alongside the design team.

Discussion: Synthesis of Needs Assessment Approaches

The four articles reviewed demonstrate that while the context of a needs assessment can vary wildly, from corporate IT and global e-learning to higher education and military medicine, the foundational goal remains the same. Synthesizing these studies reveals a shared DNA in how performance gaps are identified, alongside distinct methodological divergences and notable gaps in current practices.

Common Themes Across Contexts

- **The Universal Core of Gap Analysis:** Every credible approach centers on quantifying the discrepancy between the "current state," what is happening, and the "desired state," the standard required to meet strategic goals. Whether quantitative or qualitative, every single methodology is anchored by the same core mechanic: defining what is required for success and measuring how far the current reality is from that standard.

- **Rejecting the Initial Diagnosis:** A primary theme across the literature is the use of front-end analysis as a tool to defeat assumptions. None of the methodologies accepted the surface-level problem presented by leadership. The core purpose of the assessment in the corporate, e-learning, and higher education cases was explicitly to defeat organizational assumptions.
- **Systems-Level Thinking:** None of the approaches blamed the end-user for the performance or learning gap. Instead, they all evaluated the broader ecosystem. They recognized that human behavior is a product of its environment, whether that environment is a corporate infrastructure, a cultural background, or societal power dynamics.

- **Targeted Resource Allocation:** All four assessments prevented waste. They stopped stakeholders from building unnecessary, generic training by pinpointing the specific, nuanced barriers preventing success.

Unique Methodologies and Differences

- **Methodological Dominance:** The Military Medical approach (Deiss et al., 2023) is heavily Quantitative, relying on structured, mathematical psychometric scoring to rank deficits across a large, distributed population. In contrast, the Design Justice and Global E-Learning approaches are heavily Qualitative, rejecting standardized surveys and arguing that true needs can only be uncovered through deep observation, interviews, and discourse. The ITSS Corporate approach utilized a Mixed-Methods model, using data logs to find the "what" and interviews to find the "why".

- **The Locus of Intervention:** The articles illustrate that what needs fixing changes based on the analytical lens. The ITSS approach (Aull et al., 2016) assumes the workplace is broken and focuses on auditing external factors like tools, incentives, and management structures. The Global E-Learning approach (Saxena, 2011) focuses entirely on adapting the instruction itself to fit the learner's cognitive and cultural reality. The Design Justice approach (Lowe, 2025) assumes that the designers themselves and their institutional processes are the primary barriers to fix.

- **The Role of the Learner:** The learner's position in the assessment process varies greatly. In the Military Medical study, the learner acts strictly as an informant, filling out a survey so designers can build a course. In the Design Justice study, the learner is elevated to a co-designer, brought into the fold to actively shape the instruction alongside the design team.

Gaps in the Literature and Practice

- **The Blind Spot of Assumed Solutions:** A significant gap arises when an assessment presupposes an instructional solution. The Military Medical and Global E-Learning models operate strictly as Training Needs Assessments, assuming an instructional product is the ultimate goal. While a survey might identify a gap like "accessing resources," a purely quantitative survey cannot fix the environmental barrier of why those resources are hard to access in the first place.

- **Self-Reporting Vulnerabilities:** Highly quantitative approaches rely entirely on learners accurately assessing their own competence. This leaves the assessment vulnerable to psychological phenomena, like the Dunning-Kruger effect, which often cause novices to overestimate their skills and experts to underestimate them, potentially skewing the data.

- **Resource and Scalability Constraints:** Deep, transformative qualitative assessments require significant emotional intelligence, vulnerability, and time from the instructional design team. These rigorous qualitative methods may conflict with rapid-development

corporate timelines. Furthermore, because they rely heavily on observation and discourse, they lack the hard quantitative metrics that executive stakeholders might demand before approving a budget for a proposed solution.

Conclusion

As established at the outset, a true performance problem is defined by the presence of a gap, not merely the absence of a solution. Yet, the organizational reflex to default to training as a universal cure remains a pervasive threat to effective instructional design. The literature reviewed across corporate, global e-learning, higher education, and military contexts unequivocally demonstrates that jumping straight to a solution without a rigorous front-end analysis is a recipe for wasted resources and unresolved performance barriers.

While the methodologies vary, from the quantitative psychometric scoring used in military medicine to the highly qualitative, critically reflective practices of design justice, the fundamental lesson is the same: assumption is the enemy of design. The core purpose of a needs assessment, regardless of the environment, is to defeat organizational assumptions. By forcing stakeholders to pause and investigate, FEA shifts the blame away from the end-user and demands an evaluation of the broader ecosystem. A masterfully designed e-learning module cannot fix a broken corporate management structure, nor can a standardized training survey dismantle systemic cultural or design inequities.

Conducting a thorough needs assessment is undoubtedly resource-intensive and, at times, politically fraught. It requires time, specialized expertise, and the willingness to uncover uncomfortable truths about how an organization operates. However, as this review highlights, skipping this critical phase only ensures that the subsequent steps of the ADDIE model are anchored in assumption rather than diagnostic reality. Ultimately, front-end analysis is not just an administrative hoop to jump through; it is the strategic foundation of human performance technology. To build interventions that actually work, we must stop guessing what the problem is and take the time to gather the data to know.

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AI DISCLOSURE

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

This paper was developed with assistance from an AI language model (Gemini) The AI supported drafting, organization, APA formatting, and integration of peer-reviewed sources. All content was reviewed, edited, and approved by the student. Prompts used during development are included in the appendix.

APPENDIX A: PROMPTS USED

NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN ACTION

The following brief prompts were used to support specific tasks such as formatting, locating peer-reviewed sources, and refining sections of the paper:

- “Format this section according to APA 7 guidelines.”
- “Identify an additional peer-reviewed article relevant to needs assessment.”
- “Incorporate the selected article into the existing draft.”