Spring 5-2022

Factors Promoting and Inhibiting the Practice of Needs Assessment by Human Performance Practitioners

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FACTORS PROMOTING AND INHIBITING THE PRACTICE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

BY HUMAN PERFORMANCE PRACTITIONERS

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
May 2022

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ABSTRACT

FACTORS PROMOTING AND INHIBITING THE PRACTICE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT BY HUMAN PERFORMANCE PRACTITIONERS

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Needs assessment is an essential activity for human performance improvement practitioners. This qualitative study employed the critical incident technique to determine factors, encountered by practitioners during needs assessment, which promote or inhibit successful needs assessment by exploring practitioners work across 50 incidents. Using extreme cases representing practitioners' most and least successful needs assessment experiences allowed participants to recall rich detail of their process and the context in which they were working. Participants were also asked to reflect on what criteria they used to select most and least successful examples. From that basis, the study explored three research questions and associated themes. This study has practical implications for practitioners, providing support for needs assessment as a relationship-based and highly contextual practice. The study also highlights the structure and benefits of an iterative approach to needs assessment. Finally, the study proposes a five-level continuum on which practitioners judge the relative success of their needs assessment efforts.

DEDICATION

To my wife Karen. Without your patience, partnership, and encouragement throughout this long and challenging effort, I would have accomplished nothing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge each of the following special humans who provided invaluable support during the writing of this dissertation.

- Dr. John Baaki – My patient advisor. You helped me learn to "stick my neck out" and provided encouragement when I failed to do so. Thanks for your passion for our field and your careful guidance of your students.
- Dr. Jill Stefaniak – My committee member. Thank you for your support throughout my academic journey. In particular, thank you for your guidance as I formed the structure and conceptual framework of this dissertation.
- Dr. Petros Katsioloudis – My committee member. Thank you for your guidance and attention in making this work meaningful.
- Dr. Gary DePaul – My second set of eyes for this effort. Thanks for keeping me swimming through an ocean of data and helping me make meaning of what I captured.
- Dick Handshaw and Dana Robinson – My most impactful mentors. You each paved the way for me, personally, to do work that I love and demonstrated how to make an impact in the lives of others.
- Beth Hughes, Chris Prigmore, John Heun, Marc Donelson, Guy Wallace – My treasured colleagues. Conversations with each of you, over the years, have simply helped me think. You're the iron I've been lucky enough to sharpen myself against professionally.
- Parker and Riley – Best kids ever. You make it so easy to be your dad! Thanks for allowing me to drag the laptop along on family trips.
- Johnny and Libby Adams – Best father and step-mom a guy could have. You do so much to take care of our family, I can never repay your generosity. I can only hope to follow after your Godly examples.
- Dr. Shannon Landrum – Lifelong friend and cousin. Thanks for starting this journey with me, finishing first, and encouraging me to follow.
- Thom Gilbert and Geary Rummler – My intellectual touchstones. The insights you shared with the world about the potential of individual humans and the power of them working together have given me a career full of purposeful work.
- Dr. Roger Kaufman – My conceptual starting point. At the Mega level, you were great enough to create the entire field of practice I've attempted to study here. At the Micro level you were kind enough to speak and correspond with me (and countless other students throughout your life) about my studies. You are greatly missed. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Needs assessment is a critical activity in the practice of human performance improvement. The International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) has underscored the importance of needs assessment by including it in the society's process model for human performance technology (HPT) and in the standards by which certified performance technologists (CPTs) are credentialed (Dessinger et al., 2012b, 2012a; Unknown, 2013). Based on this model and the related standards, virtually any initiative which seeks to improve human performance should include some initial assessment of need. Needs assessment is, therefore, an important practice and valuable area of research.

Models of needs assessment have proliferated in the past five decades, and many models agree on certain best practices (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014; Watkins et al., 1998). However, models proposed in the literature are most often based on the long practice of one or a few practitioners and have little experimental validation (Kang, 2012; Kaufman & English, 1979). Practitioners may assume that following well-accepted models and the best practices these models suggest will result in greater success when performing a needs assessment. However, researchers have noted that there are factors which promote or inhibit successful needs assessment regardless of the model or process followed (Altschuld, 2004; Leigh et al., 2000). Thus, it is useful to study needs assessment in practice, through the experiences of a number of practitioners, if the goal is to capture such factors.

The literature largely falls into two categories: proposed models and published cases. Where models are proposed, they are often the product of long practice by one or a small group of practitioners. While publications from both categories may be said to be rooted in an action

research paradigm, there is little experimental verification of the relative efficacy of either models of needs assessment or approaches applied in practice. Thus, there is an opportunity to study different approaches in practice and thereby validate underlying theory. In discussing the results of the data collected in this study, I compared factors identified through the critical incident technique (CIT) with those suggested by the literature. Identified factors not represented in the literature may provide useful directions for further research.

This study also informs the preparation of novice human performance improvement practitioners. Instruction related to needs assessment can benefit from a deeper, more thorough examination of factors which are typically encountered during the practice of needs assessment. A deeper understanding of how practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment projects may also support novice practitioners in calibrating their own judgments during practice.

Finally, as noted above, defining success for needs assessments is somewhat problematic. This study generated data about how practitioners make relative judgments of success in their own practice by having practitioners recount their most and least successful needs assessments. It was useful to consider to what extent these judgments, and the individual criteria on which they are based, align with criteria for success suggested by the relevant literature. The resulting data suggested improved methods for measuring and improving the practice of needs assessment.

Definitions

The term “needs assessment” is often used interchangeably in the literature with related terms such as needs analysis, front-end analysis, training needs analysis, and needs surveys (Watkins et al., 1998). As such, operational definitions of several related terms are needed.

Needs assessment. For the purposes of this study, needs assessment was operationalized as the practice by which gaps between desired future results and current actual results are identified (Kaufman & Guerra-Lopez, 2013).

Needs analysis. In contrast to needs assessment, which seeks to identify gaps, needs analysis can be usefully defined as the process by which root causes for gaps are determined.

Front-end analysis. The process by which detailed requirements for a solution (such as a learning intervention) are defined. Front-end analysis may or may not be predicated on the identification of some need and may or may not include a needs analysis to discover root causes to be addressed.

Gap. The difference – in results, not goals or means, – between a future desired stated and a current actual state.

Need. A need is a result required by an individual or entity in order for some value of success to be achieved or maintained. Needs are distinct from wants or preferences, which may impact the means by which results are achieved without affecting the results themselves.

The present study examined needs assessment in practice using the critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954). CIT is a proven methodology for studying human performance, which allows performers to describe their practice in their own words and from their own perspective (Butterfield et al., 2005; Fivars, 1973). It is this broad perspective, across several practitioners and incidents, which provides value to the field in identifying factors important to the practice of needs assessment. The chapters that follow present a review of relevant literature, a description of the research method applied in this study, results of the CIT interviews, and a discussion of findings and the implications of this research, including limitations and opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes a review of the literature relevant to this study, beginning with a general conceptual framework for needs assessment. I also define categories into which existing research on needs assessment tends to fall and provide examples. Some factors which promote or inhibit successful needs assessment are drawn from the literature, and some challenges in researching these factors are noted. The section concludes with the research questions which guided the present study.

Conceptual Framework for Needs Assessment

Needs assessment has its conceptual basis in the study of general systems theory. Proposed by von Bertalanffy (1968), general systems theory states that there are universal organizing principles which are true for any system. Within this framework, a system can be generally defined as a group of functionally interrelated parts, where the system is more than the sum of those parts and the parts cannot be understood separately from the whole (Mizikaci, 2006; Richey et al., 2011).

A system is said to be closed if it does not react to its environment, or open if capable of interacting with its environment (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Open systems are identified by four characteristics: 1) they are goal oriented, 2) they receive inputs from their environment, 3) they produce outputs to achieve goals, and 4) they receive feedback from their environment in response to their outputs (Mizikaci, 2006). An open system also exhibits the principle of equifinality, meaning that the system can achieve its goals in a number of different ways as a result of interacting with its environment (Richey et al., 2011). A closed system, in contrast, has its final state fully determined by initial conditions.

Several characteristics of open systems contribute to the theoretical basis for needs assessment (*Needs Assessment - Theories*, n.d.). These include interrelatedness (a system is a group of parts), interdependence (parts cannot be understood in isolation), synergy (a system is more than its parts), connectivity (an open system is connected to its environment), and equifinality (a system can achieve its goals in a number of ways).

Applying a systems approach to improving performance, Kaufman (1968) developed the megaplanning model. Megaplanning adds two important principles to the conceptual framework for needs analysis: 1) needs are gaps in results and 2) needs occur at multiple, interrelated levels. A need can be defined as a gap between the current state and a desired future state (Kaufman, 1968). Kaufman felt that many assessment activities focus on generating solutions (means) before determining desired results (ends). As a result, he stressed that needs assessment is concerned only with identifying and prioritizing needs and that it should occur before the determination of cause or the selection of any intervention.

Megaplanning derives its name from the highest level of needs considered by the model. Kaufman defined three organizational levels: mega, macro, and micro, and three associated types of planning: strategic, tactical, and operational (Kaufman, 1983). The mega level is focused on results required by society as a whole. From a systems perspective, society is the environment in which an organizational system functions (Richey et al., 2011; Watkins & Altschuld, 2014). The macro level is focused on results required by the organization (Kaufman, 1983). Again, from a systems view the organization is the system, which interacts with the environment through inputs, outputs, and feedback. The micro level focuses on results required by individuals or groups within the organization. This level relates to the interdependent, connected parts of an organizational system. In the megaplanning model, Kaufman extended the conceptual framework

for needs assessment as a systems approach to human performance. This framework still informs and influences the study and practice of needs assessment (Altschuld & Watkins, 2014).

Studies of Needs Assessment

For the most part, literature relevant to needs assessment falls into two categories: models and case studies of completed needs assessments. These two categories are described below, and a number of examples are provided from each.

Models of Needs Assessment

Several researchers have collected models of needs assessment and attempted to group or categorize them in various ways. Leigh et al. (2000) reviewed fourteen distinct models of needs assessment and differentiated them based on three primary factors. First, models for needs assessment vary in their focus on ends versus means. Ends are results or desired outcomes, while means are solutions or interventions. Second, models for needs assessment can also be differentiated by the levels of need on which they focus, from individual to organizational to societal. Finally, needs assessment models suggest different methods for data collection, ranging from single-method approaches to multi-method data triangulation. For each of these primary factors, Leigh et al. (2000) suggest a preferred position or best practice. Needs assessments should: focus on ends before means; align societal, organizational, and individual results; and triangulate data from multiple sources.

Again reviewing models for needs assessment represented in the literature, Sleezer (1992) adds three additional factors useful in differentiating models: where the model begins, where the model ends, and the results produced by the model. Models of needs assessment may begin either with the assumption that a need has not yet been identified or with the assumption that a need has been identified. An example of a model which assumes a need has been identified

is Rosset's (1982) model for training needs analysis, which assumes a general need for training and focuses on identifying specific requirements. Models of needs assessment end at a number of different points, ranging from the identification of a need to the evaluation of an implemented solution (Sleezer, 1992). As to the results produced by a needs assessment model, models can result in information about needs or solutions, priorities for addressing needs, or both information and priorities.

Kaufman and English (1979) proposed a possible taxonomy of needs assessment models, which has features that somewhat overlap the reviews described above. The proposed taxonomy suggested six levels represented by the Greek letters: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, and Zeta. Kaufman (1968) equated needs assessment with gap analysis. So, each level in this taxonomy represents a more constrained view of gaps. An Alpha model would have no constraints and gaps could be considered at the level of society as a whole. For a Zeta model, there are many givens or constraints already in place, and only gaps in the implementation of a specific process are considered. These taxonomy levels closely parallel the levels of the megaplanning model (Kaufman, 1968).

The reviews described above identify broad differences in models and definitions of needs assessment and demonstrate differences in perspectives for classifying those models. For example, Kaufman's criteria for needs assessment would exclude many of the models upon which Sleezer based her review (Leigh et al., 2000; Sleezer, 1992).

To illustrate the range of needs assessment models represented in the literature, it is useful to briefly compare two models. Witkin (1984), with subsequent contributions by Altschuld (Altschuld & Witkin, 2000), developed a model for needs assessment that included three levels, somewhat modified from Kaufman, and added a three-phase process model. Witkin and

Altschuld's three levels consisted of Level 1 - needs of the direct recipient of outcomes or services (for example students), Level 2 - needs of individuals who provide services, and Level 3 - the needs of the system that supports service providers and service recipients. In this model, Level 1 needs are given priority, with Level 2 and Level 3 needs existing to produce the services required by Level 1. There seems to be some disagreement as to whether societal needs are represented by these levels (Altschuld, 2004; Leigh et al., 2000).

The three phases proposed by Witkin and Altschuld (2000) are somewhat general. They are Phase 1 - Pre-assessment, Phase 2 - Needs Assessment, and Phase 3 - Post-Assessment. Phase 1 is a planning stage, where a stakeholder team is formed and initial areas of concern are identified. Phase 2 is a data-collection and analysis phase where needs are identified and prioritized. Phase 3 is a transition into designing and implementing solutions to address high-priority needs.

The Performance Pyramid model of needs assessment was developed by Wedman (2014) and rather than focus on different levels of need, it is concerned with three components necessary for significant accomplishment: vision, resources, and a support system. Similar to the levels of need in megaplanning and the three-phase model, these components must be in alignment if an organization is to achieve its goals. This again is a systems approach, but the Performance Pyramid is much more concerned with the interrelated components of the system. As such, the support system component of the model is further divided into seven sub-components: knowledge and skills, capability, motivation, tools and processes, feedback, incentives, and organizational culture. All parts of the performance system described by the pyramid are encompassed by change process and continuous monitoring. In the application of Wedman's

model, practitioners gather data about each component of the pyramid to identify and diagnose needs.

Studies of Needs Assessment in Practice

Much of the literature concerning needs assessment is comprised of published cases (Witkin, 1994). Some researchers have collected and reviewed such published cases to inform theory and validate models by studying needs assessment in practice.

Witkin (1994) conducted a review of 125 needs assessments reported in education literature from 1981 through 1994, excluding any studies which were purely for research or to propose a model. In this study, Witkin was primarily concerned with needs assessment as a means for setting goals and priorities for program planning and evaluation in United States schools. Reviewing this body of cases, Witkin identified themes relating to several variables: focus, methods, the role of priorities, and the use of models. Most assessments focused on education by considering small groups of students or teachers, rather than whole systems. Over half of the reported assessments focused on the training needs or perceptions of service providers. Regarding methods, most reported studies used only one method of data-collection. Of these single methods, 45% were written surveys. A little less than half of reviewed studies reported some prioritization of needs. Fewer than five percent of the assessments reviewed by Witkin were based on a particular model. A similarly small number of assessments identified needs by identifying gaps, instead considering only the desired state and not actual current conditions.

Moseley and Heaney (1994) reviewed 106 articles reporting needs assessment efforts across five disciplines (science, education, medicine, business, public services). The goal of this review was to explore how the practice of needs assessment differed across various contexts. The

authors found much confusion regarding the theory and practice of needs assessment. For example, they found few examples of prioritization of needs, though its importance is stressed in the literature.

The authors noted several implications for human performance technology (HPT) practitioners (Moseley & Heaney, 1994). They noted that: a wide variety of models for needs assessment exist, actual practice of needs assessment falls along a continuum from formal to informal depending on the practice area, and while much of the literature regarding needs assessment originates in educational technology – many training programs are designed without reference to a needs assessment.

Additionally, Moseley and Heaney note that these implications are influenced by the nature of work that is typical for the context in which needs assessment is performed. They note, for example, that the educational setting requires extensive, well-planned needs assessments as part of program evaluation – but that in a legal setting needs assessment is less of a part of regular practice. They note further that some highly regulated fields such as healthcare have included needs assessment (of patient needs, for example) in their professional standards.

Needs Assessment and Human Performance Improvement

Needs assessment is a critical activity in the practice of human performance improvement. In the field of human performance technology, needs assessment is often represented as gap analysis, which is central to many HPT process models (Wilmoth et al., 2010). In the HPT model endorsed by the ISPI, Gap Analysis appears at the "beginning" (upper-left corner) of the model in a process area labeled, "Performance Analysis of Need or Opportunity." Also included in this process area are two precedents: Organizational Analysis and Environmental Analysis, and one antecedent: Cause Analysis (Dessinger et al., 2012b).

The ISPI certifies human performance improvement practitioners under the designation of Certified Performance Technologist (CPT) (Snyder et al., 2013). The basis of this certification is a set of ten standards, several of which relate directly to needs assessment (Unknown, 2013). The first two standards are: 1) focus on results or outcomes and 2) take a systemic view. These standards stand in contrast to selecting a solution without an understanding of need. The fifth standard is even more directly pertinent: determine a need or opportunity. To receive the CPT designation, applicants must document, through client attestations, their participation in at least three projects where they demonstrated the ten standards. It is reasonable to expect that to become certified, CPTs must be able to conduct needs assessments according to best practices.

By reviewing published case studies of HPT projects, Kang (2012) sought to validate the 2012 ISPI human performance improvement model through qualitative research. He noted that parts of the model had been validated only through long practice, not research-based validation. To conduct this validation, he conducted a content analysis of 30 published cases of performance improvement projects and coded for activities occurring in each case.

Kang (2012) found that while some aspects of the ISPI model were present in many cases and major phases of the model were present in most cases, some elements of the model were frequently not present in practice. This finding provided insight relevant to the practice of needs assessment, in that actual processes used to identify gaps (assess needs) differed from the model. Kang proposed a refined HPT model which more closely aligns with reported practice. In the proposed refinement, performance and cause analyses are linked while the sources of information for these analyses are broken into distinct elements. This refinement, if implemented, would more closely align the HPT model with Kaufman’s model for needs assessment (Kaufman, 1994).

Recently published individual case studies of needs assessment projects conducted by performance improvement practitioners provide useful insights into the current state of practice among the participants in the present study. In a review of articles published in *Performance Improvement Quarterly* in the years 2001 through 2021, nine examples were found. The case studies identified meet the following criteria: they included the term needs assessment in their title or abstract, the project described focused on identifying a gap – not on a particular solution that was implemented as a result of needs assessment, they described an actual project – not merely describing or proposing a method or model. In reviewing these examples, several patterns are evident.

Performance improvement practitioners conduct needs assessments in many different fields and contexts. The case studies reviewed variously occurred in a homeless community (Stefaniak et al., 2015), a non-profit innovation center (Salido et al., 2019), city government (Bernardez et al., 2012), a state agency (Horsman et al., 2021), a police department (Doane & Cumberland, 2018), a processed food manufacturer (Lagarda-Leyva et al., 2016), an industrial manufacturer (Kalman, 2016), a technology company (Aull et al., 2016), and the virtual community of instructional designers represented by a listserv (Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015). It is important to note that while these performance improvement practitioners have similar perspectives and backgrounds, and all these cases were published in the same journal, their areas of focus and practical experiences were vastly different. This makes the audience for the present study a rich resource for critical incidents across several performance contexts.

Congruent with literature already reviewed above, practitioners in these cases cited a variety of different models for needs assessment, though none strictly followed a single model. Models cited by name include:

- Kaufman's Megaplanning Model
- Witkin and Altschuld’s Three Phase Needs Assessment Model
- Chevalier’s Revised Behavioral Engineering Model
- Kaplan and Norton's Balanced Scorecard
- SWOT Analysis
- Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model
- Marker’s Synchronized Analysis Model

Two of the reviewed cases cite articles which review several models for needs assessment and draw methods from those articles without referencing a particular model or models.

There is also variety in the data collection methods employed in these cases. Practitioners reported using focus group interviews, panel discussions, individual interviews, and surveys to collect data. One case used only a single method for data collection (Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2015), while the others collected data using multiple methods (Aull et al., 2016; Bernardez et al., 2012; Doane & Cumberland, 2018; Horsman et al., 2021; Kalman, 2016; Lagarda-Leyva et al., 2016; Salido et al., 2019; Stefaniak et al., 2015). Regardless of whether one or multiple methods were used for data collection, all the cases reviewed gathered data from multiple participant groups, which represented constituencies with different perspectives and allowed for some triangulation of responses. Table 2.1 summarizes the nine case studies described above.

Table 2.1

Case Studies of Needs Assessment Published in Performance Improvement Quarterly *from 2011-2021*

Authors	Year	Context	Data Collection Methods
Bernardez, Arias Vallarino, Krivatsy, & Kaufman	2012	City government	Not specified
Ritzhaupt & Kumar	2015	Instructional design listserv	Individual interview
Stefaniak, Mi, & Afonso	2015	Homeless community	Survey, individual interviews
Aull, Bartley, Olson, Weisberg, & Winiecki	2016	Technology company	Documentation review, focus groups, individual interviews, survey
Kalman	2016	Industrial manufacturer	Observation, focus groups, individual interviews, document review
Lagarda-Leyva, Castañeda-Rodriguez, & Soto-Fierro	2016	Processed food manufacturer	Document review, survey
Doane & Cumberland	2018	Police department	Focus groups, interviews, historical data review
Salido, Lagarda-Leyva, & Díazt	2019	Non-profit innovation and business accelerator	Survey, interviews, model validation, focus groups (workshops)
Horsman, Sullivan, & Giacumo	2021	State agency delivering benefits to people with serious mental illness	Historical data review, interviews, knowledge assessment

Factors Which Enable Successful Needs Assessment

Since the focus of this study is to identify factors relevant to the successful practice of needs assessment, it useful to consider how success might be defined. In terms of the practice of needs assessment, a definition of success is somewhat problematic. Because of long project durations and the potentially large number of stakeholders and clients involved, simple measures of success are not readily available. Also, a determination of success is difficult because needs

assessments are not typically ends unto themselves. They drive decisions about public policy or about program implementations. It is difficult, therefore, to judge the success of assessments apart from the outcomes of the decisions they are designed to inform.

The literature suggests various measures of success. From Kaufman (1994), a needs assessment could be considered successful if it met certain defining criteria: societal needs are included as the starting point, ends are considered rather than means, and gaps between desired and actual states are identified. Stated differently, needs assessments could be considered successful if they followed accepted best practices. There is some difficulty with simple conformance to a definition or model as a measure of success since, as noted above, the assessment is not typically an end unto itself.

Another suggested measure of success from the literature is the concept of utilization (Witkin, 1984). Utilization is simply a determination of whether the information generated through a process of needs assessment actually proves useful in guiding decision-making. Witkin (1994) performed an informal survey to find out if several large needs assessment projects completed over the course of a decade had produced information that was later used once the assessment was complete. She found varying results and attempted to cite some factors which contributed to utilization or the lack thereof. Some of those factors are included below. Utilization is a valuable measure and is certainly a pre-requisite for success, but it is possible that data concerning needs is used - but incorrectly or incompletely. So, utilization is also insufficient as a sole indicator of success.

Kaufman (1994) has identified needs assessment as a methodology for problem solving. If so defined, a measure of success might be whether a problem is satisfactorily resolved through

the process of needs assessment. However, this too is problematic, in that the range and scope of problems addressed by needs assessments are so broad that there is difficulty in judging success.

It is because of the difficulty in defining successful needs assessments, illustrated above, that this study takes this judgment as one of its research questions. It is useful to examine how practitioners select their most and least successful needs assessment and to identify the criteria they use. However, prior research has identified some strategies that certified performance technologists (CPTs) feel contribute to their successful practice of needs assessment (Adams et al., 2020). These strategies include developing sustained client partnerships, communicating the benefits of needs assessment data, employing technology to increase the speed of assessments, and clear communications with stakeholders. It is important to note that the set of strategies employed by practitioners is necessarily only a subset of factors which could promote successful needs assessment in practice.

Factors Which Inhibit Successful Needs Assessment

Performance improvement practitioners face several challenges in conducting needs assessments. First, needs assessment is carried out in many different contexts and for many different purposes (Moseley & Heaney, 1994). As such, even the term “needs assessment” is often used incorrectly and interchangeably with related terms such as needs analysis, front-end analysis, training needs analysis, and needs surveys (Watkins, Leigh, Platt, & Kaufman, 1998).

Practitioners may also be constrained by their job role and prevented from approaching needs strategically. For example, Carliner et al. (2015) sought to explore the competencies required of a performance consultant, as a job role defined in the literature for training and development professionals, and to examine the role of consulting in the field more broadly. The

authors note that very little empirical evidence exists describing the role of performance consultant in the workforce, though it is well defined in the literature.

Carliner et al. (2015) worked with the Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD) to recruit and select job descriptions from large Canadian businesses. Very few job descriptions specifically referred to performance consulting, so related titles were included. And determined that an appropriate job title for what the literature calls performance consulting is "learning consultant." Actual competencies sought out by employers were more training focused and tactical than those proposed by the model provided by the CSTD. The authors propose that this limits the value of the role as compared to the more strategically aligned position envisioned in the literature.

Even when practitioners can approach needs strategically, they may be constrained by their job roles such that they cannot evaluate the results of the needs assessments they conduct. Hoard and Stefaniak (2016) note that there is little empirical evidence evaluating the actual skills and knowledge of HPT practitioners against standard competencies accepted by the field. The authors surveyed HPT practitioners to determine their perceptions of the HPT standards published by the ISPI and their actual use of those standards in the workplace. Participants were recruited from the general memberships of the ISPI and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT). Status as a practitioner was assigned to participants who indicated one or more years of HPT work experience. Respondents indicated generally positive perceptions of the ISPI standards. The model was generally applied in the workplace as well, but respondents did indicate difficulties arising from siloed organizational structures, which prevented some practitioners from participating in implementation and evaluation activities

related to their projects. Table 2.2 lists a number of factors from the reviewed literature that enable or inhibit practitioners in conducting needs assessment.

Table 2.2

Selected Factors Which Enable and Inhibit Practitioners Conducting Needs Assessment

Enabling Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Sustained client partnerships	Confusion between assessment, analysis and related terms
Communicating the benefits of needs assessment	Job role limitations
Employing technology to speed assessments	Siloed organizational structures
Clear communication of findings	Time constraints

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

Q1. What factors promote the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q2. What factors inhibit the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q3. What criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This section describes the research method used for this study. The critical incident technique (CIT) was used, with data collected from practitioner interviews. This allowed factors critical to the practice of needs assessment to emerge from the accounts of several practitioners. The remainder of the chapter is organized as follows: research design, participants, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative design using the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). The CIT was originally conceived as an observational data collection method for determining behaviors required for a given activity. Flanagan's (1954) foundational article traces the roots of the technique back to the Aviation Psychology Project of the Army Air Forces in World War II and supports the efficacy of the technique by summarizing ten years of studies and dissertations that employ it. Flanagan (1954) describes the procedure for the technique in five steps: determining general aims, developing plans and specifications, collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting of requirements.

Though the technique is first described as being an observational method, other specific data collection methods are discussed by the author, including: interviews, group interviews, surveys, and record sheets (Flanagan, 1954). Butterfield et al. (2005) note that most recent applications of the CIT for research rely on interview data. The technique is flexible in application, but less so regarding two basic principles: (1) reporting of facts is preferred over interpretations and (2) only significant behaviors should be reported (Flanagan, 1954).

Participants

The participants for this study were practitioners who regularly conduct needs assessments as part of their typical work activities. Participants were required to have some experience conducting needs assessments in a workplace setting in order to possess the appropriate context for the data collection activities, but participants were not required to meet any criteria of expertise. For this purpose, participants who have at least five years of experience conducting needs assessment were recruited.

Sampling Procedures

Needs assessment is a common practice across many fields and disciplines (Watkins, Leigh, Platt, & Kaufman, 1998). To focus this study, participants were drawn from practitioners working in the field of human performance improvement. The rationale for using these participants was two-fold: needs assessment is a critical step in accepted models and standards of practice in this field and participants selected from a single area of practice will have somewhat similar education, preparation, and experiences.

A purposeful convenience sampling method was used to select participants who have some (at least five years) practical work experience conducting needs assessments. To facilitate the identification of practitioners working in the field of human performance improvement, participants were recruited from among the membership of the ISPI and Association for Talent Development (ATD). These associations sponsor research committees to facilitate research among their members. The research committee chairs were contacted for approval to distribute an initial recruitment email to members.

Flanagan (Flanagan, 1954) indicated that a sample of 50-100 incidents should be identified for a study using the CIT, though other sample sizes have been recommended by

various researchers (Butterfield et al., 2005). To generate this number of incidents, 25 participants were recruited for interviews. Participants were asked to recount at least two incidents: their most and their least successful needs assessment. This provided 50 incidents for analysis. The goal of this sample size was to achieve saturation or exhaustiveness in the factors identified (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954). Demographics for the actual participant group are summarized in the next chapter.

Instrumentation

An online survey was created to facilitate recruitment and qualification of participants. The survey requested information regarding the participants' current position, work context, years of experience, highest degree attained, professional certifications, and frequency of conducting needs assessments as part of their typical practice. The survey also described the protocol and expectations for the interview sessions and asked whether the respondent would agree to participate. The survey tool included a statement of voluntary participation and informed consent. Respondents who met the selection criteria and who indicated their willingness for further participation were contacted individually to plan follow-up CIT interview sessions.

Additionally, a protocol was developed for an unstructured interview. An unstructured interview allowed participants to include details that they found most relevant to their practice, rather than imposing the researcher's perception of what was relevant (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the CIT, Flanagan (1954) noted that extreme incidents are more easily and completely recalled. Participants were, therefore, asked to recount their most successful needs assessment project and their least successful needs assessment project. To improve the quality of responses, questions were: worded as openly as possible, neutral to allow for participant judgment as to what constitutes "success," and posed one at a time to allow participants to easily order their

thoughts (Butterfield et al., 2005). The protocol was reviewed by a subject matter expert experienced in conducting needs assessment and revised. The protocol was also piloted with a small group of qualified participants to validate the protocol and help prepare the primary researcher.

Data Collection

A recruitment email for the qualification survey was distributed by research committees of both the ISPI and ATD professional organizations to their members. Recruitment information was also posted to online discussions relevant to human performance improvement practitioners. Due to challenges in recruitment, the survey remained open for responses for the duration of data collection. Each month, responses were reviewed to identify qualified respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in interviews. A total of 27 interviews were conducted, but two were excluded from the study because they could not recall the requisite most and least successful cases.

At the scheduled times, I contacted participants via Zoom or by phone. Interviews were scheduled for 30-45 minutes. I recorded audio from the interview, using two independent methods, which supported later transcription. In addition to the audio recording, I maintained a field journal in which I recorded thoughts during each session and reflections following each session. I also maintained a spreadsheet of all participants, necessary contact information, and planned times for each session.

Data Analysis

Following each interview, the audio was transcribed and merged with electronic versions of the corresponding field journal notes and reflections in individual spreadsheets. The identities of participants were masked for analysis through the assignment of a numeric identifier, which

was also used to link the prepared spreadsheets. Data was coded and categorized using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965). For the CIT, Flanagan (Flanagan, 1954) indicated three steps for analysis: 1) determine a frame of reference, 2) form categories that emerge from data, 3) determine the specificity/generality of the categories. These steps are congruent with the constant comparison method, which includes identifying incidents (or unitizing data), categorizing incidents, and delimiting categories. Constant comparison is appropriate for analyzing data that is collected over time and integrating new data into what has already been collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Categories emerged from the analysis, but two "anchor categories" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) were also used to organize data. These anchor categories are derived from the research questions: most successful and least successful.

In the first stage of data analysis, data was reviewed, similar phrases were flagged, and units of information were identified. This review included both listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts. As similar phrases were identified, they were flagged using color-coded highlights in the Dedoose analysis software. Once the initial review was complete, any flagged items were excerpted, and again indexed using the numeric identifier for each participant.

In phase two, collected units of information were organized into meaningful categories. An initial coding was conducted to generate a list of categories, which were recorded in the Dedoose analysis platform. Using this list, each collected unit of data was reviewed and assigned to a single category – by entering that unit of data into the appropriate column. The goal in this sorting was to create categories which are internally homogenous, but externally heterogeneous as compared to other categories.

Phase three involved reviewing the created categories to make meaning from the data. Categories suggested factors which either promoted or inhibited the successful practice of needs assessment. The relative number of units of data under each category indicated which factors occur more frequently. The researcher then synthesized these two types of data to derive implications from the identified factors.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established using four criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

I used three techniques to confirm credibility: persistent observation, triangulation, and member checks. To ensure persistent observation, as each CIT interview was completed, I identified emerging factors and then explored them in greater detail in subsequent interviews.

Both source triangulation and methodological triangulation was cared for. CIT interviews with 25 participants with a variety of performance contexts enabled triangulation among sources. Methodological triangulation was addressed by using multiple data collection methods indexed to each participant.

Two member checks were performed, one during data collection and the other during analysis. Participants were given the opportunity to review and validate the transcript of their CIT interview. Participants were also provided with the categorization of the data collected during their specific interviews for verification.

Transferability

By interviewing a number of participants across performance contexts and about both positive and negative outcomes, I provided a “thick description” of needs assessment in practice.

Such a thick description allows others who wish to transfer findings to additional contexts to make their own judgements about the possibility of transfer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A purposeful sampling sufficient to meet Flanagan's (1954) criteria for CIT inquiry provided wide range of information to include in the thick description.

Dependability and Confirmability

During analysis, several checks were performed to confirm dependability and confirmability of the data (Butterfield et al., 2005). An independent reviewer compared a portion of the recorded audio to the transcribed text to verify the accuracy and completeness of the transcription. Ten percent of the recorded incidents were verified in this manner.

An expert reviewer, experienced with needs assessment, reviewed each transcript and independently coded each transcript. I then met with the reviewer to reconcile their codes with those I generated in the first phase of analysis. This combined set of codes was used to create categories in the second phase of analysis.

The same expert reviewer reviewed the categories generated during analysis for content validity. This same expert reviewer was asked to categorize 25% of the unitized data independently. This check validated the coding of data performed by the primary researcher.

In addition to these checks, I kept a field journal to support confirmability by providing an audit log of the inquiry. In addition to recording a schedule of interview meetings and related notes, the field journal served as my personal diary, as a release for personal tensions, a means for reflection over the course of the study, and a place to speculate on emerging factors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Field journal notes also include a log of methodological decisions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study employed a qualitative design using the critical incident technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954) to identify and explore factors which promote or inhibit success in the practice of conducting needs assessments. The study was guided by the following research questions:

Q1. What factors promote the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q2. What factors inhibit the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q3. What criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment?

This chapter first provides a brief demographic description of the interview participants gleaned from their initial survey responses. From that context, the chapter then presents the qualitative results for each research question. Emergent themes for each question are presented along with support from the critical incidents examined.

Qualifying Survey

A recruitment survey was created to identify practitioners to participate in critical incident interviews. A total of fifty-seven (n=57) responses were submitted. The survey included three questions to qualify participants for inclusion in critical incident interviews:

1) Do you conduct needs assessments in the course of your regular work?
2) Would you be willing to participate in a 30–45-minute interview via web-conference or telephone to share details of your experiences conducting needs assessments? You

would be asked to describe, in detail your most successful and least successful needs assessment experience.

3) Please provide an email address where you can be contacted to schedule an interview.

Twelve respondents either disqualified themselves by answering the first item in the negative or opted-out by either answering the second item in the negative or by choosing not to provide contact information.

I contacted the remaining forty-five (n=45) respondents to schedule interviews. Of those, twenty-seven agreed to schedule time and move forward with the interview. During the interviews, two respondents were unable to identify the two discrete incidents required for the interview and were thus excluded. Thus, I interviewed twenty-five participants, providing a total of fifty critical incidents for study.

Demographic Information

The qualifying survey also provided demographic information for the interview participants. The interview participants, for the most part, have many years of work experience, with only three participants indicating less than 10 years of experience. Four participants indicated they have more than 30 years of work experience. Participant job roles also reflect a high level of experience, with nearly half of participants holding executive (n=4) or management (n=6) positions. Participants were also asked to indicate their highest level of academic achievement. The group is highly educated, with every participant (n=25) holding at least an undergraduate degree. Twelve participants have graduate or professional degrees and five hold doctorates. The tables below summarize these participant group attributes.

Table 4.1

Participant Work Experience

Years of Experience	Count of Participants
1-5	1
5-10	2
10-20	10
20-30	8
> 30	4

Table 4.2

Participant Job Roles

Job Role	Count of Participants
Executive	4
Faculty	2
Manager/Supervisor	6
Practitioner	13

Table 4.3

Participants' Highest Level of Academic Achievement

Level of Academic Achievement	Count of Participants
Doctorate	5
Graduate or Professional Degree	12
Undergraduate Degree	8

When asked to describe the settings in which they currently work, participants provided a broad range of responses, with nine participants indicating that they regularly work in multiple contexts. The most frequent current work setting for participants was the Technology sector (n=8), followed by the Non-profit sector (n=6) and Manufacturing (n=4). As expected of a group with many years of work experience, participants identified an even broader range of settings in

which they have performed needs assessments. Technology (n=11) and Non-profit (n=9) were still the sectors where the most participants had experience. A considerable number of participants also indicated that they have conducted needs assessment in the Finance (n=8) and Healthcare (n=7) sectors. Geographically, all interview participants are based in North America, with one participant based in Canada and all others (n=24) in various parts of the United States. Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 summarize the current settings in which participants work and the work settings in which they have performed needs assessments.

Table 4.4

Participants' Current Work Settings

Work Context	Frequency
Technology	8
Non-profit	6
Manufacturing	4
Healthcare	3
Consulting	3
Finance	2
Higher Education	2
Government	2
Learning and Development	2
Transportation	1
K-12 Education	1
International Development	1
Sales	1
Professional Coaching	1
Business Management	1
Retail	1
Business Services	1

Table 4.5

Work Settings in which Participants have Performed Needs Assessment

Work Context	Frequency
Technology	11
Non-profit	9
Finance	8
Healthcare	7
Manufacturing	5
Government	4
K-12 Education	3
Retail	3
Utilities	2
Higher Education	2
Business Services	2
Insurance	2
Construction	1
Transportation	1
Sales	1
Business Management	1
Learning and Development	1
International Public Sector	1
Pharmaceutical	1
Human Resources	1

The final non-qualifying question in the survey asked respondents how often needs assessment is a part of the projects in which they participate. Interestingly, though all interview participants indicated that they do perform needs assessment in the course of their regular work, and all were able to provide the two requisite cases, seven participants indicated that their projects include needs assessment only infrequently.

Critical Incidents Examined

In keeping with the Critical Incident Technique, I asked each interview participant to identify two especially meaningful cases of needs assessment efforts in which they participated. I sought extreme cases to improve the likelihood that participants would recall richer detail. Thus, each participant was asked to recall their most successful and least successful needs assessment effort. In an attempt to promote clearer recall, I asked participants to select their cases from the last five years, though this was not practical for the work contexts of all participants. I provided no rationale for selecting most or least successful cases and left that determination completely to participants, to inform my third research question. Given this approach, participants provided a total of 50 critical incidents for examination across a wide range of work contexts, audiences, and scopes of effort. To provide an orientation to the various contexts in which each incident occurred and to relate the most successful and least successful cases for each participant, Tables 4.6 and 4.7 summarize each most successful case and Tables 4.8 and 4.9 summarizes each least successful case. Cases are referenced by participant numbers, followed by an “M” for most successful cases and an “L” for least successful cases.

Table 4.6

Context of Most Successful Cases

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P1M	Corporate	Software system rollout	Commercial loan processors	Unknown	Document review, interviews	Months
P2M	Corporate	Increasing speed to proficiency	Cable install technicians	Thousands	Document review, direct observation, interviews	Months
P3M	Non-profit	Supporting parents of children with autism	Parents and caretakers	50-100	Survey, interviews, focus groups	Weeks
P4M	Corporate	Eliminate forklift injuries	Forklift operators, supervisors	Hundreds	Direct observation, survey, interviews	1 Year
P5M	Corporate	Sales enablement	New sales reps, experience sales reps, managers	70	Interviews, scenario creation	1 Week
P6M	Education	Forming leadership team	Senior leaders	12	Survey (Hogan Leadership Profile), interviews, workshop	2 Months
P7M	Non-profit	Volunteer preparation	Volunteer coordinators	115	Document review, interviews, prototyping	1 Year
P8M	Non-profit	Advising amputee support groups	Amputees using support group services	54	Survey	1 Year

4.6 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P9M	Corporate	Manager capability assessment	Senior leaders in IT function	40	Capability assessment instrument, focus group	30-45 days
P10M	Non-governmental organization	Assessing funding eligibility	NGO board	12	Organizational Capacity Assessment instrument, document review, interview	2 months
P11M	Corporate	Automating insurance claims process	Claims adjusters	Unknown	Document review, interview	3 months
P12M	Non-profit	Structuring benefits program within Episcopal churches	Benefit admins	Thousands	Historical data analysis, document review, focus groups	6-9 months
P13M	Corporate	Annual goal setting	Technical service leaders	6	Interviews, monthly check-ins	1 year
P14M	Government	Preparing staff for global deployment	National laboratory global staff	Unknown	Document review, site visits, Interviews	10 weeks
P15M	Corporate	Selection of legal secretary staff	Legal secretaries	Unknown	Document review, interviews, prototype	1 month
P16M	Corporate	Implementing enterprise software	Member services reps	Thousands	Focus groups, document review	1 month
P17M	Corporate	On-boarding sales staff	New sales reps	Unknown	Benchmarking, focus groups, interviews	1 year

4.6 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P18M	Corporate	Enabling sales of new technology	Sales reps	Thousands	Interviews, focus groups, prototyping	6 months
P19M	Corporate	Developing a learning culture	Merchant bankers	200-300	Survey, interviews, focus groups	6 weeks
P20M	Corporate	Call center documentation	Call center reps	2500-3000	Historical data analysis, interviews	1 month
P21M	Corporate	Improving delivery reporting	Delivery managers	700	Interviews, document review, persona validation	2 weeks
P22M	Education	Second grade music instruction	Second grade students	72-88	Skills pretest, video observation	2-3 months
P23M	Corporate	Driving adoption of an electronic logistics booking tool	Cargo carrier representatives	Unknown	Survey, historical data analysis, interviews, video testimonials	3 months
P24M	Corporate	Onboarding employee support teams	Employee service center team members	Unknown	Focus groups, prototyping	4-5 months
P25M	Corporate	Supporting users of a software product	Software users	1000	Survey	3 months

Table 4.7

Project Participants for Most Successful Cases

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P1M	Corporate	Software system rollout	Project manager, business analyst, consultant, instructional designer	Instructional designer	Vice President of Operations
P2M	Corporate	Increasing speed to proficiency	L&D generalist, Learning consultant	Learning consultant	Head of L&D
P3M	Non-profit	Supporting parents of children with autism	Consultant	Consultant	Board of Directors
P4M	Corporate	Eliminate forklift injuries	Consultant	Consultant	Senior Operations Manager
P5M	Corporate	Sales enablement	Instructional designer, consultant	Consultant	Vice President of Sales Enablement
P6M	Education	Forming leadership team	Consultant	Consultant	Company President
P7M	Non-profit	Volunteer preparation	Consultant	Consultant	Church Mission Board
P8M	Non-profit	Advising amputee support groups	Consultants (2), research assistant	Consultant	N/A

4.7 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P9M	Corporate	Manager capability assessment	HR leader, global talent manager	HR leader	N/A
P10M	Non-governmental organization	Assessing funding eligibility	Lead assessor	Lead assessor	USAID Project Director
P11M	Corporate	Automating insurance claims process	Project lead, instructional designer	Project lead	N/A
P12M	Non-profit	Structuring benefits program within Episcopal churches	Consultants (3)	Consultant	N/A
P13M	Corporate	Annual goal setting	Lead consultant, consultant, technical specialist	Lead consultant	Vice President for Desktop Collaboration
P14M	Government	Preparing staff for global deployment	Team lead, instructional Designers (4)	Team lead	National Laboratory Program Director
P15M	Corporate	Selection of legal secretary staff	Instructional designer	Instructional designer	Head of HR
P16M	Corporate	Implementation of enterprise software	Lead assessor, research assistant	Lead assessor	Senior executive

4.7 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P17M	Corporate	Onboarding sales staff	Learning strategist, portfolio lead, program manager, instructional designer, facilitator	Learning strategist	Head of HR
P18M	Corporate	Enabling sales of new technology	Learning consultant, instructional designer, portfolio manager, program manager	Instructional designer	Head of product development
P19M	Corporate	Developing a learning culture	HR business partner, project lead, learning consultant	Project lead	Merchant bank leadership team
P20M	Corporate	Call center documentation	Instructional designer, instructional design manager	Instructional designer	Department head
P21M	Corporate	Improving delivery reporting	Project lead, instructional designers (2), technical resource	Project lead	Group vice president
P22M	Education	Second grade music instruction	Assessor	Assessor	School district leadership

4.7 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P23M	Corporate	Driving adoption of an electronic logistics booking tool	Consultant, IT technical resources (2), product analyst	Consultant	Vice president of operations
P24M	Corporate	Onboarding employee support teams	Instructional designer	Instructional designer	Group vice president
P25M	Corporate	Supporting users of a software product	Project manager, customer marketing specialist, instructional designers (2)	Project manager	N/A

Table 4.8

Context of Least Successful Cases

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P1L	Corporate	Marketing training products to banks	Bank employees	Thousands	Interviews	Months
P2L	Corporate	Ensuring compliance in a financial organization	Frontline managers	Hundreds	Document review, interviews	1 month
P3L	Government	Preparing federal agency staff for various missions	Front-line staff, managers, supervisors (across 11 job-roles)	Hundreds	Document review, focus group, survey	Months
P4L	Corporate	Preparing forklift operators	Forklift operators	Unknown	Interviews	6 months

4.8 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P5L	Corporate	Onboarding information security analysts	Information security analysts	50-60	Survey, focus group	6 weeks
P6L	Corporate	Executive coaching	Company executive	1	Hogan assessment instrument, interview	6 months
P7L	Education	Developing an English literature class for a Chinese national university	English literature students at a Chinese national university	50	Site visits, email interviews	10 days
P8L	Corporate	Training needs assessment	Front-line retail workers	Hundreds	Survey	Months
P9L	Corporate	Management coaching	Manager	1	Interview	90 days
P10L	Non-governmental organization	Developing 5-year strategic plan	Justice sector leadership in Rwanda	10	Interview, focus group, survey	3 months
P11L	Corporate	Managing vendors to produce training in manufacturing setting	Manufacturing plant employees	Hundreds	Interview	Months
P12L	Corporate	401(k) plan onboarding	401(k) plan administrators	3000	Survey	1 year
P13L	Corporate	Building communities of practice	Technicians	3600	Interview	6 months
P14L	Government	Training laboratory staff	National laboratory global staff	Unknown	Interview	3 months

4.8 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P15L	Corporate	Building technology skills for attorneys	Lawyers	Unknown	Historical data analysis, survey, interviews	7 months
P16L	Corporate	Improving customer interactions in insurance call center	Marketing sales representatives	Thousands	Historical data analysis, interviews, survey	3 months
P17L	Corporate	Creating standards across a sales management organization	Sales managers	Hundreds	Interviews	8 months
P18L	Corporate	Increasing sales of a software product	All employees in sales or sales support functions	2000	Interviews	4 weeks
P19L	Corporate	Professional development in a retail support office	All employees in a corporate office of a retail chain	4000-5000	Survey	4 weeks
P20L	Corporate	Implementing a new customer debit card vendor	Auto finance processors	50-75	Interview	5 weeks
P21L	Corporate	Replacing anti-harassment training	All company employees	2500	Interview, document review	Weeks
P22L	Education	Implementation of Google Classroom in elementary classrooms	Fourth and fifth grade students	20-24	Direct observation	2 weeks
P23L	Corporate	Adoption of a business intelligence tool	Sales reps	450	Historical data analysis, interviews	3 weeks

4.8 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Audience Description	Audience Size	Methods	Duration
P24L	Corporate	Training needs for a tech ops group	Entry-level telecommunications install technicians	35,000	Focus groups, interviews	3 months
P25L	Corporate	Promoting adoption and user retention for a software product	All sales, marketing, and customer success staff members	350	Survey	3 months

Table 4.9

Project Participants for Least Successful Cases

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P1L	Corporate	Marketing training products to banks	Consultant, instructional designer, graphic designer	Instructional designer	Banking Vice President
P2L	Corporate	Ensuring compliance in a financial organization	Learning consultant	Learning consultant	Learning and development director
P3L	Government	Preparing federal agency staff for various missions	Lead strategist, assessors (3)	Lead strategist	Federal agency director
P4L	Corporate	Preparing forklift operators	Consultant	Consultant	Company President

4.9 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P5L	Corporate	Onboarding information security analysts	Lead consultant, instructional designer	Lead consultant	Vice President of security operations, directors of security operations (3)
P6L	Corporate	Executive coaching	Consultant	Consultant	Company President
P7L	Education	Developing an English literature class for a Chinese national university	Instructor	Instructor	Head of faculty for English department
P8L	Corporate	Training needs assessment	Consultant	Consultant	N/A
P9L	Corporate	Management coaching	Consultant	Consultant	Senior manager
P10L	Non-governmental organization	Developing 5-year strategic plan	Project director, consultants (3), lawyer	Project director	USAID project oversight
P11L	Corporate	Managing vendors to produce training in manufacturing setting	Project liaison, instructional designer	Project liaison	Head of learning and development
P12L	Corporate	401(k) plan onboarding	Consultant, project manager	Consultant	Product implementation team
P13L	Corporate	Building communities of practice	Learning consultant, change consultant	Learning consultant	Vice president
P14L	Government	Training laboratory staff	Consultants (5)	Consultant	Laboratory training manager

4.9 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P15L	Corporate	Building technology skills for attorneys	Consultant, trainers	Consultant	Managing partner of law firm
P16L	Corporate	Improving customer interactions in insurance call center	Consultant	Consultant	Assistant vice president
P17L	Corporate	Creating standards across a sales management organization	Instructional designer, program manager, developer, learning consultant	Program manager	Head of sales enablement
P18L	Corporate	Increasing sales of a software product	Learning consultant, instructional designer, curriculum portfolio manager	Instructional designer	Director of business unit, program manager
P19L	Corporate	Professional development in a retail support office	Learning and development leader	Learning and development leader	N/A
P20L	Corporate	Implementing a new customer debit card vendor	Instructional designer	Instructional designer	Department head
P21L	Corporate	Replacing anti-harassment training	Instructional designer, human resources managers (2)	Instructional designer	Vice president of Human Resources

4.9 Continued

Case	Org. Type	Context	Project Team	Participant Role	Client Team
P22L	Education	Implementation of Google Classroom in elementary classrooms	Classroom teacher	Classroom teacher	N/A
P23L	Corporate	Adoption of a business intelligence tool	Learning consultant, project sponsor, IT product analyst, onboarding manager		Vice president of sales
P24L	Corporate	Training needs for a tech ops group	Learning consultant, project manager	Learning consultant	Vice president reporting to the CEO
P25L	Corporate	Promoting adoption and user retention for a software product	Consultant, project manager	Consultant	Vice president of customer success

Qualitative Results

The rest of this chapter will be organized by research question. For each question I describe themes that emerged from the critical incident interviews and provide support for each theme from interview data. Table 4.10 summarizes themes associated with each research question. Note that themes are presented in the order of most occurrences to least occurrences. (Reference Appendix D for theme occurrence detail.)

Table 4.10

Summary of Themes for Each Research Question

Research Question	Themes
Q1: What factors promote the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?	Needs assessments are most successful when: 1. Client sponsorship is effective. 2. There is no predisposed solution. 3. Opportunities are allowed for iteration. 4. A thorough process is followed. 5. There is a clear rationale for performing the assessment. 6. Practitioners have deep knowledge of and a personal connection to the audience whose needs are to be assessed.
Q2: What factors inhibit the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?	Needs assessment are least successful when: 1. Client sponsorship is absent. 2. There is a predisposition to a single solution. 3. The audience whose needs are to be assessed resists. 4. A process is not effectively followed. 5. Practitioners lack experience in the pertinent context. 6. Significant change occurs during the process. 7. There is no clear rationale for performing the assessment.
Q3: What criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment?	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether: 1. Solutions were implemented based on assessment findings. 2. Stated goals were met. 3. The assessment effort furthered the client relationship. 4. New knowledge was generated through the assessment. 5. An appropriate process was followed.

Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked: what factors promote the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners? Six key themes emerged in relation research question 1, indicating that needs assessments are most successful when:

1. Client sponsorship is effective.
2. There is no predisposed solution.
3. Opportunities are allowed for iteration.
4. A thorough process is followed.
5. There is a clear rationale for performing the assessment.
6. Practitioners have deep knowledge and a personal connection to the audience whose needs are to be assessed.

Needs assessments are most successful when client sponsorship is effective.

When asked to describe their most successful needs assessments, the theme most frequently expressed was that of effective client sponsorship. This enabling factor occurred in 18 of the 25 most successful cases. (Reference Appendix D for detail regarding the occurrence of themes in different cases.) Effective client sponsorship was primarily discussed in one of two ways: sponsor engagement and practical support.

Sponsor engagement was a key factor facilitating success in conducting needs assessments. For P7, engagement was very intentionally sought as part of the process:

> Part of what we do is also, and throughout the whole project, kept touching base with them, both in terms of review, but also, and this is very, very, important, getting their agreement and buy-in of this along the way and their strong commitment to doing this. So, they were real strongly involved and strongly committed in sponsoring the effort all along the way. (Appendix E, page 127, line 25)

P6 and P23 encouraged engagement by having their sponsors actually complete certain project tasks, including gathering assessment data (Appendix E, page 124, line 43) (Appendix E, page 173, line 5).

Project engagement was viewed as an extension of ongoing professional relationships with sponsoring clients. P21 cited this as a primary reason for success, noting, “Yeah, I think, number one, this group vice president that I speak of that came to me, he and I have worked together for 27 years,” (Appendix E, page 170, line 28). P24 also described a long working relationship with a sponsor, indicating, “he knew me, kind of grown up together in the organization and was able to, in critical moments, come to my aid to make sure there was movement and have conversation” (Appendix E, page 180, line 19). P10 also described the importance of developing sponsor relationships:

> I found that I can say that almost across the board in my 20 years, that's something you cannot underestimate the importance of: drinking tea and talking through like the real intention behind the assessment, and the utility of it, and how it will be shared, or else you're not going to get necessarily an honest response, speaking very generally of course. (Appendix E, page 137, line 35)

Beyond sustained engagement through the course of a needs assessment, sponsors also contribute to success by providing practical support. P1, referencing this important aspect of effective sponsorship, reflected, “You don't always have access to the right people or the right information, or some of the resource, the time, the money. Whatever it might be to do such a thorough analysis,” (Appendix E, page 109, line 28). Time to complete a thorough process was also cited as a critical part of client sponsorship. P18 attributed success to, “I think, just everyone's willingness to do what we recommended and to take the time to do that thorough analysis,” (Appendix E, page 160, line 33). Also, P23 noted, “I think I had the support of the VP of operations that we didn't have to move at breakneck speed and we could collect a little more

data up front to see exactly what the knowledge gap and the skill gap were for our reps," (Appendix E, page 176, line 35).

Underscoring the importance of effective sponsorship, two participants noted that the level of sponsorship they received in their most successful example was uncommon or unique. P9 reflected, "… because this was unique and because the leadership team was so engaged and because they did their homework. Sometimes you have to push and prod, but in this case, there was good engagement at the leadership level and good conversation," (Appendix E, page 134, line 22). P3 was even more enthusiastic in noting:

> Yeah, I think the clients, I have to say, it was like a dream. I mean, so open, so honest, really wanting to improve, really speaking out. "How can we do things better?" They didn't pay for this, of course. It wasn't a monetary thing, but it was really like, "Whatever you can give us, we really want it," and they were actionable about it and serious about their action. They backed it up, their words with their actions. (Appendix E, page 115, line 39)

For participants, effective sponsorship of their needs assessment efforts was the key factor enabling their success. Through their sustained engagement and practical support, sponsors make a key difference.

Needs assessments are most successful when there is no predisposed solution.

Frequently, practitioners engage in needs assessments where clients are already predisposed to a single solution. In this study, this was cited as a challenging factor in 23 cases. In such cases, needs assessment can become either simply confirmative for sponsors of the work or a frustrating and purposeless process step for practitioners. In contrast, needs assessments are most successful when practitioners are allowed to generate data without the constraint of a single predisposed solution. 16 participants identified the absence of a predisposed solution as an enabling factor in their most successful cases, and it was mentioned as a positive factor in two least successful cases.

P2 cited the lack of predisposed solution as a key enabling factor of their most successful case and noted that the condition was not the norm, stating, "I consider it the most successful because... I was brought in explicitly with a blank slate and I was hired for my specific expertise in this area and asked to do this work rather than much of the time you're either backing into needs assessment or validating it," (Appendix E, page 109, line 5). P18 described a similar situation where, "They had a need, but they didn't come to us with a solution already. They came to us to say, 'Okay, this is what we need. How do we go about getting there?'" (Appendix E, page 160, line 32). P4 went so far as to compliment his client on allowing such freedom, noting, "So I thought, okay, this guy is pretty smart to ask the question and I would, you know, want to do a study of that would start with defining what his problem was and take it through to whatever interventions we were going to impose," (Appendix E, page 116, line 5).

In the absence of a single predisposed solution, needs assessments can consider multiple levels of the organization and produce sets of multiple solutions more likely to fully address needs. P20's most successful case exemplified this with findings that indicated, "We needed some training and were pretty clear on the expectation, but then we needed some other solutions. We needed something within the system itself that would give employees a required field," and, "We also needed some type of something added to the quality analysis process just to find out, were they doing this?" (Appendix E, page 165, line 4). P9's most successful case, which was an effort to assess management capability among a group of senior IT leaders, also resulted in multiple solution recommendations, through a consideration, "both at an individual level and at an organizational level," (Appendix E, page 133, line 9). As P9 described the needs uncovered and their associated solutions as follows:

> At the individual level, there were specific actions back to an individual if there was particular areas that an individual needed to focus on from a coaching and development

> perspective. Or in some cases, we moved the manager out of the people leader role because they really weren't performing. Then there were also some organizational outcomes in that we deployed certain training and development topics, one on career development and having career conversations. (Appendix E, page 133, line 9)

In looking across multiple levels, overcoming a predisposition to a single solution can also enable practitioners to approach needs assessment systemically. As P3 noted:

> You know that I come from an HPT perspective, right? So, I'm thinking about the whole system and not just, "Okay, parents need more efficacy. Let's design a training." I think there were only two recommendations that were training-related. The vast majority of the recommendations were really around better leveraging existing resources, non-instructional interventions. (Appendix E, page 114, line 31)

Sometimes practitioners must find success through skillfully overcoming clients' predisposition to a single solution. Exemplary of this is the most successful case described by P9, where the participant was supervising a colleague through a needs assessment effort. P9 describes a turning point as follows:

> She (P9's junior colleague) put together just this beautiful recommendation about how we can support and what we feel that is the best way to go. It was a bit of a risk because leaders, senior director of VPs some pretty high up leaders within merchant org, we're saying, "We want you to build us eight learnings." And she was going into a meeting with them to say, "Actually, no, here's what we're going to do instead." And there's a bit of a risk and she kind of blew them away with her presentation because it was backed by data. It was backed by not hunch, but actually talking to employees, talking to leaders to understand things. And at the end of the day, all very much aligned and said, "Yes, you're right. That's exactly what we need. Tell us what to do. Lead us through this work and help us to get this out." (Appendix E, page 162, line 13)

Practitioners may even need to overcome their own predisposition to a single solution, or that of their project team. P25 noted in introducing their most successful case, "So we wanted to have some hard data in a basis around moving forward, even though we probably had in our minds what we could have done," (Appendix E, page 181, line 1).

Needs assessments are most successful when opportunities are allowed for iteration.

Ten participants identified the opportunity to iterate, in their data gathering and in implemented solutions, as a key factor enabling success in their needs assessment efforts. Iteration was also mentioned by six participants in their least successful cases. P7 noted that, "Over the years, part of what I've seen is if you think of your needs assessment as an important first step, but then you think of it as a more cyclical kind of thing, so you build that into your project, so then what you're doing is you're making adjustments as you're going along," (Appendix E, page 127, line 14).

One way participants approached iteration was to allow time for the audience and stakeholders to personally reflect on assessment topics prior to data collection. P6 and P9 indicated that their processes benefited from having their audience members complete self-assessments some period of time prior meeting with assessors. (Appendix E, page 122, line 17) (Appendix E, page 133, line 7) This allowed time for reflection and allowed the audience members to iterate and refine their responses before actual data collection took place.

Participants also incorporated iteration in their needs assessment efforts through the creation of prototypes. For example, P24 when working to team onboarding in a corporate environment, "…created a little prototype for them to react to," (Appendix E, page 178, line 6). Four participants: P7, P15, P18, and P24 included prototyping as a data collection method in the descriptions of their most successful cases.

Going further, P17 described a fully iterative, agile-like approach in their most successful case:

> So, at first we're like, here's the idea. And then we said, this is the wire frame. And then we said, these are the details, and this is how it's going to be deployed. And each step of that, we were getting feedback in surveys. If we had to get their feedback, we would do one-on-one interviews or group interviews. We tested a couple of pieces of it. So, we

> brought in about six salespeople and we test ran a couple of pieces. We brought in our facilitators to test run pieces. And that's how we ultimately got to the outcome. And for us, the first release is just, release early, release often. So, once we released it, then we tested the assumptions that we started with, and we double checked it against the needs that we are trying to tackle and to say, "Hey, listen, did we actually achieve it? Did we hit the right needs?" (Appendix E, page 155, line 7)

For P17, this iterative approach was somewhat transformative. P17 concludes, “We knew we weren't going to get all the needs right up at the front. And so, we actually built that assessment modeling actually is more of a cyclical process than it is more of a waterfall,” (Appendix E, page 155, line 7).

Needs assessments are most successful when a thorough process is followed.

Participants were more successful in performing needs assessments when they followed a thorough process. Among the most successful cases, 11 participants mentioned process as an enabling factor. For example, P19 describes, “…being able to go in with more of a consultative approach and utilize some of the processes and tools to dig a little bit deeper and consult,” (Appendix E, page 164, line 37). Four participants, P4, P7, P14, and P19 cited their own process expertise as an enabling factor in their successful cases (Appendix E, page 116, line 7)(Appendix E, page 127, line 19)(Appendix E, page 146, line 3)(Appendix E, page 164, line 36). Process was mentioned as a positive aspect in two of the least successful cases as well.

One interesting indication of the relative thoroughness of the processes followed by interview participants emerged when considering the research methods used in each case. The most successful cases were far more likely to triangulate data using multiple sources, while the least successful cases were more likely to use only a single data collection method. The 25 most successful cases used a total of 63 data collection methods, an average of 2.52 methods per case and only two of the most successful cases relied on only one data collection method. The 25 least

successful cases employed a total of 40 data collection methods, an average of 1.6 methods per case and 14 of the least successful cases relied on only one data collection method.

Participants noted benefits of following a through process, such as prompting practitioners to consider needs at multiple levels. As P6 noted, "…things happening at the individual level, happen and the departmental or divisional level, which also happen at the organizational level," (Appendix E, page 199, line 21). Another benefit of following a thorough process resulted from practitioners adapting their process to the context in which they were working. P24 reflected, "I think my methodology is different. My analysis methodology is much simpler and not as elaborate. I think it worked better for me to use focus groups, better use of time to use the focus groups as opposed to the interviewing, although I got a great deal of depth," (Appendix E, page 180, line 20).

Needs assessments are most successful when there is a clear rationale for performing the assessment.

Participants most successful cases were more likely than their least successful cases to include a clear rationale for performing the assessment. Nine most successful cases specifically cited a clear rationale as a factor enabling success and five least successful cases specifically cited a lack of a clear rationale as a factor inhibiting success. Assessment rationale was expressed in terms of client or stakeholder goals, as in the following examples. From P5, "They really had a clearly defined outcome. They had a defined outcome around a successful discovery call around five key facets," (Appendix E, page 119, line 3). Simlarly with P23, the sponsor indicated, "I want to see a 5% increase in digital booking," (Appendix E, page 172, line 4). Additionally, P24 noted, "We had four behavior outcomes that needed to happen. We knew what the business needs were clearly," (Appendix E, page 168, line 13). Finally, P21 described, "It was creating a

customer satisfaction issue, which in turn ultimately could affect the revenue," (Appendix E, page 168, line 8).

For two participants, a clear rationale translated into sustained sponsor engagement. This was the case with P4 who formed a long partnership with a manager concerned with reducing serious injury and death associated with forklift operation. When asked what made this partnership successful, P4 indicated, "It was the question (asked by the manager), can you help me solve a problem so it stays solved?" (Appendix E, page 116, line 4). Similar sponsor engagement was evident in P18's most successful case. Again describing reasons for success, P18 reflects, "I think, one of the first things is that the leaders in our business units identified an opportunity. They had a need, but they didn't come to us with a solution already. They came to us to say, "Okay, this is what we need. How do we go about getting there?" (Appendix E, page 160, line 32). P18's case also underscores how a clear rationale enables an approach without a presidposed single solution.

P20's most successful case involved an effort to help a group of thousands of call center representatives to better document their calls. Their description of the case underscores the benefit of a clear rationale:

> I was very grateful that they came with a clear problem that to me needs analysis, if it starts, and there's already a clear problem. I mean, that's half the battle right there. If you have to spend time sorting out what the actual problem is that definitely can take a lot more time and more meetings and more analysis, but they came with this problem already, great. (Appendix E, page 165, line 2)

Needs assessments are most successful when practitioners have deep knowledge of and a personal connection to the audience whose needs are to be assessed.

The final theme that emerged under research question 1 concerned the relationship between the practitioner and the audience whose needs are to be assessed. Six participants, in

their most successful cases, benefited from deep connections with their audiences. One example of this is P8, who became an assessor after having been a subject of an earlier needs assessment (Appendix E, page 130, line 13).

Participants described a deep connection to the audience as an enabling factor in that it generally informed their work. As P15 notes, “I think that the reason why I was so successful in my needs assessment, even though I had one negative one, is that because I understand the industry,” (Appendix E, page 151, line 31).

More specifically, participants described their connection to the audience as a way to better gain access and communicate with the audience. P7 observed, “I was able to talk to them in their language in terms of exactly what we were trying to do, (Appendix E, page 126, line 6). Similarly, P3 described, “There were things that they didn't have to explain to me because I knew what they were talking about,” (Appendix E, page 114, line 36). Also, regarding access P3 noted, “This was another group or organization that I had already had a bit of entree with because I was a part of this group,” (Appendix E, page 112, line 7). In all of these cases, close personal association with the audience whose needs were to be assessed helped practitioners navigate the particular contexts in which they sought to understand needs.

Research Question 2

Research question 2 was: what factors inhibit the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners? Seven themes emerged in interview responses to this question. Together these themes show that needs assessments are least successful when:

1. Client sponsorship is absent.
2. There is a predisposition to a single solution.

3. The audience whose needs are to be assessed resists.
4. A process is not effectively followed.
5. Practitioners lack experience in the pertinent context.
6. Significant change occurs during the process.
7. There is no clear rationale for performing the assessment.

Needs assessments are least successful when client sponsorship is absent.

When asked what inhibiting factors challenged their needs assessment efforts, 20 participants cited a lack of appropriate client sponsorship, with eight participants noting this factor in both their most and least successful cases. A lack of client sponsorship provided challenges in three key areas: engagement, clarity of direction, and practical support.

P21 described the key inhibiting factor of their least successful case like this:

> I think a lot of personalities involved and not getting the stakeholder who I consider to be the VP of HR. He was very hands off. It was like, "Whatever they want to do, whatever they want to do." Whereas he and I should have probably worked more closely together to make sure that didn't happen. (Appendix F, page 236, line 19)

This lack of sponsor engagement later made it difficult for P21 to advocate strongly for both a thorough approach to assessment and for reasonable solutions to address identified needs. Similarly, P13 reflected, “I felt like the sponsorship, while it was there, it probably wasn't set up properly,” (Appendix F, page 216, line 18). Practitioners engaged in needs assessment are often, of necessity, not in positions where they directly inact changes within their audiences. Ongoing client sponsorship is needed to legitimize the assessment within the relevant work context.

An absence of client sponsorship can also inhibit the work of needs assessment through a lack of clarity. This occurs when there is no clear decision maker on the client team. P2 noted, “Conflict between a lot of business and compliance about who gets to set their priorities,”

(Appendix F, page 189, line 21). Similarly, P20 noted, “Getting buy-in from other departments is I think, where we failed,” (Appendix E, page 166, line 9). P23, who was also challenged by a lack of sponsorhip which lead to a lack of clarity, observed that, “It took a long time because people couldn't make up their minds basically,” (Appendix E, page 179, line 11).

Practitioners are also challenged by a lack of appropriate client sponsorship because of their dependence on clients to provide practical support in terms of access to requisite time, people, and resources. In regard to their least successful case, P3 reflected that, “It was one of those things where we checked a box saying that we did something, but it was maybe not given the right amount of time, resources, data input, or asking the right questions.” P3 went on to conclude, “But I feel like that's kind of a common example of things that happen in the field,” (Appendix F, page 189, line 1). P12 described their least succesful case in similar terms, noting, “For this project, some of the challenges were just time. We were a small team and so trying to get a lot of work done in a small amount of time and having just the resources to do the analysis that we needed to do,” (Appendix F, page 142, line 17) .

A changing group of client sponsors was the root of P24’s challenges in their least successful case. P24 describes the issue as follows:

> My management support was sketchy because they were just changing so much… And it was not a good recipe for success. I needed somebody who could help me, and I could go to for escalation purposes, it would be a consistent message, a consistent front, unified message, to these people and who could exert some influence. I was at the wrong level to be doing this. (Appendix F, page 243, line 21)

Thus, for P24, the absence of client sponsorship was an initial condition going into the assessment that was not cared for. P24 felt a remedy would have been seeking sponsorship at a higher level within the organization.

Needs assessments are least successful when there is a predisposition to a single solution.

Fifteen participants described their least successful cases as situations in which the client or sponsor began the project with a particular intervention, solution, or action in mind. P20 noted that, “The requester already came with all the questions answered, at least for them. ‘Hey, there's this problem. We need training. It needs to be an e-learning. Do it.’,” (Appendix F, page 233, line 2). Similarly P18 described a case where, “They had in mind already what needed to be released. They just wanted us to comply with what they had,” (Appendix F, page 230, line 37). P9 noted that the predisposition to a single solution is unfortunately typical in their experience, observing that, “It's usually very much where the manager's already decided what they want, but it may not really be solving the problem from a needs perspective. They think they know the outcome before really assessing what's the things that are the underlying issue,” (Appendix F, page 205, line 1). Even when there is some initial success in data gathering and uncovering needs, a predisposed solution can inhibit success. P16 described an effort to improve customer interations in an insurance call center where this occurred:

> I think we went in the right direction of what we wanted to do, but I say least successful because when brought back the results of the analysis to the clients and went over everything, they really were just very dead set on it's only training and training needs to be updated. And so unfortunately the rest of the recommendations were not taken into consideration. (Appendix F, page 223, line 4)

Two participants observed that past success in needs assessment and the implementation of related solutions can establish a problematic pattern where past solutions are expected to succeed without an understanding of current needs. P4 observed, “Our clients… you know over time have seen such a reduction in the risk that one of the challenges is we've been so successful,” (Appendix E, page 117, line 17). P17 describes a similar case where, “So then

everybody had an idea of what we should be doing. They're like, ‘Do it quickly, do it quickly.’ We haven't been given the latitude to really do the work. So, we're coming up with solutions before we even actually identified the need,” (Appendix E, page 156, line 20).

In the examples cited below, expectation of the efficacy of a single solution solidified into a fixed perception of a given department or role within participants’ organizations. P16 observed that, “They see learning and development as a training department and that's kind of it. And so when they call our department, it's already in their mind of "You're the training people, do what you do," and they don't open it up to (needs assessment),” (Appendix E, page 153, line 19). P3 experienced similar expectations. Here, P3 referring to a “schoolhouse” as a development function within government agencies, reflected that, “I just think that the fact that that organization, that the director's view of the schoolhouse was that we say yes and we just do what we're being asked to do, instead of letting some of the data speak for itself,” (Appendix F, page 193, line 56).

Needs assessments are least successful when the audience whose needs are to be assessed resists.

Audience resistance was noted as a factor inhibiting success in 11 least successful cases and in nine most successful cases. Participants described several challenges arising from a resistance by the audience to participate in either data gathering or the implementation of interventions following on from needs assessments. Audience resistance had two underlying causes: either the audience did not see sufficient value in their participation, or they perceived that some harm could come to them as a result of their participation.

Where audience members did not perceive sufficient value in the needs assessment, they were less likely to participate. P19 described a challenge, “Just getting people to complete the

survey… Part of the approach is setting up a table and trying to get people to come to that table and take time out of their day. There had to have been better, more convenient, easier ways to collect that data because there's a lot of pulling teeth to get people to come over," (Appendix F, page 233, line 22). Audience members may devalue partipation because managers and supervisors do not prioritize their work to provide time for participation. P3 describes such a condition:

> So, for all the people actually doing this work and their managers and supervisors, they are busting their butts already to meet mission needs. Right? They're not wanting to participate, because they know this is going to eventually lead to either changes in the way that they're currently doing their work, addition of things that they need to do on top of what they're doing, or additional hoops, in their mind, hoops that they were going to have to jump through. (Appendix F, page 193, line 50)

P16 faced a similar challenge, due to, "Capacity concerns because the focus groups that I put together and just attendance to those started out a little bit rocky. You know, because pulling the MSRs off the phones to come in and meet for an hour was maybe a little tricky when it was busy," (Appendix F, page 153, line 14)

Participants also faced challenges when audience members held a perception that participation in the needs assessment could harm them. P10, in working across a number of U.S. federal agencies faced audience members unsure of what information they could safely share. P10 recalled that, "People were very apprehensive to meet even though we went through the formal channels. So yeah, we didn't necessarily have willing participants in some cases," (Appendix F, page 210, line 38). P15 encountered similar resistance when the audience percieved that their job roles could change based on the needs assessment outcomes. He noted that, "The secretaries did not want to come to the assessment. They were offended by it because they had been in this line of work for 15 plus years," (Appendix F, page 150, line 26). Finally, in

the quote below, P3 summed up a challenge with audience resistence based on percieved harm, which actually occurred in their most successful case:

> In this particular instance, a lot of the barriers that affect the organization also affected this needs assessment process. So, when you have parents who are parents of kiddos with special needs and those needs range in severity, then they are stressed out, they are short on time, they are short on funds, and they are already tapped out emotionally. (Appendix E, page 114, line 33)

Needs assessments are least successful when a process is not effectively followed.

As noted earlier, following a thorough process can enable success in the practice of needs assessment. The inverse is also true, 14 participants indicated the lack of an effective process as a key inhibiting factor in their least successful cases. Also, five participants noted that the lack of a thorough process was a challenge, even in their most successful cases. P20 described moving forward with a complex and costly solution, which was not successful and only after this, “Finally, we asked all the questions that we should have asked in the first place and found out that the issue itself was one overheard conversation from a manager and an employee.” P20 went on to lament not following a thorough process, indicating, “...that was my complete failure of not doing needs analysis at all. And just finding out after the fact, ‘Oh no. Yeah, you completely did that wrong.’,” (Appendix F, page 233, line 3). Similarly P17 described a least successful case where, “We chose to not do the pre-work and not do the assessment and not build it thoughtfully. We built it quickly. So, we had to build it twice.” (Appendix F, page 227, line 16).

For two other participants, failing to follow a thorough process made decision-making later in their projects difficult. P1 reflected, “The largest challenge was that a couple of times new information arose that significantly changed the design or the course of the project work. And I think this was directly related to not being able to do as thorough of an analysis as I would've liked to do,” (Appendix F, page 187, line 19). P19, in describing a survey instrument

that was the single data collection method for their least successful case recalled that, “The data that I got from it, probably because of the way, wasn't extremely useful.” As a result, P19 indicated that their needs assessment faltered because, “I just didn't learn nearly as much as I wanted to, and wasn't able to actually go and build or do anything differently as a result,” (Appendix F, page 231, line 4).

Needs assessments are least successful when practitioners lack experience in the pertinent context.

Nine participants faced challenges in their least successful cases due to a lack of work experience relevant to the contexts in which their needs assessments were performed and this factor was also cited as a challenge in five most successful cases. P20 noted being new to an organization and new to the process when trying to conduct a first needs assessment. P20 shared that, “I was brand new to that company. I was new to the world of instructional design, at least traditional instructional design. And I didn't have any needs analysis experience,” (Appendix F, page 233, line 1). P24 also noted that in their least successful case they were, “A relatively new person to the organization at that time,” (Appendix F, page 243, line 21). Being new to a work context made it difficult, in these two cases, for the practitioners to navigate the organization and obtain needed access and resources.

Being new to a work context can also mean a lack of background knowledge. P21 describes such a case where an assessment concerning compliance training needs was scoped incorrectly and somewhat derailed because P21 was new to the context and lacked key background knowledge:

> I think the other challenge was me not knowing specifically what the compliance requirements were, I think I thought it was simpler than it was going to be, you know what I mean? I thought it was like, well, we have a content provider we pay a lot of money to over here. So, they should have the right content and here it is, serve it up.

> Okay, great. Let's move on. It wasn't something we were going to develop in house. None of that. (Appendix F, page 236, line 18)

In an extreme example, P7 was attempting to conduct a needs assessment in preparation for teaching an English literature class to a group of Chinese national students in a university located in mainland China. P7 was a very experienced and knowledgeable practitioner but was somewhat unfamiliar with the culture of Chinese higher education. P7 described part of the effort to obtain basic information about the participants in his class in the weeks before it began as follows:

> One of the next things that I tried to do was find out about more of the parameters of the course, how many students, what was their background, how experienced were they, and so forth. I also tried to find out information about the ... well, not only the student population, but also how many students would be taking the class, what the expectations were in terms of material, testing, and so forth. And all of that, and even in very simple things that I would think of being simple, such as, "Can you give me a roster of the students?" and so forth. (Appendix F, page 201, line 7)

P7 was able to capture almost no information about the students prior to the beginning of class. Being completely new to the context and without effective sponsorship to bridge the gap, P7 was not able to engage in any meaningful process.

Needs assessments are least successful when significant change occurs during the process.

Seven participants noted that an inhibiting factor in their least successful cases was simply a change that occurred within their organization while the assessment was ongoing. P4 cited significant changes as challenges in both their least and most successful efforts. Sometimes the change was structural, such as the merger that P24 faced which, in their words, “Just completely stopped everything,” (Appendix F, page 243, line 17). P4 reflected on their general

experience with human performance improvement projects that they, “Die an early death usually related to… changes in management,” (Appendix F, page 195, line 15).

Another type of change that impacted least successful cases was shifting priorities. These eroded commitment to assessment efforts and prevented follow-through to solutions. P25 reflected on this saying, “I think in the years past, January, February was the time that we could do stuff like this and be proactive. But I suspect that in a cyclical nature of what we had seen that the other demands and customer facing things just took priority,” (Appendix F, page 247, line 20). P13 experienced changing priorities through their least successful case, noting, “The needs assessment, that bar just kept moving all the time. And I think I could have done probably a better job at holding my boundaries instead of being as flexible as I was,” (Appendix F, page 217, line 25).

Needs assessments are least successful when there is no clear rationale for performing the assessment.

As reported under research question 1, needs assessments are most successful when there is a clear rationale for the assessment. Here, again, the inverse is true and when asked about inhibiting factors, five participants numbered the lack of a clear rationale among them. P5 cited this as the key factor in their least successful case. “I think the biggest challenge was defining a specific goal. How do they define… successful?” (Appendix F, page 197, line 16). Similarly, P23 reflects, “So I think that was where that went wrong, was just the lack of a clear lack of a clear target, and then a lack of understanding,” (Appendix F, page 239, line 3). Finally, in contrasting least and most successful examples, P13 notes that, “The success measure wasn't as clearly called out as it was in the first (most successful) one,” (Appendix F, page 216, line 18).

Research Question 3

Research question 3 asked: what criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment? The five themes which emerged under this question indicated that practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether:

1. Solutions were implemented based on assessment findings.
2. Stated goals were met.
3. The assessment effort furthered the client relationship.
4. New knowledge was generated through the assessment.
5. An appropriate process was followed.

Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether solutions were implemented based on assessment findings.

Participants were not provided with any criteria on which to select their most and least successful needs assessment efforts, other than those two labels. It was therefore up to them to develop internal criteria as to why each case stood out specifically as their most or least successful needs assessment experience. When participants were asked why they choose a particular example as either most or least successful, the criterion cited most was whether solutions were implemented based on the findings of the needs assessment. Whether solutions were implemented was cited as a selection criterion in a total of 26 cases, 13 most successful cases and 13 least successful cases. P25, whose cases both concerned supporting users of a software product, summarized both perspectives on this criterion well:

> Sometimes you do needs analysis and needs assessment in various ways, and then you get some really nice data, but nothing comes of it. You don't do anything with it. Other

> demands come in and take away the bandwidth or you just get distracted or becomes less of a priority. So yeah, I think for me and what I've experienced in my time in my current employer, that was probably the biggest reason that we were able to have a team behind it and momentum, and we're able to do something with results and based on what we found that was a good solution and a good outcome. (Appendix E, page 183, line 27)

For the participants cited below, who identified implemented solutions as their criterion for selecting their most successful case, the impact of their work was significant and immediately apparent. P14 explained that, “My recommendations were presented, and this is why I call it successful, they actually based their work and the accompanying budgets, I would say, let's see, for the next four years,” (Appendix E, page 146, line 4). P1 noted that, “In this case, the analysis work led us to a design. I think that really fit the client's needs and the client's business goals,” (Appendix E, page 109, line 28). Similarly, P3 shared an experience where recommendations were well-received by sponsors and, “The organization immediately started taking action,” (Appendix E, page 111, line 2).

P23 reflected how the implementation of solutions completed the work started with the needs assessment. P23 explained, “With this one, I felt like we assessed what the need was, we tried to solve for some of the problems that we knew were going to be issues, we launched the training, we incentivized the behavior, we tracked that to see kind of what the difference was.” P23 summarized the selection of this case as their most successful with, “It's one that I could see moving all the way to the end,” (Appendix E, page 176, line 31).

P16 picked their most successful case, which involved an enterprise-wide implementation of new software to thousands of employees, because the solutions implemented were different from a solution to which the client was predisposed. P16 described their selection as follows:

> I'd probably say the reason I like this one is because the client did already come to us initially with a solution in mind. You know, came in thinking that training would solve the issue, just like the previous example. But when I came back with the analysis and

> kind of went through the six boxes and explained all the different pieces and how they sit in and that training really wasn't an issue, the other were, than they kind of like "Oh wow, that's very interesting. I really like all of this." And they were very open to it and changing their mind that maybe they didn't have the right solution. (Appendix E, page 153, line 17)

In contrast, the participants cited below based the selection of their least successful case on a lack of implemented solutions. P13 who indicated that, “I was the most disappointed that this particular one didn't fly,” meaning that solutions were not implemented based on the assessment findings (Appendix F, page 216, line 20). P13 went on to note that, “There's been times when I've done some needs assessments and it starts out as one thing and it grows in scope, and you learn to flex or you learn to manage expectations. And this particular one, there was none of that,” (Appendix F, page 216, line 20). P4 had a similar experience, in which they were unable to, “deliver pretty precise recommendations from these formal assessments,” thus being unable to move forward with appropriate interventions (Appendix F, page 194, line 2).

Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether stated goals were met.

Participants also used whether stated project goals were met as a criterion for selecting their most and least successful cases. This criterion was used by nine participants to choose their most successful cases and by two participants to select their least successful cases.

For two participants, success meant achieving very specific business metrics. In the case of P23, who was seeking to increase adoption of a software-based workflow, it was an increase from 6.2% of the organization to 6.6% in the first iteration of the interventions they recommended (Appendix E, page 173, line 9). For P18 it was an increase in sales (Appendix E, page 159, line 21).

For the participants cited below, the goals were more behavioral. For example, in a primary educational context, P22 noted that, “I chose this one as my most successful example because I feel that I was really able to tailor my instruction based on where they were at,” (Appendix E, page 172, line 18). P6 described a goal around changing the behaviors within a group of leaders and seeing that goal met at an individual level. P6 recalled being approached by two leaders following the implementation of the program P6 recommended, where the leaders shared, “I really appreciate the fact that I didn't think this was going to work, but I can see the other person's side, and I need to step up to my own issues," (Appendix E, page 124, line 36).

Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether the assessment effort furthered the client relationship.

Ten practitioners selected their most successful needs assessment cases based on whether those specific projects grew, continued, or deepened their relationship with their clients. P19 describes such a case as a “shift within the business” that resulted from their most successful needs assessment (Appendix E, page 164, line 32). P19 worked with a client group who was bought into an old model where they approached the project team as a solution provider, “We’re going to come to you and ask you to build a thing,” (Appendix E, page 164, line 32). Success for P19’s team came from building the relationship with that team through the process of the needs assessment. P19 reflected that:

> It was a small corner of what we do. It just stands out to me because it made such a mental shift for some of those partners. And really helped my team buy into the process a little bit more too. Because we were relatively new at the consultation model and they saw, "Wow, this works." And it's a lot more fun this way than just building the thing. (Appendix E, page 164, line 32)

P21 shared a similar experience where their team learned that their needs assessment approach, “Does work and we can control our own destiny and projects like this prove that, that we can

control our destiny and educate the organization as we go along." P21 also described the relationship impact, noting that, "The next time that we have to work with this group vice president, it's going to be even easier because he's going to understand the process," (Appendix E, page 169, line 26).

Another way that furthering the client relationship emerged was in cases where the needs assessment effort served as a platform for continued and ongoing work. P14 reflected that, "The real success of this is that they are actually in the process now of doing another needs assessment, one, to take a look back at the baseline that they've had from the first one and in a sense refresh their plan moving forward," (Appendix E, page 146, line 5). Similarly, P18 described a positive and growing client relationship that resulted from their most successful case:

> I'm most proud of how well received it was. People still will, I'll meet them, I'll be working on a project team with someone and they'll say, "Hey, weren't you the one on the containers project?" It gives me a sense of pride to know that, "Hey, that was a very well received project, and now these people are looking forward to working with me on other projects." (Appendix E, page 160, line 30)

Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether new knowledge was generated through the assessment.

Practitioners perceive their needs assessment efforts to be successful when those efforts generate new and useful knowledge. Six participants considered this factor when selecting their most successful cases and one participant, P19, considered this factor in the selection of their least successful case. P15 described in detail his most successful needs assessment, which included what P15 described as some detective work. The need was skill in legal document preparation in a group of attorneys and legal secretaries. A lack of skill was apparent on evaluations but masked in the workflow because of a helpful word processing group within the legal practice. P15 describes the detective work like this:

> You can see the history of a document. And so when I looked at the history, I kept seeing it got emailed to word processing, emailed, emailed, emailed, everything was emailed towards to word processing. And the before picture and the after picture were very different files. The before file had all sorts of formatting errors, but once it got sent to the word processing team and came back, it was a beautiful document. (Appendix E, page 149, line 14)

Through in-depth document review and interviews at multiple levels, P15 revealed the root cause to a workflow issue that had been previously hidden. This uncovering of new knowledge was P15's criterion for selecting their most successful case. P6 used a similar criterion, noting that in their most successful project, "Everybody had an ah-hah moment somewhere in the process," (Appendix E, page 124, line 40). Similarly, P3 valued the collaborative process of generating new knowledge, stating that for their clients, "The whole process, for them, was like idea generation, even before the results even came. So that was really good," (Appendix E, page 114, line 30).

In contrast to the examples above, P19 based the selection of their least successful case on the failure to generate any new knowledge. P19 was invested in the process but indicated their selection of a least successful case was, "Because of the effort I put in and the outcome that I got as a result, it didn't match. It was the right intent. It was the right work to be doing. It was the wrong way to approach that work," (Appendix F, page 233, line 24).

Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether an appropriate process was followed.

As presented in the earlier results for research questions 1 and 2, the relative success of needs assessment projects is influenced by whether a thorough process is followed. Consistent with those results, practitioners made judgements about their own most and least successful examples based on whether they had applied an appropriate process. Six participants cited this

criterion in their selection of their most successful cases and one participant, P20, considered this criterion in the selection of their least successful case.

Participants who selected their most successful needs assessment case based on the criterion of following an appropriate process expressed their personal satisfaction with the work. P3 noted, “I felt really solid in my approach. I felt really solid in the theory behind my approach, was able to really easily gain entree and get buy-in from lots of levels within this organization, (Appendix E, page 111, line 1). P3 went on to reflect, “I felt like I was in the flow the entire time,” (Appendix E, page 114, line 35). P2 described their most successful case selection in similar terms:

> Because it reflected sort of my ideal process, kind of unencumbered by either the client not understanding or believing in a true analysis process or other constraints, whether they be time or budget or whatever. People's time was really kind of free rein to do what we thought best for the audience and the business. (Appendix E, page 111, line 38)

Likewise, P1 made their most successful selection, “I think because the needs analysis was very thorough. I was able to do all of the types of analysis that I felt was necessary to have a successful outcome and to reach the results that the client was looking for, (Appendix E, page 109, line 28).

In contrast, P20 based the selection of their least successful case on their frustration in failing to apply an appropriate process:

> This one, that was... It was a complete lack of needs analysis on my part. That was a learning experience. It was just like, "Okay. Yeah. That's what happens when you don't do needs analysis like you're supposed to. You end up making... You work really hard on something and it's not really anything." (Appendix F, page 235, line 17)

Summary

This study employed the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) to identify factors that promote or inhibit success in the practice of conducting needs assessments. The study further

sought to identify the criteria used by practitioners to evaluate their own relative success in the critical incidents they described.

This chapter provided a brief demographic description of the interview participants based on a qualifying survey. The chapter then presented the qualitative results for each of three guiding research questions. Emergent themes for each question were presented along with support from the critical incidents examined.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore factors which promote or inhibit success in the practice of conducting needs assessments. The study addressed the following research questions:

Q1. What factors promote the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q2. What factors inhibit the successful practice of needs assessment by human performance improvement practitioners?

Q3. What criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment?

This study employed a qualitative design using the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) to identify and explore factors which promote or inhibit success in the practice of conducting needs assessments. To provide a sufficient number of incidents from which to establish themes, 25 participants were identified to provide two critical incidents each for a total of 50 critical incidents. Specifically, each participant recalled their most successful and least successful needs assessment efforts. Participants were selected who could provide the requisite incidents based on performing needs assessment in the course of their normal work and who had specific experience in the field of human performance improvement. Otherwise, the contexts in which participants performed were left open, to provide a broad set of incidents across various work contexts.

Chapter 4 provided a brief demographic description of the interview participants drawn from their responses to an initial qualifying survey. From that context, the chapter then presented

the qualitative results for each research question. For each question I provided support for five to seven themes that emerged from the critical incident interviews. Table 4.10 summarized the themes associated with each research question.

In this chapter, I discuss the results presented in the previous chapter and highlight significant themes that emerged across the three research questions. From this context, I then note implications from these results for the preparation of novice practitioners. This chapter concludes with limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Results

The focus of this study was practitioner-based research. By looking at practitioners, across a broad set of work contexts and by examining actual needs assessment efforts, I sought to move beyond the clean theoretical models of needs assessment taught to novice practitioners into the real, messy, politically and financially constrained practice of needs assessment as it actually happens in the field. My goal in this was to identify key differentiators between the most and least successful needs assessment efforts, which might more fully inform and prepare (especially novice) practitioners for their own work.

What this study found was that, in practice, needs assessment is difficult, complex, and often undervalued. Needs assessment is purpose driven in that some solution or remedy for a problem is the ultimate goal, though needs assessment is a method for optimizing that solution or remedy. Further, success in the practice of needs assessment is often relationship dependent and requires iteration.

Additionally, the participants I interviewed were introspective about the incidents they selected to represent their most and least successful needs assessment efforts. The criteria they generated for judging their own relative success fell on a spectrum from simply being able to

complete a process, through growing and deepening their relationships with their clients and sponsors. Each of these findings is explored in more detail below.

Needs Assessment is Relationship Based

When asked to identify factors that either enabled or inhibited their success in performing needs assessments, effective client sponsorship, or the lack thereof, was the most cited factor in both categories (Reference the occurrence of themes in Appendix D). Practitioners conducting needs assessment by the nature of their roles typically lack the authority to garner the necessary resources to complete needs assessments or to implement solutions recommended through those assessments. As a result, needs assessment requires partnership with clients and sponsors who can champion the effort within the organization and provide practical support in terms of access to people, time, and resources. In this study, P21, P24, and P23 credited their success in large part to longstanding relationships with clients who helped them navigate challenges and provide resources in the course of their work. Practitioners who have yet to form productive client relationships may suffer from lack of sponsorship and their work may falter due to lack of access or resources needed to continue.

Not only do needs assessment efforts benefit from established client relationships, the act of performing needs assessments can be a platform for growing and deepening relationships with clients and sponsors. A theme that emerged when participants were asked why they selected their most successful incidents was that participants judged their efforts successful when the client relationship was furthered. Furthering the relationship was evidenced by either a change in perceptions on the part of the client or by the creation of opportunities for additional work.

In addition to client and sponsor relationships, the successful practice of needs assessment is facilitated by a relationship between the practitioner and the audience whose needs

are to be assessed. P3, P7, P8, and P15 all credit their current or previous membership in an audience group as a key enabling factor in their successful cases. These relationships allowed them to empathize with, gain access to, and more effectively communicate with the individuals whose needs they were seeking to understand.

The practice of needs assessment is relationship dependent. Existing and productive client relationships can enable needs assessment by providing effective sponsorship. New or previously challenging client relationships can be grown and deepened through the conduct of needs assessments. Also, the successful practice of needs assessment can be facilitated through deep associations with the audience groups whose needs are being assessed.

The Practice of Needs Assessment is Highly Contextual

Part of the design of this study was to seek participants with a similar orientation to needs assessment, namely the practice of human performance improvement, but who had practiced needs assessment in various work contexts. Looking across contexts provided a broad topography of needs assessment in practice from which themes could emerge. Several themes did emerge which indicate that needs assessment is a contextual practice.

First, as noted above is the enabling effect of a deep knowledge of and a personal connection to the audience. Such an affiliation provides in-depth contextual knowledge which aides practitioners in navigating challenges in practice. This insider knowledge informs the collection of data and allows the practitioner to seek information using the language of the group. It also informs the presentation of recommendations in that the practitioner can better advocate for the group.

Additionally, participants called out contextual expertise as an inhibiting factor in both their least and most successful cases. When practitioners are new to a culture, an organization, or

a job role, they are challenged in seeking information and advocating for recommendations. Without contextual expertise practitioners lack the knowledge of how to obtain resources and how to communicate with assessment participants across roles or organizations.

A final related theme is the enabling factor of following a thorough process. One way in which process supports successful needs assessment is practitioners' ability to adapt their process appropriately to their work context. P24 described developing a more efficient process for a given context, noting, "I think my methodology is different. My analysis methodology is much simpler and not as elaborate. I think it worked better for me to use focus groups, better use of time to use the focus groups as opposed to the interviewing, although I got a great deal of depth," (Appendix E, page 180, line 20). This was an example of a practioner finding what works in a given context.

In an earlier study, my collegues and I proposed that practitioners approaching a needs assessment systemically should attempt to actively manage the bounds of the system to limit the scope of assessment, thereby setting many inhibiting factors outside the zone of performance for the assessment (Adams et al., 2020). This assertion aligns with the highly contextual nature of the incidents examined in the present study. Only with a full understanding of context, including the inputs, outputs, goals, internal functions, and external environment characteristic of open systems can practitioners resonably work to adventageously "bind" the system.

The practice of needs assessment is highly contextual in that: a) practitioners benefit from personal association with the audience, b) deep contextual knowledge allows practitioners to navigate challenges and obtain resources, and c) success in practice is enabled by adapting process to context. A full understanding of context allows practitioners to manage the bounds of the system in which they practice.

Needs Assessment is Iterative

The opportunity for iteration in data gathering and in the implementation of recommended interventions was noted by 16 participants as a key enabling factor in their most successful needs assessment cases. Iteration expressed itself in three aspects. First, participants P7, P15, P18, and P24 listed prototyping as a data collection method for their successful needs assessment cases. Second, P17 described a fully iterative, agile-like approach in their most successful case. Finally, in five of the least successful cases explored (P13, P14, P16, P18, P23), participants described how, following the initial unsuccessful effort they were able to re-engage, create new iterations of the implemented solutions, and eventually find some level of success.

It is interesting to note that an agile-like approach is in contrast to Kaufman's (1968) caution of "ends before means" in needs assessment. This is because, in an agile approach, needs are identified and solutions are constructed simultaneously. However, iterative and agile-like approaches may align well with von Bertalanffy's conceptualization of an open system (1968). Von Bertalanffy, as a biologist, developed the theory of open systems because of his interest in how every living system exchanges matter with the environment (von Bertalanffy, 1972). This exchange provides the basis for a feedback loop as the system interacts with its environment, similar to how, in an agile approach, constant review and feedback are used to develop solutions. I propose that iteration is another means by which practitioners can manage the bounds of the system in which they work.

Consider Mizikaci's (2006) formation of the four characteristics of open systems. Open systems are: 1) goal oriented, 2) receive inputs from the environment, 3) produce outputs to achieve goals, and 4) receive feedback from the environment in response to the outputs. These characteristics align very well with the actual practice of needs assessment described by the cases

in this study: 1) As noted above, needs assessment is goal oriented in that there is typically a solution or remedy to a problem needed which initiates the assessment. 2) Any needs discovered are inputs from the environment or context in which the practitioner works. 3) Prototyping provides a mechanism for producing outputs. And finally, 4) iteration allows a means for receiving feedback in context, which sends the practitioner back to the beginning of the loop. In the earlier study mentioned above, we included a fifth characteristic, which is that open systems are bounded (Adams et al., 2020). Applying iterative, agile-like approaches which enact a feedback loop with the system enables practitioners to dynamically manage the bounds of the system. For example, P17 described an effort to improve the on-boarding of new sales representatives. P17's assessment team used interim deliverables such as wireframes and partial prototypes to gather input from audience members and other stakeholders. Each round of input identified additional needs data, while also allowing the assessment team to constrain later rounds of assessment. For instance, features eliminated from wireframes no longer needed to be considered in later iterations, thus setting limits to the scope of the ongoing assessment.

Practitioners' perceptions of success in the practice of needs assessment fall along a natural continuum.

When I asked participants to recall their most and least successful needs assessment efforts, I did not provide any definition for success. Participants were therefore forced to generate their own definition for success and criteria for selecting a most and least successful incident to discuss. Research question 3 was, what criteria do human performance improvement practitioners use to judge relative success in needs assessment? To answer this question I asked, for each case, why the participant chose that case in particular; why it stood out from all of their other experiences. Five criteria for making relative judgements of success emerged from the 50

cases considered. The most frequently cited criterion was whether the needs assessment produced recommendations that were acted upon in the form of implemented solutions. This is consistent with the finding mentioned earlier, needs assessment is purpose driven. While this criterion was most cited, the other four were all mentioned as primary selection factors for either most or least successful cases.

It is interesting to note that taken together, the five criteria can be placed along a natural continuum based on the relative impact of the needs assessment described. The continuum I propose lays out as follows:

Level 1: Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether an appropriate process was followed. At this lowest level, the measure of success is simply behavioral. As noted, however, some practitioners described it as unusual or unique to be able to complete as P2 described it, an “ideal process” without undue constraints (Appendix E, page 111, line 38). Also, practitioners who were unable to complete a thorough process described their efforts in terms of frustration (P20, Appendix F, page 235, line 17). So, being able to complete a thorough and appropriate process is a first criteria for success. This is consistent with the notion in the literature from Kaufman (1994), that needs assessments could be considered more successful if the effort met certain defined best practices.

Level 2: Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether new knowledge was generated through the assessment. Moving up a level on the continuum, here practitioners were able to see some benefits to the first outcome of their efforts. In this case, new knowledge that was previously unknown is generated through their data collection efforts. However, as with the first level, this level of success may only be percieved by practitioners themselves.

Level 3: Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether solutions were implemented based on assessment findings. At this intermediate level, practitioners first see the impact of their work beyond the needs assessment effort itself. Here clients, sponsors, audiences, and other parts of organizations can see tangible outcomes from the needs assessment in the form of implemented solutions. This level parallels the concept of utilization (Witkin, 1984). As Witkin (1984b) defines it, utilization is simply a determination of whether the information generated through a process of needs assessment actually proves useful in guiding decision-making.

Level 4: Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether stated goals were met. Moving into the higher levels of the continuum, here practitioners can percieve real impact to the organizations for whom they performed needs assessments. Note that this is far more difficult to measure than the previous levels. It requires up-front goal setting, data gathering, and analysis equivalent to a Level 3 learning evaluation in the Kirkpatrick-Katzel model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Thalheimer, 2018). Defining success at this level would also be consistent with the concept of needs assessment as a method of problem-solving, this from Kaufman (1994). In that stated goals were met, it could also be said that the problem at hand was solved.

Level 5: Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether the assessment effort furthered the client relationship. At this ultimate level, the impact of the practitioners work moves beyond the project or problem at hand. Participants who cited this criteria identified multiple benefits for themselves, their clients, and their organizations. These included improved working relationships with clients, making the conduct of future

assessment work easier. Participants also described opportunities for new and on-going assessment work that emerged from successful assessment efforts.

It is important to note the continuum of levels proposed here from the success criteria that emerged in this study does not reflect any distribution, frequency of occurrence, or sequence that appeared in the data. The order in which these themes were presented in the previous chapter reflects how many cases cited each criteria. As mentioned above, implemented solutions (here Level 3) was the most prevalent theme. Following an appropriate process (here Level 1) was the least prevalent. Rather, I'm proposing that this is a rational continuum based on the level of impact the needs assessment has on the system in which it is performed.

It is interesting to consider the continuum proposed here in the context of the previously described idea that needs assessment is iterative. It could be argued that an agile-like approach could constantly provide a gauge of success in the first four levels. Using a process where the outcomes or solutions are the priority and where many prototypes with feedback are the basis for iteration, practitioners would constantly see the process as it is implemented (Level 1). At each iteration, knowledge in the form of feedback would be created (Level 2). By actually employing prototypes with the audience, practitioners could observe how each iteration's recommendations were put in practice (Level 3). Finally, since agile-like processes seek to develop requirements and solutions at the same time, practitioners would be continually in the space of solving the problem as it is currently understood (Level 4). Level 5, success at the relationship level, is more difficult to consider in this context, perhaps because there are tagential factors involved not considered in the scope of this study's interview structure.

Implications for Practitioners

To discuss implications of this study for practitioners, it is important to note that practitioners were the very focus of this research. I asked practitioners, across various contexts, to recall critical incidents from their practice in order to identify what actually happened in each case to result in their most or least successful experience. Several of the findings described above can aide by informing the practice of needs assessment, particularly for novice practitioners.

First, this study emphasizes the nature of needs assessment as relationship-based and highly contextual. This reveals a significant challenge to novice practitioners, or even those new to a given context. For successful needs assessment, time and effort must be planned to sufficiently engage practitioners with clients and sponsors, as well as the work context and audience about which the needs assessment is concerned. Some published models for needs assessment indicate that a client team should be formed to guide the work and that this should be codified in a contract or statement of understanding (Altschuld & Kumar, 2009). This study however indicates that such formal process steps may be insufficient for practitioners working in a novel context. A further implication is that practitioners with greater contextual expertise may be better "fits" for certain needs assessment efforts based on context.

Further, this study informs practice by describing needs assessment as an iterative, agile-like process. The benefits of such an approach were discussed both in terms of most successful efforts that used this approach, but also in terms of least successful efforts where subsequent re-engagement and recovery were facilitated through iteration. Participants (P7, P15, P18, P24) also described their use of prototyping as a data gathering method. The practical implication is that iteration is a useful approach to needs assessment that can be applied in various contexts.

Finally, this study has academic implications for practitioners in that it proposed a continuum of five levels for describing the relative success of needs assessment efforts. This continuum is rooted in the actual criteria practitioners use to judge the success of their own efforts. It further identifies certain levels which agree with various earlier approaches to evaluating the success of needs assessment as summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Proposed Levels of Need Assessment Success

#	Proposed Success Level	Related Concepts from Literature
Level 1	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether an appropriate process was followed.	Relates to the concept in the literature from Kaufman (1994), that needs assessments could be considered successful if the effort met certain defined best practices.
Level 2	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether new knowledge was generated through the assessment.	No related concept identified.
Level 3	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether solutions were implemented based on assessment findings.	Relates to the concept of utilization (Witkin, 1984).
Level 4	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether stated goals were met.	Relates to a Level 3 learning evaluation in the Kirkpatrick-Katzel model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016; Thalheimer, 2018).
Level 5	Practitioners judge the relative success of needs assessment efforts based on whether the assessment effort furthered the client relationship.	No related concept identified.

In addition, the first four levels of the continuum provide additional insight into the possible benefits of an agile-like approach to needs assessment.

Limitations of the Study

In order to manage the scope of this study and to promote some cohesiveness in the language of responses, I recruited participants with a background in the general practice of human performance improvement. There are certainly countless fields, many unrelated to human performance, in which needs assessments are conducted. Though a number of different work contexts, organization types, and geographic contexts were included in the incidents examined here, the common background of the participants practically limited the study to a certain range of contexts. One implication of this limitation rests in the fact that the practice of human performance improvement shares practical and academic roots with the practice of instructional design. As a result, most of the solutions described by participants in this study involved, in some way, training or educational or developmental interventions. Further study would certainly benefit from exploring the concepts discussed here in different contexts where different or more varied solutions emerged from the practice of needs assessment.

Similarly, due to my personal constraint of needing to conduct interviews in English, all participants were based in North America at the time the study was conducted. This limitation was also enforced by the choice to recruit participants through their affiliation with two U.S.-based professional organizations, the Association for Talent Development and the International Society for Performance Improvement. Though both organizations are international in scope and though several of the cases examined here were performed in an international context, this study does reflect a particular geographic context.

One final limitation resulted from the way I chose to structure the critical incident interviews for this study. I asked 25 participants to reflect on both their most and least successful needs assessment efforts. In doing so, I asked them to make a value judgement as to what criteria they would individually use to determine success. It is possible that this value judgement created some bias in their case selections; so that when a given participant selected their most successful case, some distinct feature of that case predisposed them to select a related case as being least successful. For example, if a participant identified a case as most successful because there was a clear rationale for performing the assessment, they may have been predisposed to select a case where a clear rationale was lacking as their least successful. A change in methodology whereby I asked 25 participants to describe only their most successful needs assessment efforts and then asked 25 different participants to describe only their least successful needs assessment efforts may have yielded different results free from this possible selection bias. One impact from this change in method could be a broader range of responses to research question 3, where participants were asked to describe their criteria for selecting each case.

Future Research

This study's examination of experienced practitioners, which was necessitated by the need for most and least critical incidents for examination, identified significant challenges that would face a novice practitioner. Specifically, needs assessment is relationship dependent and its practice benefits from deep contextual knowledge. This begs the question, what techniques to novice practitioners employ to overcome these challenges? Do they rely on established models to navigate challenges? Is their relationship with clients and stakeholders different? Do they naturally iterate until the challenges are overcome? Further research to follow new practitioners

first attempts at needs assessment given this conceptual framework could help address these questions.

Also, because of the structure of the study, though a natural continuum of five levels of success emerged, the data gathered here was insufficient to validate that continuum. For example, participants were simply asked to identify why they choose an incident as most or least successful. I did not provide an opportunity for participants to indicate the relative difference in perceived success between the two cases. For some participants their relative judgement of success between their two cases may have been relatively small, while for others it may have been the difference between once-in-a-career success and total failure. Research to validate the continuum and levels proposed here could provide additional insight.

Finally, there are opportunities to conduct further research using the data collected for this study. This study gathered rich descriptions of fifty needs assessment projects, which were also classified by practitioners as either most or least successful. As such, many different "lenses" could be applied to this data to generate new knowledge. One such lens is the concept of complexity. Complexity could be operationalized based on several factors captured in the present dataset. Cases involving larger audiences, more data-collection methods, larger project teams, or more identified challenges could be said to be more complex. With each case rated on a scale of complexity, a determination could be made as to how complexity relates to the relative success of needs assessments.

Another lens through which the present dataset might be viewed is that of practitioner experience. Because participants were asked to identify both their most and least successful projects, it would be difficult to compare experience and success on simple scales. However, the various factors identified for each research question could be indexed to practitioner experience

in the cases where they occurred. This indexing could reveal patterns of practice where, for instance, certain challenges or enabling factors are encountered more frequently by less experienced practitioners. This could yield insight as to how practitioners' skills develop as their experience grows.

Summary

This study used critical incident technique to examine needs assessment in practice across 50 cases. Using extreme cases representing practitioners' most and least successful needs assessment experiences allowed participants to recall rich detail of their process and the context in which they were working. Participants were also asked to reflect on what criteria they used to select most and least successful examples. From that basis, I addressed three research questions and 18 associated themes. The findings of this study have practical implications for practitioners providing support for needs assessment as a relationship-based and highly contextual practice. The study further emphasizes the structure and benefits of an iterative approach to needs assessment. Finally, the study informs the field of human performance improvement by proposing and delineating a five-level continuum on which practitioners judge the relative success of their needs assessment efforts.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent Document

PROJECT TITLE: Factors Promoting and Inhibiting the Practice of Needs Assessment by Human Performance Practitioners

INTRODUCTION
You are being asked to complete a survey that will explore the factors contributing to success in needs assessments. You are being asked to participate in this study because of your affiliation with a professional organization with a focus on improving human performance. The purpose of this study is to determine what factors contribute to successful needs assessment. The feedback provided will be used to better inform the preparation of novice practitioners.

RESEARCHERS

Responsible Project Investigator:
John Baaki, PhD., Assistant Professor, STEM Education & Professional Studies, Old Dominion University

Investigator:
Christopher Adams, M.Ed., Graduate Student in Instructional Design and Technology, Old Dominion University

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
If you take part in the study, you will be asked to complete an online survey, made up of 10 questions regarding your experience conducting needs assessments. The online survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If you indicate your willingness to do so, you may also be contacted for a follow-up interview, of 30-45 minutes in length.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
RISKS: There are no known significant physical or psychological risks incurred by participants in this study. However, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: As a participant in this research study, you may not directly benefit from this research. However, we hope that your participation in the study may benefit other people by the long-term best practices that will be applied to needs assessment practice.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS
There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study. The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION
If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will inform you.

CONFIDENTIALITY
All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept in confidence by the primary

investigator. The principal investigator will keep raw and developed data secured and will limit access to the data to the principal investigator and other study researchers. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations and publications, but the researcher will not identify you.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY
If you say YES and continue, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Dr. Laura Chezan, the current chair for the DCOE Human Subjects Committee, at 757-683-7055 at Old Dominion University.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By continuing on to the survey and then, if chosen, to an interview, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Dr. John Baaki: (757) 683-5491
Chris Adams: (704) 906-3448

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Laura Chezan, the current chair for the DCOE Human Subjects Committee, at 757-683-7055 at Old Dominion University.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to allow the collection and use of your data in this study.

APPENDIX B

QUALIFYING SURVEY

Needs Assessment - Initial Survey

Q1. Do you conduct needs assessments in the course of your regular work?

- Yes
- No

Q2. Over the last three years, in how many needs assessments have you participated?

- 0-1
- 2-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- > 30

Q3. In which of the following settings do you currently work?

- Construction
- Healthcare
- Finance
- Technology
- Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Higher Education
- Government
- K-12 Education
- Non-profit
- Other

Q4. In which of the following settings have you performed need assessments?

- Construction
- Healthcare
- Finance
- Technology
- Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Higher Education
- Government
- K-12 Education
- Non-profit
- Other

Q5. In which geographic region are you based?

- Africa
- Americas (Non-US)

- Asia
- Australia
- Polynesia
- US Mid-Atlantic
- US Mid-West
- US Northeast
- US Northwest
- US Southeast
- US Southwest
- US West
- Other

Q6. Which of the following best describe your job role?

- Executive
- Faculty
- Manager/Supervisor
- Practitioner
- Student

Q7. How many years of work experience do you have?

- 1-5
- 5-10
- 10-20
- 20-30
- > 30

Q8. What is your highest level of academic achievement?

- High School
- Associate's Degree
- Undergraduate Degree
- Graduate or Professional Degree
- Doctorate

Q9. Relative to the projects you participate in, how often do those projects include a needs assessment?

- Never
- Infrequently
- Frequently
- Always

Q10. Would you be willing to participate in a 30-45 minute interview via web-conference or telephone to share details of your experiences conducting needs assessments? You would be asked to describe, in detail your most successful and least successful needs assessment experience.

- Yes
- No

Q11. Please provide an email address where you can be contacted to schedule an interview.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Greeting and Consent

Hello, my name is Chris Adams and I'm conduction research as a PhD candidate at Old Dominion University. Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview.

To facilitate note-taking, I would like to record audio of our conversations today. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the recordings which will be destroyed after they are transcribed. As a reminder, the online survey included an informed consent form. Essentially, this form states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm.

We have planned this interview to last 30-45 minutes.

Introduction

You have been selected for this interview because you indicated that you perform needs assessments as part of your regular work and have participated in at least two needs assessments in the last 3 years. My research project, as a whole, focuses on the experience of performance improvement practitioners when conducting needs assessments, the challenges they face, and their strategies for success. My hope is that by studying the experiences of a number of practitioners, we can better prepare practitioners just entering the field. My study doesn't seek to evaluate your performance in conducting needs assessment, so there are no correct or incorrect responses. But, I will ask you to describe two needs assessment projects - one you feel was your most successful and one you feel was your least successful.

Questions

Part I

1. Please describe your most successful needs assessment project within the last 3 years.
2. What were the goals or purposes of this assessment?
3. In what context, such as corporate, military, non-profit, did the project occur?
4. Describe the client or client team who requested this needs assessment?
5. Describe the audience or entity whose needs were being assessed?
6. Describe your role in the project.
7. Who else was involved in the project? Can you describe their roles?
8. Walk me through the project, in terms of actions taken.
9. What data sources or measures did you use to collect data during this needs assessment?
10. What were the results or outcomes of the project?
11. What challenges did you face during this project?
12. Why did you choose this as your most successful example?

Part II

1. Please describe your least successful needs assessment project within the last 3 years.
2. What were the goals or purposes of this assessment?
3. In what context, such as corporate, military, non-profit, did the project occur?
4. Describe the client or client team who requested this needs assessment?
5. Describe the audience or entity whose needs were being assessed?
6. Describe your role in the project.
7. Who else was involved in the project? Can you describe their roles?
8. Walk me through the project, in terms of actions taken.
9. What data sources or measures did you use to collect data during this needs assessment?
10. What were the results or outcomes of the project?
11. What challenges did you face during this project?
12. Why did you choose this as your least successful example?

APPENDIX D

OCCURRENCE OF THEMES IN INCIDENTS

Table D.1

Occurrence of Themes Under Research Question 1 By Incident

	Audience Association	Clear Rationale	Effective Sponsorship	No Predisposed Solution	Opportunity For Iteration	Thorough Process
P1L					•	
P2L						
P3L						
P4L						
P5L						
P6L						•
P7L						
P8L						
P9L						
P10L						
P11L						
P12L						
P13L					•	
P14L			•		•	•
P15L						
P16L					•	
P17L						
P18L					•	
P19L						
P20L						
P21L						
P22L						
P23L					•	
P24L						
P25L						
P1M			•	•	•	
P2M			•	•		
P3M	•		•	•	•	•
P4M	•	•		•	•	•
P5M		•	•			
P6M			•		•	•
P7M	•	•	•		•	•
P8M	•			•		•
P9M			•	•	•	•
P10M			•	•		•

	Audience Association	Clear Rationale	Effective Sponsorship	No Predisposed Solution	Opportunity For Iteration	Thorough Process
P11M						
P12M			•	•		•
P13M			•			
P14M			•		•	•
P15M	•				•	
P16M			•	•		
P17M		•			•	
P18M		•	•	•		
P19M			•	•		•
P20M		•		•		
P21M		•	•	•		
P22M						
P23M		•	•	•		
P24M		•	•	•	•	•
P25M	•			•		
Totals	**6**	**9**	**18**	**16**	**16**	**13**

Table D.2

Occurrence of Themes Under Research Question 2 By Incident

	Lack of Effective Sponsorship	Lack of Contextual Experience	No Clear Rationale	Single Predisposed Solution	Process Not Followed	Audience Resistance
P1L				•	•	
P2L	•					
P3L	•			•	•	•
P4L				•		•
P5L			•	•	•	
P6L	•	•	•	•		•
P7L	•	•			•	•
P8L	•				•	
P9L		•		•		
P10L				•	•	•
P11L	•			•	•	•
P12L					•	
P13L	•		•		•	
P14L		•			•	
P15L	•			•		•

	Lack of Effective Sponsorship	Lack of Contextual Experience	No Clear Rationale	Single Predisposed Solution	Process Not Followed	Audience Resistance
P16L		•	•	•		•
P17L				•	•	
P18L	•			•		•
P19L	•				•	•
P20L		•		•	•	
P21L	•	•				
P22L		•				
P23L	•		•	•	•	
P24L	•	•		•		
P25L	•					•
P1M						•
P2M	•			•		
P3M						•
P4M	•			•		•
P5M	•				•	
P6M	•					•
P7M						
P8M						•
P9M		•				
P10M				•		•
P11M		•				
P12M	•					
P13M						
P14M	•					•
P15M	•					•
P16M				•		•
P17M	•	•		•		
P18M	•	•				
P19M	•			•		
P20M	•			•	•	
P21M	•			•		
P22M		•				
P23M	•				•	
P24M	•				•	
P25M					•	
Totals	**28**	**14**	**5**	**23**	**19**	**20**

Table D.3

Occurrence of Themes Under Research Question 3 By Incident

	Effort Furthered Relationship	Stated Goals Were Met	New Knowledge Was Generated	Thorough Process Was Followed	Solutions Were Implemented
P1L					
P2L					
P3L					•
P4L					•
P5L		•			
P6L					
P7L					
P8L					
P9L		•			•
P10L					
P11L					
P12L					•
P13L					•
P14L					
P15L					•
P16L					•
P17L					•
P18L					•
P19L			•		•
P20L				•	
P21L					
P22L					•
P23L					•
P24L					
P25L					•
P1M		•		•	•
P2M				•	•
P3M	•		•	•	•
P4M					
P5M					•
P6M		•	•		
P7M					
P8M	•		•		

	Effort Furthered Relationship	Stated Goals Were Met	New Knowledge Was Generated	Thorough Process Was Followed	Solutions Were Implemented
P9M	•				
P10M	•	•			•
P11M			•		•
P12M					
P13M		•			
P14M	•				•
P15M	•		•		•
P16M					•
P17M				•	•
P18M	•	•			
P19M	•				
P20M		•			
P21M	•	•		•	
P22M		•	•		•
P23M		•		•	•
P24M	•				
P25M					•
Totals	**10**	**11**	**7**	**7**	**26**

APPENDIX E

MOST SUCCESSFUL NEEDS ASSESSMENT INCIDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Case P1M Interview

1. P1: The needs assessment was for one of our clients who is a very large banking client. They had a need to transition to a new commercial lending system and their challenge was to roll out the new software to all of the bank affiliates and their corporations. So, they had seven bank affiliates that they were trying to run a consistent process and consistent workflow in addition to learning a new software product. So, the needs assessment was to determine what type of training or other intervention would be required to get their various audiences up to speed and proficient in the system. As part of that work, I did an audience analysis, delivery systems analysis, some learning culture analysis, and a pretty extensive task analysis.
2. P1: The goal was to determine how to train all of their employees from all their different affiliates on the same system. Their business goals were consistency. So, they wanted to make sure that everyone was following the same workflows, the same processes for their commercial lending services using the same software. Which was a challenge because the affiliates all had their own processes and individual procedures that they followed. And there was no global SLPs or any consistency enforcement across the bank corp at that time.
3. CA: In what context such as corporate, military, nonprofit, did the project occur?
4. P1: In corporate.
5. P1: So, we had a project liaison who was my main point of contact during the project. She was project manager basically on the client side. She and I worked together on a daily basis to run the project from both sides. She was helpful in helping me get access to subject matter experts and other resources that I needed on the client side. There was a key subject matter expert who is a business analyst for the client and he and I worked very closely together for a long time to capture all of the content and information that would go into the training program including a lot of screenshots for the system simulations.
6. He also helped arrange some input from other subject matter experts including their participation in the instructor led training portion of it. Those are the two key members. Otherwise, we had a project sponsor at the higher level who was the person who invested in the project, the key stakeholder in the project. And then there were some other stakeholders as well. And then other than that, just some other subject matter experts on the business analyst team that supported me and the primary BA in any other ways they could.
7. CA: What was the sponsor. How would you describe that role in the organization that you were working with?
8. P1: Well, at the... I think a VP. I'm trying to remember specifically what the title was. Someone at an executive level or VP level? I'm sorry, I can't remember the exact title.
9. P1: It was operations of some sort, but I can't remember exactly what they called it at their organization. Yeah.
10. CA: So, describe the audience or entity whose needs were being assessed.

11. P1: So, the audience was very broad for this project. It was anybody who has a hand in processing commercial loans at the bank corp or any of its affiliates. There were seven key roles. I think it was seven who use the system. And so, a very big part of this needs assessment from both the audience and the task perspective was determining which roles completed which tasks in the system. Some of them are primary members in the system in processing a loan, key roles from start to finish. Some of them [inaudible 00:05:52] will touch the system and just needed something like an overview course, for example. In addition to that, they were across all different affiliates, which meant that there were some variations within each role. So, the tasks for each role weren't necessarily consistent from affiliate to affiliate.
12. P1: I was the lead instructional designer on the project, so I was responsible for conducting the needs assessment. I did the majority of the analysis work and from there I also did the majority of the rest of the project, which was the design and the production of the training materials.
13. CA: Who else was involved in the project? What did your project team look like?
14. P1: I had some support during analysis from our lead consultant. He helped with some delivery systems analysis, and I believe some learning culture analysis as well. I also had at least one of the resources in production that I had some help with the web based training courseware. I think it varied. I think I may have had [inaudible 00:07:26] at some point and I had some help with some graphics at certain points during the project. During production. The largest source of resources on my side was facilitators. So, one of the major components of this blended learning strategy was an instructor led training component and we supplied the facilitators for that rollout. So, a lot of the project was finding those people and bringing them up to speed and then managing their performance in their... All the logistics that had to do with their implementation of the instructor led training.
15. CA: So, can you give me high level steps that were taken in the project?
16. P1: Okay. So, we started with the analysis phase. The analysis phase included a couple of different types of analysis that I've hit on so far. We looked at the business goals, we looked at the audience learning culture, task analysis and delivery systems analysis and we put those through client reviews, especially the task analysis, which was instrumental determining which roles needed which training. After analysis we went onto a design phase where I designed the blended learning strategy. So looked at what each type of deliverable would be for the training and all the details of how each objective would be taught and how it would be assessed and some details about what those different components might look like. We did a learner try out after that, which was our first formative evaluation. So, we built a prototype and put that in front of a small group of learners at the bank corp and got their feedback on their interaction with specifically the web based training.
17. And after that we moved into production. So, we built all of the training materials as they were described and agreed to during the design phase, incorporated the feedback from our learner try out and evaluation and ran all of those deliverables through review cycle and finally implementation and rollout. So, implementation, we delivered the web based training courses and provided whatever assistance we could with helping them implement it into their LMS. And then the instructor led training I mentioned was the part where we helped our client through the rollout process by providing facilitators and training them,

getting them up to speed, and then helping with the logistics and planning for staffing each one of those instructor-led training sessions.

18. CA: When you were gathering data, what methods did you use to gather data?
19. P1: Interviews mostly with subject matter experts who were primarily the business analysts and a lot of source documentation. So, I had documentation from the system. The system was an out of the box system that was customized for this client and so I had source documentation from the baseline system. Then I had some procedures and designed documents for the customization and workflow for the client.
20. P1: The results were that they were able to successfully train all of their system users on the new system. I don't know the number off the top of my head of how many people were trained, but I do have that information somewhere if you want me to get that for you. The learners had to start using the system immediately after training and so I think that a good level of support was provided to help desk calls and support needs and things like that. We had for instance... We decided to have business analysts attend each instructor led training session as subject matter experts. And so, when questions came up during the class, the BA's were able to answer those questions.
21. And the key there was that there's one way to do things in the system. The system introduces a workflow, but the learners were not following that current workflow necessarily in their current jobs. And so there was a gap between how things were done in the system and how they were used to just doing things on the job as they currently were. And so a lot of questions along the lines of, "Well, how do we do things now?" "What does this mean for us?" "How is our job going to change?" That BA or subject matter expert was able to answer those types of questions. And so support I think was minimized and cared for in that way.
22. They also were able to implement a good consistency standard across the bank corp. So, as I mentioned earlier, the system implementation introduced that consistency. And so, as a result today, their specific roles are following the same workflow because it's implemented through the system. They have to follow the same tasks and do things the same way. And so the training provided them with that baseline knowledge to be able to do that the same way. That's workflow and it's the data that's collected. So that's another point is that there's a million fields in the system and the training help them understand which ones were required, which ones were key. And so there are employees across the bank who are collecting data more consistently in addition to a more consistent workflow.
23. P1: Now the program has transitioned to ongoing training and so they still run the program today for new hires or anyone who's new to the system from another department or things like that. We've been able to use the same materials and just run those classes when needed. The facilitation is transferred to internal resources of the client's side. So, we no longer provide facilitation, but the materials we're using are the same.
24. CA: What challenges did you face during this project, particularly around needs assessment?
25. P1: I think the largest challenge was that the SNPs, just the general workflow and procedures were different among all affiliates. And so doing something like a task analysis kind of forced you to answer those questions or resolve those discrepancies when you found that two affiliates were doing something the same way. That was a big challenge for me because I'm an outside consultant, which means it's not my job to answer those things or resolve those issues. And so sometimes it led to having to find the

client who can make the call and say, "Well, we're going to train it this way." And we did have those BAs in the classroom to speak to those things and account for those things and do some explanation. But it came down to having to make calls and training pretty regularly about how we were going to teach it and then sticking to those decisions as we went down the line during production.

26. Because during reviews, without fail someone would bring up or ask a question. I mean all the way to the end of the project. "Well, why don't we train it this way?" Or "Did we leave this out?" And every time we'd have to go back and rehash the decision and remind everyone why we trained it the way we trained it. And even second guess ourselves a lot of times and had to remind ourselves, "Well, wait a minute, we made this decision for a reason and we're going to stick to it and go forward."
27. CA: So why did you choose this as your most successful example?
28. P1: I think because the needs analysis was very thorough. I was able to do all of the types of analysis that I felt was necessary to have a successful outcome and to reach the results that the client was looking for. You don't always have access to the right people or the right information, or some of the resource, the time, the money. Whatever it might be to do such a thorough analysis. And in this case, the analysis work led us to a design. I think that really fit the client's needs and the client's business goals. Mostly around all those different roles and how each one had to be trained differently. It led us to creating an overview course for anyone who touched the system but then to create a series of role specific courses that targeted how each role use the system.
29. And those wouldn't have been successful without the level of audience and task analysis specifically that we found. Learning culture analysis as well. I mean we found that they... For instance, a practice environment that was available to us. And so, we made heavy use of that in the instructor led training class in designing the instructor led training class so that it was guided hands on practice in the practice environment. Which provided an extra means of practice and an application between the web-based training and going back to their desks and having to use the system for the first time on the job.

Case P2M Interview

1. P2: The irony is this one is that ... well, I think the needs assessment portion was the most successful I've ever done. It ended immediately after that.
2. CA: So, just to clarify, that means that you've completed the needs assessment, but then the engagement?
3. P2: Yeah, I completed, actually, all the way through a curriculum design and then the engagement stopped.
4. P2: The client went through a merger and it ... I think you probably know which project I'm referring to, and the work was discarded to go in a different direction because the purchaser had other plans.
5. P2: So, I consider it the most successful because ... I might be jumping the gun a little bit. I was brought in explicitly with a blank slate and I was hired for my specific expertise in this area and asked to do this work rather than much of the time you're backing into ... either backing into needs assessment or validating it or ...
6. P2: It was, we want to re-examine this from scratch, kind of ...
7. P2: It really was a goal of improving the end performance and the time to proficiency, or whatever the ... speed proficiency. So, you know, new hire audience, existing program.

8. CA: What was the position of the target audience? Was it homogenous, first of all?
9. P2: Yes. Yes. This is cable installer technicians. I did thousands, at least, nationwide.
10. CA: So, who was the client for this?
11. P2: So, the client was L and D, who owned the prior curriculum with the, I guess, dotted line to the ... an involvement from the management structure above the technicians. So yeah, the right parties were ... At the table.
12. P2: Yeah, again, I was kind of the sole ... learning consultant, I guess, with active engagement from my L and D partner, as far as discussing strategy, reviews. It was collaborative in a good way.
13. P2: I was very much allowed to work my process as I saw fit. So, you know, a clean project intake, goals ... It's a little fuzzy. If you weren't timing me, I would get out my laptop ... Goal definition, examine the current state, define a desired future state.
14. I believe the currents ... it's hard to say. So, there was definitely like document review, but there was also fieldwork.
15. P2: You might remember I rode around ... I went to ... we actually split ... so I forgot this part of the project. So, I actually split some of this work with my client L and D partner. So, we went to six cities between the two of us, three cities each, and spent multiple days riding in the truck and observing the work of exemplary technicians after having done pre-work through doc review and interviews with ... people who used to do the job and now are kind of like the consultant team or you know, not supervisors per se.
16. CA: Obviously, you were in the truck. When you did interviews, were you doing them face to face? Were you doing focus groups? Was it one-on-one? Can you recall how you did it?
17. P2: Yeah. So, we did ... obviously we interviewed the people that we were observing as well. I think, if I remember correctly, we did some interviewing before and then we went out and observed them possibly or at some point during the process we interviewed. Yeah. And then there were additional, I think ... some interviews. It was pretty broad. I could share my report with you. I'm sure it summarizes all my activities.
18. P2: Definitely regular calls. There was this kind of typical series of reports building to an analysis report, a designer for it, a curriculum design.
19. P2: I think there was an audience analysis with some data, you know, like gathered from HR and stuff like that.
20. CA: So, you would report out analysis design at a high level and then curriculum design?
21. P2: Yes.
22. CA: And what was the process for basically ... Who did you present those to? How were they reviewed or approved?
23. P2: Yeah. So, I worked collaboratively with the L and D contact to get them into a state that they agreed with and then took it to higher-ups.
24. CA: And were the higher-ups in the ... where they in the management chain of the techs or was that a higher level of approval in the learning motivation?
25. P2: Yeah. And within the learning organization is my memory.
26. P2: Sorry, I'm just looking. There was an analysis report that included an audience analysis and a task analysis and then there was a design report that included the curriculum design, and all of that. Current state analysis, curriculum design ... This was good.
27. CA: So, the final outcome was the curriculum design was approved.

28. P2: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
29. CA: I know that this was your successful project, but what challenges did you face in this project?
30. P2: There was definitely one bomb thrower within the L and D organization. They were one or two levels above my contact. Yeah, well they weren't their direct boss, either a dotted line or bosses boss kind of thing.
31. CA: Okay. And what sort of behaviors ... I mean what were they doing to make it challenging?
32. P2: Oh, there were a lot of sort of questions and questioning in kind of an uninformed manner, due to kind of not having been paying attention to earlier work.
33. P2: Oh, sorry, I just remembered where some of the ... there was like a lot ... it got to the point of scoping out what it would take to actually develop it. And there was a lot of weirdness about the ... not weirdness. There was a lot of antagonism about the projected scope.
34. P2: Yeah. Just lack of knowledge of what a project of this size takes and general ... combativeness.
35. CA: So back to the mitigation strategies, any particular things that you tried to do or that worked in trying to mitigate that?
36. P2: Yeah, I mean my response is all was to go back to the data, you know?
37. CA: Why did you choose this as your most successful?
38. P2: Because it reflected sort of my ideal process, kind of unencumbered by either the client not understanding or believing in a true analysis process or other constraints, whether they be time or budget or whatever. People's time was really kind of free rein to do what we thought best for the audience and the business. I still think it's a good design.

Case P3M Interview

1. P3: So, for my recent residency, I did a needs assessment and then some research top of that. I would say that this is my most successful because I feel like where I am as a practitioner and in my studies, I felt really solid in my approach. I felt really solid in the theory behind my approach, was able to really easily gain entree and get buy-in from lots of levels within this organization. Parent participation still wasn't maximum, because it never is.
2. P3: But those that were engaged in terms of providing data were super engaged, extremely thoughtful, and generous with their time and with their information. Then the recommendations and the results from this and the recommendations were extremely well-received. The organization immediately started taking action.
3. So, I think when I think about that, it's a perfect example of all the things that you would want to see happen in a needs assessment. I also think it was my most successful because it was one of those things that was really driven from a place of opportunities-based, right? This was not about, "Whose fault is it, and where is the weak link?" It was really about, "What opportunities do we have to enhance ourselves as an organization?" Everybody was really on board with that almost more of an appreciative inquiry, positive approach to the process.
4. CA: What were the goals and purposes for this assessment?
5. P3: The goal was to get me through my research residency.

6. P3: Well, that was one of them. But mainly for the organization, specifically for that needs assessment, we were focused on opportunities to enhance ... Okay, sorry. Seeing how well the organization was currently meeting and affecting parent efficacy and then opportunities to enhance parent efficacy amongst the group.
7. So, this was another group or organization that I had already had a bit of entree with because I was a part of this group. It's a nonprofit organization in the Metro DC area that their goal and mission is to provide parents of children on the autism spectrum with resources and guidance and advocacy and things like that. So they were, again, nonprofit. It's led by parent volunteers, and everyone's just in it for the right reasons, common theme, and very giving and open. So that was the thing.
8. CA: Okay. So, this may not directly apply in this case. It sounds like it was very collaborative. But was there a client or client team who requested the needs assessment?
9. P3: No. So, they didn't request it. What happened was I went to them and said, "Hey, I'm in a research residency, and this is what I'm about. Would you be interested in me working with you?" They were like, "Oh my gosh, yes."
10. So, then I went in to pitch to their board of directors with a group of seven, at the time, individuals and said, "Hey, this is what needs assessment is, and, for your organization, these are some possibilities that I could take on for you that I'm willing to take on." I gave them four different scoped options, and then what they did is choose the option they wanted to go. They wanted to focus on this area of parent efficacy. So, I approached them, but then they chose the scoping of the project.
11. CA: So, moving into the project, the board of directors became your client?
12. P3: Correct. They were the client.
13. P3: Yeah, the primary service recipients were the main focus of this, and those were parents and/or caretakers of students on the autism spectrum.
14. P3: As some additional data sources, of course, the clients were instrumental in that. I also looked at a bunch of their extra data, so their organizational documentation, and then I also included stakeholders of the organization in the data collection process. Those stakeholders included therapeutic providers that partner with the organization, as well as educators and administrators within the local public school system for a multilayered approach to the data.
15. P3: I was the lead and only person doing the entire project. So, from scoping the project to being the project manager to carrying all of the data collection out and writing it up and being the liaison with the clients, all of those things. Everything from soup to nuts, start to finish.
16. CA: Can you walk me through, at a high level, the actual steps that you went through in the project?
17. P3: Sure, and I'm actually going to pull something up, because it's laid out really easily in the thing that I wrote. So, one second. It will be easier for me to follow my little outline. So, essentially, the needs assessment steps that I followed were making sure that I wanted to identify the current state, desired state, performing discrepancy analysis between those two, prioritizing the needs, and then coming up with recommendations.
18. In performing my discrepancy analysis, I basically took into consideration how many and in which of those different data participant types the needs were highlighted from. So, did it emerge from the parent and the client and the stakeholders? If all three of those groups commented on that particular area either as a strength or as a need, then that got some

more weight. Then, within that, how frequently those themes emerged was taken into account.

19. In addition to not only getting the current state and the desired state, I also asked questions around what the enablers and barriers were. So I ask questions to all of the participant types about what either processes, resources, or people are currently in place that are already in place that will help you or that can help you get to that desired state, and then also what are those individuals, processes, resources, constraints that may hinder you from getting to that piece of success?
20. So, I looked at all of those areas of needs within the context of enablers and barriers and then used that to help reprioritize those levels of needs so that we can make recommendations on what was going to be really feasible for them.
21. P3: So, timeline-wise, again, I pitched to the board first, got their buy-in. Once they pick their area of scope, I gave them a draft outline of what I would need, how the timeline would go, and all of those things and those specs, and they signed off on that project plan. Once they signed off on it and I got IRB approval, I then put everything out. I had a survey and then follow up interviews and focus groups.
22. So, I had three separate surveys, one for the client, one for the parents and caretakers, and then one for the stakeholders, because some of those questions had to be worded a little bit differently based on the role that they were playing. But some of the questions, of course, did overlap. Again, all those questions were getting at current state, desired state, and all of that, and, of course, biographical information and then some additional embedded research that I had in there.
23. So, if you were both a client and a stakeholder or if you played multiple roles, you were invited to complete all of those surveys that applied. Then, at the end of each survey, you were invited to sign up for a focus group or an interview.
24. My goal for the surveys was to get 100% of the clients, which we achieved, at least 100 parents, which I did not achieve, and then up to five of the stakeholders involved for the surveys. Then, for the focus groups, I wanted, again, 100% of the clients, but then 10% of however many surveys I got completed from the parents and then from the stakeholders. I got the 10% of each for the different focus groups, but I didn't get 100 surveys from the parents. I only got, I think, 42.
25. P3: So, the results were I was able to show the organization a bunch of areas where they were really doing well and maybe didn't realize they could pat themselves on the back, because I forget the exact number, but something like 30% of the parents' total efficacy, they were able to attribute to this organization alone, which is huge.
26. P3: That's a huge accomplishment that they could hang their hat on and use it as marketing strategies that they hadn't thought of. So, a lot of the things, they were already doing, I was able to couch for them in a way that they can already be using to market and further their message, because one of the things they're struggling with is really making sure that they are reaching all the parents in this particular county.
27. It's a huge county that we live in, and then diverse representation, all of those things. So, they want to get to a place where they can be kind of like a household name, like if you're in this county and you've got a kid on the spectrum, then this is an organization that is a go-to organization. They aren't there yet. So, there's a lot of ways they can market themselves.

28. So, a lot of positive stuff. Again, like I said, this was opportunities-based. Right? But then I was also able to reveal to them, and in a way that they hadn't been able to quantify with any sort of rigor, what parents' needs were around parent efficacy. I was able to give them a number of those, all of the information, but couch it in a way that they have the top two, top three things, right, and then really call out for them things that they saw that were enablers that other of their stakeholders also saw.
29. It was a way for them to get an outsider perspective and see how that compared to their own perspective of the organization, and they all said to me, "Just going through this process and participating in these focus groups has allowed us to say, out loud, things that we have been thinking but hadn't had the opportunity or the space to share with each other before and really get some consensus around that."
30. So, the whole process, for them, was like idea generation, even before the results even came. So that was really good.
31. P3: They also really appreciated a lot of the recommendations that I had come up with. Again, you know that I come from an HPT perspective, right? So, I'm thinking about the whole system and not just, "Okay, parents need more efficacy. Let's design a training." I think there were only two recommendations that were training-related. The vast majority of the recommendations were really around better leveraging existing resources, non-instructional interventions. Let's put it that way. They were really appreciative of those things.
32. CA: Okay, great. Any particular challenges you faced in this project?
33. P3: Yep, getting the parents to participate, because, in this particular instance, a lot of the barriers that affect the organization also affected this needs assessment process. So, when you have parents who are parents of kiddos with special needs and those needs range in severity, then they are stressed out, they are short on time, they are short on funds, and they are already tapped out emotionally. There's a whole section. A couple of publications that I'm doing off of this are really around just those burdens and how that affects the needs assessment process. So, I think that was the major thing.
34. CA: Then I think I have some reasons, but anything you'd like to add as to why you chose this as the most successful?
35. P3: One of the things that I didn't get to say about it was that, through this process, I felt ... I don't know. When I was doing my qualitative course, I read a bunch of articles about what being in the flow means. I felt like I was in the flow the entire time. I think my unique position as both almost being like a practitioner-participant within this process was really ... and a great unintended consequence was that it was therapeutic for me as well and really just a good experience. I think that the participants benefited from me also being a part of that community of people, that community of practice, and that they felt comfortable talking to me, revealing certain things maybe they wouldn't have been able to reveal or comfortable revealing if I had more distance from them.
36. P3: There were things that they didn't have to explain to me because I knew what they were talking about. You know what I'm saying?
37. P3: There was no shame in that. I understand if you've got a kid [inaudible 00:32:36]. I'm in that community, and there's no judgment there. So, I think I felt in the flow, they felt really comfortable, and then there were even personal connections that emerged from that. Typically, when I'm doing a needs assessment, that is not how it goes, and there are pluses and minuses to that too, right?

38. There are pluses and minuses when you are close to the group, when you were close to the data, no doubt about it. But I think, in this particular instance, it was helpful, because a lot of the content was really sensitive.
39. Yeah, I think the clients, I have to say, it was like a dream. I mean, so open, so honest, really wanting to improve, really speaking out. "How can we do things better?" They didn't pay for this, of course. It wasn't a monetary thing, but it was really like, "Whatever you can give us, we really want it," and they were actionable about it and serious about their action. They backed it up, their words with their actions. So, I think that that was just a really great experience for me, and it got me through my research residency. So that was good.
40. CA: So, you completed this recently. Do you see that this particular organization might benefit in the future from a repeat of a similar engagement?
41. P3: Yeah.
42. CA: How frequently or at what point in the future do you think that this should be revisited?
43. P3: So, I think once, we kind of laid out some recommendations, and we're going to have some ongoing discussions about how best to address those things, because I told them, "Let's start small. Don't be overwhelmed." In terms of recommendations, there may have been 30, 40. You know what I mean? There was a lot in there.
44. I said start small, pick one or two things. But some of these had implications for their next calendar year. They go by school year, so next school year. I think once they come up with their final list of things that they want to really implement for that school year and then that school year is done to do a comparison. So I would say a year, a year-ish from now, to start ... which would have been two years after the needs assessment, if that makes sense.
45. CA NOTE: For least successful, participant uses terms like, checked a box, no skin in the game, overridden, mandated, assumed “yes.” There’s no purpose in it for the participant or for the organization. Contrasts with most successful where participant is an invested member of the target audience.
46. CA NOTE: Most successful case described as a ongoing discussion, may repeat assessment in two years.

Case P4M Interview

1. P4: Alright. Most successful needs assessment that I've done in five has to do with a project that I've started and we've revisited every year since probably 1985.
2. P4: I have this off. We keep reinventing this performance management system as we evaluated and come up with new information, changes in environment and so on and so forth. So kind of needs assessment we do is born out of, we actually do several different kinds of terms of our process and it depends upon you know, where, where we're at and what level as an organization we want to look at or think we should look at to determine, you know, what kind of needs they are.
3. Generally start by doing a kind of a survey or kind of assessment to determine what kind of assessment we're going to use and we usually break things down, you know, at the organization level, process level, job level is the typical three levels we look at and depending upon which level we're going to start at two we will, we will use a slightly different or sometimes the specific type of analysis. So this particular project is probably

my favorite one. It for me represents kind of a pure performance check analogy outlook on the whole field and within my project, over the last you know, 30 years practically that I've been doing this, I keep discovering new and new things.

4. So some 30 years ago, and I've written a textbook chapter on this by the way, that was published a couple of years ago. It's a case study that pretty much recounts this particular project and all its iterations. But I have a project that started out when I was an employee at a cosmetics company, French cosmetics company. The senior manager called in and he asked me a question and the question is the title of that chapter in the textbook. It was the question, can you help me solve a problem so it stays solved?
5. So I thought, okay, this guy is pretty smart to ask the question and I would, you know, want you to, a study of that would start with defining what his problem was and take it through to whatever interventions we were going to impose. Which you know, we started to become successful with to a point where today that particular project working for that company has pretty much become one of the main stays of this business. I started about 20 years ago.
6. P4: Well I'm improving performance. Yeah. So what the problem was, was this. He told me that about three or four months before I was hired, there was a 20 year old woman who during a lunch break, got on a standup model forklift truck in his warehouse and she wasn't a forklift truck operator, but she got on it in such a way that as she stepped on it, she accidentally accelerated the forklift truck that went into a 360 degree turn and her leg that never made it into the forklift truck was crushed between I-beam and the forklift and when he got ahold of it - this is the senior operations manager - French guy. He was concerned that, you know, he's had other forklift injuries and they want this to end. How do we solve this problem so it stays solved? And so that began an investigation, an assessment as you might say that has evolved over time as we found more and more information.
7. So today, you know this was a full scale intervention. It's a performance management system that's based on much of the science and much of the engineering that you've heard about when you study performance improvement methods and techniques and principles and practices. Okay, so what we've done in our iterations of this system that we have, I mean we'd always go back with an assessment and we would use an analytical tool that I learned from [Joe Harless 00:09:42] when I was part of his Harless Performance Guild. I don't know if you're familiar with Harless?
8. P4: Okay. So you know, Joe died about five years ago now but at that time I had learned his particular approach to accomplishment based front end analysis and we used that methodology - his process - for much of the work that we've done. Although we've used other methods too. So much deep [inaudible 00:10:25] we need to talk to you on this.
9. CA: When you started this project, what was the target audience?
10. P4: Well it was, you know, it was obviously it was forklift truck operators but there were a whole bunch of different people that had to play a role in fixing this, you know, so it would stay fixed. So in the end we had really three levels of management involved. One was senior management who held the purse strings to any intervention we would need to finance. So we had some people on board. Secondly, the frontline supervisors we needed to target because they were pretty much responsible for just about everything that happened on there - as they call it- their floor. They're a particular, you know, piece of the enterprise and then there were both the forklift operators who are considered, you know,

semi-skill and the pedestrians that they work around. So if you count the forklift truck operators and the pedestrians as you know, one on class of target audience then that was the group that we really had influence. But we needed all these other groups, these two other groups to participate and to actually drive.

11. CA: And can you tell me in working with these groups, you mentioned an initial survey and then also the accomplishment based FEA approach. What methods have you used to gather data? Is it primarily survey data? Do you also do interview focus group observation sort of things?
12. P4: Well, all of the above with a concentration on direct observation. Yeah, we... I actually started the idea that we would not [inaudible 00:13:15] on other methods of data collection and direct observation along with some interviewing because it was a lot more reliable and valid. You know, kind of like Tom Gilbert. I don't know if you've studied Tom Gilbert yet.
13. P4: So anyway, you know, Tom talked about his idea of an exemplary performer. He talked about the tennis player. You know, don't interview the tennis player to see what they say, watch their feet. So this idea of direct observation for me holds a lot of weight and continuous, in my opinion, it'd be far far superior to any other method of data collection under the circumstances I had to face, you know.
14. CA: So in conducting this project, what were the...were there any challenges that you faced in this particular project?
15. P4: Yeah, there were a lot of challenges. There continue to be challenges 30 years later. You know, so one of the challenges is, you know, if you're going to do the job right, you can't just conduct a training class and the forklift operator safety you know, you have to get in there and actually do an analysis. You have to take whatever time is necessary. It's not that everything takes a lot of time, but [inaudible 00:15:25] we eat up a lot a lot of time and we've had clients that you know, have seen the benefit of it but for the most part, people that we approach are saying they want to solve the problem so it stays solved. Look, you know, they look at what we propose and they get scared so they don't do anything.
16. You know, they don't do anything differently from what they and a lot of other people are doing. That is significant because in the United States, just the United States, OSHA have reported- and they've been reporting the same number. All you have to do is look at the literature on forklift safety, I've seen this number come up over and over again. They say that...well they determined or estimated that every year in the United States about a hundred people - that's two a week - get killed related to forklift trucks and another 36- approximately 36,000 per year.
17. P4: You know, that's somewhere between six and 700 people a week, get seriously injured. I mean it's a problem and it hasn't gone away for most people. Our clients, you know, hey, they, you know over time have seen such a reduction in the risk that one of the challenges is we've been so successful. New management would change or come in or they'd rotate into the building. Then they would say 'why do we need to have this consultant in here?' Comes around, 'I don't see any problems near forklift trucks' and you know, nobody argues with the new head guy for fear of losing their jobs or you know, insulting them or whatever.
18. P4: So these companies, you know, some of them anyway heck most of them would eventually, you know, after six years worth of contracting on average, would just say

thank you very much, we don't need you anymore. We don't have any trouble with forklift trucks and they forget.

19. Well this is a conundrum that I think performance improvement consultants get into when they have successful projects.
20. CA: And have you seen, have you seen in that cycle that the practice of sustainment is somewhat different from the initial assessment? Would you have clients - and you re-engage with him year after year or year over year, does your engagement tend to stay? Are you doing the same activities, applying the same process over time, and then the change is really in the personnel? In other words, you know, new management comes in and wants to change things or does the...does your work with them adapt over time as they're...as the situation improves and sort of evolves?
21. P4: Well, yeah, various aspects of it. You know, we have a whole process that we've established, so we're continuously monitoring it and being everything about everything. We're new stuff. It's- for example, when we started out, we were talking about industrial safety, forklift safety, and one of the still traditional approaches to this is that you teach the person who is going to be certified. You teach them how to operate the truck safely.
22. Now, most people equate being safe on a forklift truck with going slow enough on it when you're operating it to process everything in your environment, so you don't hit a person or slam into a rack or upset your...the load that you're carrying and we found out that if we train them to do this slowly it generates some resistance among management. Because you know, the idea in business, especially in material handling is you lose as much of the stuff as you can, which means you have to go fast.
23. P4: But to keep people from getting hurt or killed, you got to do it at a certain speed. So we discovered sometime ago, which we didn't always have until we actually had an accident, we discovered that we could not divorce the industrial..the safe actions on a forklift truck, which we call precision actions from the productivity issues that the company is facing.
24. They could not be divorced and they often are in all the training management and the discussions that you see across the country and it's a mistake. It's a mistake. We actually had an accident which somebody who got seriously injured one year, about 20 years ago, and we had only been teaching, you know, precise forklift movements with no respect for speed and I was pretty upset because the company called me in to train this person and didn't want him trained by the in house certified instructors and test examiners that I had produced for them. A woman, it was a woman. She got hurt and she slammed her foot and it was pretty much permanently injured, but I was a bit upset about it so I went back and I started asking different people through ISPI, you know what I might do and at some point I ran in to [Ogden Lindsley 00:00:22:47] who I'd known from meeting him at ATD, I don't know if you know Ogden Lindsley, which is precision teaching stuff and fluency and all that.
25. He basically explained to me, he said, look, I think I know your issue here. He went on to tell me, he said, look, no matter what domain or human behavior you're in, it has at least two important dimensions. One is the precision, the actions that the forklift truck operators take. But the other one is the temporal dimension. It's the speed at which you do stuff. And he went on to explain how you have to have the right speed. In my case, the right pace and you also have to have the right precision. In other words, how precisely can you operate the forklift truck.

26. So you know, this 10,000 pound or more machine, it was actually being placed where you need it to go. So that opened up an entire new, you know, iteration of this system we had, cause we had not paid any attention to this in the past. We only that everybody else did. And that is we train them in how to operate this work with trucks safely or precisely as much as we can. And nobody ever paid attention to the fact that the bosses, you know, the, the supervisors don't want to hear you're going slow because they got to get, you know, 40 trucks loaded today or they have to get a pallet loads of components down to a production line and then we can't have slow pokes running around our warehouse.
27. CA: Yeah. And so, and that pressure can override any training that you do if you're just focused on a slow pace.
28. P4: Well yes and it does other things too, cause the supervisors weren't telling me anything. You know, they...the whole culture out there in a lot of companies, and I'm going to say nearly all of them is 'Hey, we consider safety first.' I don't know if you've ever heard that. They say safety is always first, safety is first. That's just a slogan, that's bull, you know, production, inventory, movement, turnover, you know, getting it done, that's probably first. Yeah. And you know, the fact that somebody is able to be safe in most cases, you know, it's not a given. Although employees, you know, and employers in particular will say things like, Oh, but we, you know, we meet the OSHA rules. OSHA says we have to do this so we comply with the regulations. Well, the regulations don't say anything about productivity.
29. P4: Regulations don't, you know, address the issue of speed or what you might call fluency. You've heard that [inaudible 00:26:24] I'm assuming.
30. P4: Yeah, you know. So all of a sudden, you know, we're starting to engage in some instructional design methods that target forklift truck operators for both productivity and the safe or precision aspects of operating a forklift truck. Well, it wasn't, yeah, it wasn't until then that we would start to get a clear, a clear buy in from supervisors because no longer were...was anybody, you know, particularly the expert me advocate.
31. CA NOTE: This participant's cases were hard to pin down. Participant is such an expert practitioner that cases are generalized vs. specific.
32. CA NOTE: Participant makes a point about durability of HPT projects. Success stories last about 3 years, then there's enough organizational change that the impact becomes irrelevant. Encourages longer view of work, success/failure.

Case P5M Interview

1. P5: Yeah, so for this one, we were working on sales enablement training, particularly around a discovery call.
2. P5: Yeah, so this was the VP of sales enablement, here on this side, and I worked together with one of the instructional designers on my own team.
3. P5: Yep. So, the outcome ... so, they really had a clearly defined outcome. They had defined outcome around a successful discovery call around five key facets. They outlined all five facets that a sales executive needs to master or demonstrate mastery of to have a successful discovery call. What we did is we filled out their template, we talked to how long a discovery call should be, what were the outcomes. We actually set up a rubric for storing and then outlined that rubric that was quantitative on a scale of zero to three. We outlined what is successful. We used the same benchmarks for tier one, two, and three

salespeople. We just lowered the total score needed to pass the tier one. So, if there's five categories and the maximum you can get is three points per category, somebody at tier one or somebody just starting out to really be quantified as you're ramping properly or you're demonstrating success, they have to get 10 points out of 15. 12 months in, 12 points out of 15, and then as a manager, director, need to be scoring 13, 14, 15 and higher.

4. P5: This was about 70 individuals, 70 sales representatives across the company. Anybody from inside sales to outside sales and management, director level.
5. CA: All right, and so ... and you mentioned a lot of information about what success looked like and defining that. Did all of that data come from just meeting with the VP of sales enablement?
6. P5: It came from a meeting ... the VP of sales enablement and our director of sales operations.
7. P5: Yeah, so as soon as we were able to tee that up, and we were able to define what success looked like, what we wound up doing was creating a fake scenario and a fake customer, fake scenario. We outlined kind of a sample of what the call should look like and we actually had two of our reps role play a call as part of the training. We clearly outlined in a document the components of a good discovery call, segmented those out. We clearly defined what the certification would look like, including a sample scorecard, and then, what we wound up doing is we wound up training our managers and directors on how to score their teams and then let them funnel through their direct reports.
8. CA: And what were the outcomes?
9. P5: We've had well over ... we decreased our employee turnover on a sales team well over 20% so far and the number of sales team members that are leaving is decreased. We're actually going to incorporate this as part of our inside sales kind of tiering system and career pathing.
10. CA: What was the duration of the needs gathering portion of this effort?
11. P5: A week.
12. CA: All right. And this is your more successful example, but were their challenges that you faced, either in getting there or in implementing?
13. P5: Yeah, there were some challenges and especially when it comes to sales and messaging. That's something in our business that's been continuously evolving. So, we've had to get approval from our COO and our CEO, which in a medium size company can take some time.
14. P5: So, there was some challenges in terms of ensuring that what we were training on in the messaging was 100% correct.
15. P5: And then, also making sure that the managers were rightfully certified before they could certify their team.
16. CA: Why did you pick this as your most successful?
17. P5: I think I ... well, I know I picked this because our sales team a year ago did not have the pointed request that they have today. They did not have the data and the collection tools within Salesforce and some of our other marketing legion tools. They didn't have any of that data, and I think by spending time collecting that and being able to create a case as to what core training was needed really helped move that product forward and move it forward in a way where anybody that's going through the training knows exactly what their outcomes need to be.

18. CA: Great. And do you think that there are any other factors that we haven't surfaced so far that were present for this effort that maybe were lacking before that enabled this success?
19. P5: I think because we had a lot more data that the company-wide initiative from the top down was really pushing to sales and sales enablement and moving our sales teams to bigger goals and it was like an all-hands effort to get that done.
20. CA NOTE: If a practitioner volunteers to conduct a needs assessment or does it from within the purview of their own role (they are the client) is that the ultimate in controlling the boundaries of the assessment?

Case P6M Interview

1. P6: Yes. I have one again, these are my clients. For confidentiality purposes, I will be not specific about the organization. I'll be very general; however, I will try to answer your questions as specifically as I can.
2. P6: I would have about one instance where I have an institution and their entire leadership team had been contacted by the president saying that he needed to understand how to better serve his leadership team. And he had different individuals, some of them that had been there for many years, some of them were coming up through the organization, some were hired from outside, and how to pull it together to move the institution forward.
3. CA: Okay, great. And can you tell me, in general, what were the goals behind the work that you were doing together?
4. P6: Team-building.
5. P6: And then, to further explain it, there were assimilating old and new and whatever. It's creating a culture, it had a very small culture, but you also had new people in different levels of maturity of a senior leader. There was lots of little levels that needed to be assessed early-on.
6. P6: And the president had been there five years. And had hired most of them or somebody... So his whole point was, a little of it was a refresh on his leadership style and how does he communicate, especially when there's some contention within the leadership team. And what role did he play?
7. CA: And then, the context here, is this a corporate context? Is it a private business? Is it industry? Is it governmental? Just general context?
8. P6: It's a university.
9. P6: The leadership team. There was 12 people on the leadership team, so it was not a small team.
10. CA: Okay. And were you the single practitioner or assessor here, or were you working with a group, a team, to carry this out?
11. P6: I was the single person.
12. P6: Okay. Couple of things, first off, I was contacted by the president. And then I was asked to work with the chief of staff to work logistics. We sat down and devised a multi-step plan, and how to best gather information from the individual members of the leadership team. But also, how to then build a team-building workshop after those conversations.

13. What I also did then is I individually engaged all the leadership numbers, using some tools. I used a series of...the Hogan? A leadership profile for each of them, and then I individually gave feedback to every one of them on a one to two hour response to basically look at their strengths and some of the things that they were being challenged with. And how did they feel that they were moving forward, what they though their goal was, etc. etc. And it's based off of the Hogan profile.
14. Those were all independently done. None of the material was to go... none of those instruments were reported to anybody but the client, the individual that I worked with. So this was very much a one-on-one. Part, to build trust and to build confidence in the process as I, as the assessor. So I had an individual idea of everybody's strengths and weaknesses. And they also got a report back. It is my responsibility to tell anyone else on the team, including the president, what those responses were. They even fell off the chair, but that was not for me to do. So there was a level of confidentiality that we had a hold into that.
15. We then developed, the chief of staff and I developed, a full workshop, a full-day workshop. That also included Myers-Briggs and set of team-building exercises. And we used the Myers-Briggs as a way to look at their strengths and what could they each individually do to make the institution better? And where did they want to go over time? And what strengths do they have, not just as an individual, but as a leadership team?
16. And one of the things that you're talking about is how do you project them so that they have this kind of self awareness of their own issues? So that was part of the... So then, what do they as a team need to move forward? And where do they have to break any impasses, or get clearer on some issues that were there?
17. I think that the big ah-hah moment was the [inaudible 7:48] table that we did., which was laying out everybody's Myers-Briggs. Even though we had done other needs assessment, or assessment tools, this was a generic enough tool that they could kind of see differences within the group and how the team was balanced or not balanced. And I think also, the president saw that he had some gaps. And then he was over on another particular area in terms of strengths and there were some blind spots that the team had as a whole.
18. But I also think there was an awful lot of open conversation, that fences were able to come down. Everyone who I assessed individually, I asked them, after the interview, did their profiles reflect them? And they all, in all essence, said, "Yes, this reflects exactly who I am." Or they would say, "Yes, my wife or my husband has said this to me." So there were a lot of self-awarenesses. I didn't know it to what degree, but I'm delighted.
19. P6: So there was a lot of self reflection in there. But also, when they came to the table, to the workshop, everybody had the same experience. They had a one-on-one with me. And if they choose to say something, they could, but that wasn't the intent. The intent was knowing what your strengths are and what is it that... Because we also use the overview of the strategic plan, and we did the scenes of where do they want it to go? Where does the institution want to go?
20. One thing, that I also did, was I broke them into different sub-groups. And then they had to create a [WhatsApp 9:48]. Now this is a really interesting experience, because everybody's saying, "I can't create an application, I can't create an app." However, it was all about what do they want to say about their institution and where do they want to project themselves? What was the messaging that they wanted to do?

21. And you could see the level of creativity, some honored the more traditional path, and some people really wanted to engage more with their constituency. It was just really an... It was a couple hours that we did this and they started to realize each of them fall into their role in the institution in kind of a different way. And now how do they bring it together and make it work?
22. So it was actually a good experience because it wasn't getting into the personality, but it was allowing them to kind of develop something about the institution and the goals of the institution. And where do they want it... and how can they make it better? And how, as a team, they can lead the institution. And not just say, "It's the president's responsibility."
23. And everybody was engaged. This was about a year ago, I followed up with the president about a week ago, ironically. And the team is still intact, nobody left. There's not the same level of contention, and they're moving in a much more positive direction where they're not overstepping each other, type of thing. So, I think they got clear on some role definitions, as well as some external influences that some people were using. So they started to trust one another a little bit more, especially some of the newer folks who weren't where to trust.
24. CA: I do want to clarify, when you say, "external influences," is that people that are not a part of this team, that are exerting influence, or potentially setting agendas for the people who are on the team? Is that the kind of external influence you're talking about?
25. P6: Yes. There are some others that are not a part of the leadership team that are influencing decisions that are actually counter to what the team was trying to accomplish.
26. P6: So there are external factors that were driving some of the decisions and it was causing a problem, because while everybody was trying to move in one direction, there was an antithesis coming from an external source that was causing... that was challenging the team's focus, I think.
27. CA: And that was resulting in mistrust over time.
28. P6: Right, and in this one particular situation, this person was new and was seeking information from an external source that was not a part of the team. And so, the person was having conflicted loyalties, I guess I should say. Because they were getting external advice from somewhere else and it wasn't consistent with what the internal group was trying to focus on. That's the leadership team. Does that make sense?
29. CA: It does
30. P6: When you have an external faction that's causing discontent, and this was a known external factor and had been a problem over the years, how do you... So bringing everybody on board together was kind of an... When you're a new person, who do you trust?
31. P6: And what was really interesting is part of the issue was the strategic plan. And while the team had agreed and adopted the strategic plan, there was people that didn't like a strategic plan, so they were co-opting one of the newer members of the team to derail it. So the new person is trying to identify what's wrong with the plan, and part of it was their own... They had to deal with that constituency, and so, where does their loyalties flow?
32. So the issue for the organization was making sure everybody was clear on what the strategic plan was, and the direction was. And understanding that there will be factions that will try to change it. The other thing that came out of this, and I'll say it is, we had a lot of... some of the people that had actually been at the institution for many years, that had been promoted up from within, saw things very differently than those that were

coming in from the outside. Okay? And also those that were coming up through the organization didn't always feel they had the voice, because I don't think they were mature enough in their leadership to challenge things in an appropriate way. So they basically became pacifists and said, "Well, we'll just wait this through." As opposed to saying, "No, I think we need to address this issue." Is that making any sense?

33. CA: It does.
34. P6: So you have differences in sense of urgency, people proving their own, and then what other external factors are also challenging the system?
35. CA: What, to you, caused you to identify this as your most successful example?
36. P6: Part of it is, we did a lot of different things and... I'll give you, one of them that was very much a very passive person, who was facing and say, "Oh that needs to be addressed," but wouldn't directly do anything even though it was that level of responsibility. When it was all said and done, one or two of them came up and said, "You know what, I really appreciate the fact that I didn't think this was going to work, but I can see the other person's side, and I need to step up to my own issues."
37. And that was really important, is that we created the trust, and we created the environment that they felt safe enough that they could challenge. And especially those, and this is why the one-on-one part, is you have some people that are reticent to share their opinions because they just don't want to, they're not confrontational. Yet we had others on the leadership team that were highly confrontational. And so, what was their responsibility? These were a lot of really good people. The reason that I thought it was important, from my point of view, is creating this safe... listening to people, creating the safe space, getting them to trust the process as much as possible, and having them actively... It wasn't like preaching to them. They literally were able to just kind of sort through their own issues and acknowledge things that they didn't think they could.
38. For me, that was very much of a... Well, you have a team that could completely implode and there's a lot of more, what I'll call, passive-aggressive behavior in the sense of pulling back. So that was what was hard for people if they just didn't want to say anything. And so here was an opp... in a situation where they had to actually be accountable and say something. And that was part of my individual coaching piece, and I didn't coach each one of them when they did the debrief on each of their assessments. For the personal assessment is what held them back. So I gave them three questions to think about, now this is part of a coaching experience that I added for them individually, and then as a group we did this: "What is it you want? What will success look like? And what holds you back?"
39. That's pretty generic, but those were kind of the things that I had each of them individually talk about, and then as a team, "What, as a team, do you want? What would success look like? And what holds this team back?" So I used the same level from an individual perspective, but I also did it at the team level. And that became the leadership, the institutional leadership level.
40. And I think that for me it was really uplifting, a great experience to see what the ah-hah moments for... Everybody had an ah-hah moment somewhere in the process. And this was over a couple months' period that we did this.
41. CA: Did the president go through the same process?
42. P6: Absolutely
43. CA: Was the president an active participant? So they did the profile and the coaching?

44. P6: Absolutely, one-on-one, exactly.
45. P6: So everybody has the same. So there was nobody that was singled out with any kind of exceptions, really. Everybody got the same sort of treatment. And that was really important because it was to level the playing field.
46. And in fact, I didn't allow the president to say anything until at the end. That was my only requirement in the full-day meeting. He could talk, but I gave him an opportunity at the end to have a conclusion [inaudible 00:21:13] and I asked him to do a summary. So he had to pay attention the whole time. He couldn't tell anything. He had said to the team ahead of time, "We're going to do this." But he was not really running the meeting. I ran the meeting as the facilitator so that he could stay... and his role, and this is what I said, his role was to listen to the dynamics too. And then he's the president, he could conclude.
47. That was the only requirement that I had. Because what I didn't want to have was everybody sit back and say, "Okay, well this is his meeting. Whatever." It was their meeting and he was just one of them.
48. And he played along beautifully. He's a real wonderful guy. And he himself said, "I'm five years in, I just want to make sure that my style is working too." He was really self reflective on that, which not all people are that aware.
49. CA NOTE: Most successful case interesting because of how target audience was involved. Very self-directed: self-assessed before group assessment. Individual coaching as a follow-up. Integrated some solutions with the assessment – they happened at the same time.
50. CA NOTE: Participant makes an interesting point about exiting engagements as a success tactic. If the effort is not “win/win” then don’t go through with the process.

Case P7M Interview

1. P7: Yeah. Well, I'm not sure if I'd put that one in the category of least successful and most successful, but talking about one that was successful, and let me choose one from this [inaudible 00:26:20] pro bono [inaudible 00:26:23] working with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the service mission office.
2. Once again, the people that I worked with most directly for this particular project that I'm talking about are the 86 couples, so it's about ... oh, 116, 114 people throughout the United States and Canada that help coordinate all the various service activities and volunteers that I mentioned earlier, these 27,000-some folks throughout the US and Canada.
3. For each year, and by the way, these folks are also involved in essentially pro bono service, and they typically will be directly involved in the role that they have as coordinators of these efforts for about three years, so every year, about 1/3 of the people churn over, there's brand new people, so there's a constant training need. In this particular case, for the brand new volunteers, what happens is that there's certain kinds of training that takes place as they first start this assignment, and then there's additional training, there's a two-day training that takes place here in Salt Lake City for the volunteers that come from various parts of US and Canada.
4. As I mentioned, I've been working in this particular pro bono assignment for about a year and a half. Well, 14 months. And about a year ago, one of the things that I identified was the need for training before they came to Salt Lake City so that the training here in Salt Lake City on site would start off with people having certain kinds of basic concepts and

being able to do certain kinds of things so that there would be better effectiveness in terms of what they did when they got here to Salt Lake.

5. So, in this particular case, I started and I had sat in ... I was experiencing that and then sat in on three different kinds of the courses offered here in Salt Lake, so I had a pretty good idea in terms of exactly what the training was here in Salt Lake. Excuse me.
6. Then I initially met with four content experts and the four people that I met with were involved in working either for several years or at least for the past year and a half with teams throughout the United States and Canada, and I met with them and I was able to talk to them in their language in terms of exactly what we were trying to do, what the overall goal was in terms of wanting to put together some independent training.
7. There were two things about that that I think were really significant. One is that as we were doing that, we were able to have that communication in basically terms that they understood and using comparisons and analogies and so forth, so it wasn't me imposing my ideas on them, it was a collaborative effort with them, and this is the second part of buying in to this whole thing, and them not only buying in, but being enthusiastic about that.
8. As part of that enthusiasm, part of what we were able to do, part of what they did, is put together what they thought would be a basic curriculum in terms of what were the key things that people needed to have as training before they take the training here in Salt Lake.
9. The other thing that happened, and this happened before that meeting, I started working on what I thought in terms of a delivery solution might look like, and in this particular case, since these people were ... and I knew some of their characteristics and so forth, and during those previous versions a few days' training, I was able to actually go through the audience identification in terms of audience characteristics, their experience levels, work with computers and technology, with information about the various systems that they would be using, and some of the things that would be really key in terms of their communications abilities with the people that they'd be working with, and so forth.
10. So, I was able to start identifying the audience characteristics [inaudible 00:34:48] to also start identifying some of the delivery constraints. Obviously, we needed something that would be asynchronous, that people could take at different times, and basically I was able to use some simple video tools, Camtasia, to create a couple prototypes not directly involved with the training, but showing what kind of things that we might be able to put together.
11. So, going back, I met with these four content experts, and part of the result of that meeting was not only this overall vision of what we were talking about, but then they created essentially a content outline and so forth.
12. Now, one of the other things that happens is that we have not only these four overall coordinators that are here out of the Salt Lake area, but each group of coordinators throughout the United States and Canada have what they call an area group coordinator, and that person is essentially acting as a support and an aide and helper as the individual couples perform their task as well as enact that for themselves.
13. We took that preliminary content outline to the area coordinators through a technology similar to what we're using. In this stage we would use [inaudible 00:37:02] ... we're using still here. But same kind of concept, we took it to the area coordinators and found out more in terms of some their issues and so forth, both in terms of the people, their role,

and also specifically the content aligned that way with [inaudible 00:37:41]. We further refined the content outline based on that.

14. One of the other successful things that we did is that sometimes, in some models, the idea is we do a needs assessment, then you do your [inaudible 00:38:10] and so forth. Over the years, part of what I've seen is if you think of your needs assessment as an important first step, but then you think of it as a more cyclical kind of thing, so you build that into your project, so then what you're doing is you're making adjustments as you're going along.
15. So, after we built one of the first training modules for this pre-Salt Lake training, basically, we went back out to not only people here in the office where there's four content experts, but also other people here in the office that were involved in the training effort, as well as to the area coordinators. All together, I think that we touched base with about, oh, 13 different people, 12 or 13 different people, and got their feedback, and we incorporated it in that prototype, but then as we were developing all of those, we did that.
16. So, then the final step is that in January, we had the first training session for this next round of people that had gone through the pre-Salt Lake training. We basically gathered information on ... both formal information as well as informal information to find out whether they had used it, how well it worked, what kind of adjustments we could make, which get ...
17. Part of what I think is an important point in terms of what makes for success is that you're communicating with people in language that they can understand, working towards goals that they have as well as what you have, and not only are you gathering the information, but then, as you're going along, the evaluation efforts and needs assessment helping you to be cyclical rather than just a one-time kind of thing.
18. CA: Can you tell me how you became involved in this group? Were you specifically commissioned by a leader in this program or is it through long association that you became involved?
19. P7: When I came on board as a volunteer with the Service Missionary office, part of the reason that they had me coming on board was the commission of my background or expertise for various aspects of training. However, in this particular case, while they knew that they wanted to improve the training and the training effort and so forth, a lot of the people involved didn't have a very good idea in terms of exactly what that meant. In other words, what I'm saying is that part of the expertise that I brought had to do with all this stuff that we know about in terms of [inaudible 00:42:49] performance and technology and needs assessment and all the other stuff.
20. So, they were very strongly committed to saying, "Yes, we want to deliver training and improve our training. Yes, we had different people working on it in the past and their," ... A lot of the stuff that they had in the past were, like I say, this two-day training class that they were [inaudible 00:43:29] and a lot of the instructional job-based kind of things, but in terms of [inaudible 00:43:41] having the expertise to know exactly what needed to be done, they just needed ... they wanted to improve some of the training.
21. CA: And it was the mission office leadership who brought you into this work?
22. P7: Yes, it was.
23. CA: And did they remain involved throughout or-
24. P7: Yes, they did.
25. P7: Yeah, I mentioned those four content experts that I work with. Part of what we do is also, and throughout the whole project, kept touching base with them, both in terms of

review, but also, and this is very, very, important, getting their agreement and buy-in of this along the way and their strong commitment to doing this. So, they were real strongly involved and strongly committed in sponsoring the effort all along the way.

26. CA: Is there anything that you would like to add in general about needs assessment and areas of focus for new practitioners working in that area that I haven't asked about?
27. P7: Yep, the two projects that I've talked about were pretty much solo, on my own, working independently. Other projects that I've worked on in the past [inaudible 00:45:54], yeah, various corporate settings, Arthur Andersen Company, Boeing, [inaudible 00:46:04], [inaudible 00:46:08], other corporate settings that I've worked at. In some cases, I've worked individually, but in many cases, probably most, I worked as part of a team. And the dynamics are a little bit different when you're working as part of a team, because there, not only does it become important to know your individual role, but the counseling, the collaboration role, and the clarity of communication becomes so very important. When you're working individually, communication is really key, but the role that you have in terms of communication becomes different, but important if you're working in a team.
28. P7: Okay. I think that for new practitioners, it's also very important to be humble enough and respectful enough of other people's expertise, and really respect the other people that are involved in the project, or respect they have some expertise.
29. In other words, the idea that I sometimes seen where people come in and not only try to talk in language that they understand, so when talking about a needs assessment and so forth rather than putting that in terms that the people that they're working with understand, and trying to understand the people, the environment, and the content, and have a respect of those and regard for the expertise of other people that you're working, I think, is vital to that kind of thing.
30. CA NOTE: Again challenged by the shear depth of knowledge and experience of the participant. These two cases are described in more precision, but still have to work to avoid over generalization vs. case specifics.
31. CA NOTE: Least successful is first truly international work context. Seems to hold patterns with other cases.
32. CA NOTE: Participant stresses that they were solo practitioner on their cases, suggests that team-based efforts might be fundamentally different. Requirements of communication and collaboration impose differences.

Case P8M Interview

1. P8: Okay. Again, when we're talking needs assessment, it can be pretty broad. I mean, we conducted research study last summer out or after the [initial 00:02:09] the results and we were looking at amputees and why they join [inaudible 00:02:19] well they might rejoin support groups and whether technology can help enhance their participation and offer more opportunity for them. So I'm not sure if it's a research study, but it's focused on what have [inaudible 00:02:41]
2. P8: We did a research study last summer. We were trying to find out what amputees want in a support group. So that's a type of the needs the process [through 00:04:01]. But it was basically an open ended survey. Do you want to hear about that or are you looking for some other aspect of needs assessment? Because the other thing we looked at, in fact

tomorrow I'm meeting with a group of patients to look at a satisfaction survey, patient satisfaction survey.

3. P8: Well, yeah. The thing with the support group, the amputee support group is, well yes we want to improve their experience and their performance. The information that actually goes to support group leaders who organize support group meetings. It's the learnings that they get from their constituencies if you will, that allows for the changes and improvement hopefully in performance. So let me briefly talk about that. They were four questions we basically wanted answered. Why do people, why do amputees join support groups? Why do they leave? Why might they come back and is there a role for technology? The answers to the questions, and again, I'm over simplifying, but basically amputees initially joined support groups to learn more about living life as an amputee with a focus on getting as much of their normal functionality back as possible and learning from other people that have been through it.
4. So the common link of connecting with other amputees helps them improve their capabilities and see that it's possible for them to move beyond what they see as a limitation at the moment. However, over time what we learned is that once they get a certain level of functionality and mobility and most of their life back, if not all of it, staying a part of the support group is insufficient. Simply on the basis of being a fellow amputee, he needs to be more common. And the feedback we received with very often was, "I don't have that much in common with the other people in the group beyond being an amputee." So, that answered a question early on. It's an issue of functionality, later on it's connectivity commonality. And people often leave because they don't feel they're getting anything out of the group anymore.
5. They've reached as far as they can and the lack of connection means that they don't know who participate or the topic. The other reason they leave is the topics of the support group meetings don't resonate with them and that comes back, what we learned there was who drives the agenda and the content. And when it's healthcare professionals, as opposed to the support group participants, there is a greater risk of losing participants because it's not being driven as much by the participants. So I mean those are the learnings we took away. When it came to technology, we asked them, "What's your level of confidence technology?" And then we had 54 people in the study. The youngest age was 20 and the oldest was 82. We asked the group what their confidence level was with using technology and I say 85% told us that they're pretty confident. And the majority use it every day, with a few using it weekly and one or two never.
6. So we asked them would you participate more if it was teleconference capability, video conference capability or virtual reality. And the general feeling, it was pretty mixed. And we looked at the data from different directions by age group, by gender, and we got different answers. So anyway, I don't want to bore you with these details but the idea of what we were looking at the data, we're trying to look at it from different perspectives. Understanding that there's a general belief. I'm still not convinced, but there's a general belief that younger people are more capable with technology than older people. They may be more comfortable, but I don't know if they're more capable. And we found that there was some correlation to that belief, but not as much as people make it out to be.
7. CA: Okay, good. Yeah, that absolutely doesn't bore me out. I love to hear about research like that. Let me ask you some specific questions about the work that you did here. First

of all, I understand that you were seeking to answer these four questions, but what was the goal behind that understanding? What results are you trying to drive for or through?

8. P8: We're trying to understand if there's a role for virtual reality in the use of avatars. Basically, obviously when you lose a limb, there is a level of grief and issues of body image and I was involved with another study with a colleague because I'm an amputee, right leg below the knee. It'll be nine years in June. And I took part of the support group that was using avatars, which is very interesting because if you ever go to second life or any of those environments, everybody is 25 and above.
9. P8: Well here we have people join this support group and yes, they would take on a young healthy avatar, but then they'd say, "I want to make sure I'm walking around wearing prosthetic on my avatar." And some people didn't want that at all.
10. P8: In that environment too, being able to do exercises that you might not be doing or should be doing in real world, perhaps gaining confidence and understanding how to do them better, to an avatar so that you would then try it at home on your own.
11. P8: So that was why we were trying to answer some basic questions, whether support groups, my belief going into this as we, there's an opportunity for more information here or more research. My belief is that the virtual reality aspect would be helpful for amputees who don't have a support group geographically close to them and they have barriers of transportation or distance or scheduling where they can take part in the support group. So I think the technology definitely could lend itself and you could have various support groups at various times. So depending on where people are, because obviously you're not restricted to a particular hospital or location. So this was preliminary to get more information about the broader use of virtual reality in helping patients.
12. CA: Was there a client or a client team that brought you into this work?
13. P8: Nope, I semi retired and I do professional consulting on performance issues. Having been a subject in my current research partner's study, before she was a research partner for me, we got to talking after I finished my role as a subject and decided, because she's really into the virtual reality stuff, I can take it or leave it. I participated, but it really doesn't... I'm so busy. I'd want to spend my life in the real world not really in this virtual one. So there are people, I have friends who are so isolated that the only way they get out is through this virtual reality and I understand that very well.
14. There's one lady who was a [quad 00:00:12:47], I mean missing on hands and feet and the only way she could really participate in the world and do things like dancing and stuff. I mean she's got [past her history 00:12:53] and she gets around, but the second life is allowed you to do even more.
15. P8: So to your question. We got a little bit of sponsorship only because of people I know, but this was a study we did on our own. The Amputee Coalition gave us the access to their membership for a fee and that fee was covered by a prosthetic company that I work with on another project.
16. CA: You mentioned you had a research partner. Were there any more people helping you with this or are working on a research team or was it just you and your partner?
17. P8: My research partner at the beginning because she has connections with a university. I've had jumped faculty, I didn't pick a college and I only teach every two years. Whereas [Name] is a part of the VA down in Tampa, Florida. I'm up in Pennsylvania and she's doing research projects all the time and working with amputees and people with other disabilities all the time. So she had access to the survey tool we use. We use REDcap. So,

she helps with the administration. She's also helping out with getting it published, but I pretty much put together the survey with a grad student She had who was only involved in the project for a couple of weeks until her coursework was done.

18. It was somebody working on their master's degree. So they were helpful. Her name was [Name] and she was very helpful. But then she dropped out of this whole process or wasn't involved in collecting the data or in analyzing rather the final paper. And I did most of that. Sandy, my partner, she critiqued it and made a few changes, some very good suggestions, but I had more time than she did because she was dealing with a few medical issues [around 00:00:15:03]. So it worked very well. But it was basically the two of us with the grad student at the beginning who was learning how to use REDcap, which was the survey instrument. Are you familiar with that one?
19. P8: Exactly. There were a total of 39 elements to the survey because what we tried to do is we know people don't like to fill in text. So we tried to anticipate what all the possible answers would be for a particular question. So we may have as many as eight, nine or even 10 choices, but then we leave other, because we couldn't anticipate everything. And so people wouldn't most questions but they may only answer other on three or four, that much. And on one or two questions, other was the biggest response, not because we missed it in the choices we anticipated but people wanting to elaborate beyond the choices we gave them. It was very interesting.
20. CA: And then, what was the time frame of the work from the time that you sort of conceived of this study and started planning it through?
21. P8: It was a year ago, basically. February, March, we were talking about the idea, we put the survey together by April and got IRB approval and then I think we launched the thing in May and it ended the end of August for as far as the survey goes. And then I use the [walls 00:17:06] to write the paper and look at the data, figuring out, excuse me, how to slice and dice the data. It was fun because there's so many ways you could look at it. We have a whole bodies with 54 people. Interestingly, the split between male and female, was about 31% female, 69% male and that tends to match the national average, which was good. So we did get feedback where women, sometimes are the only people in the support groups. So they had some other needs and interests. So we looked at the data on some of the questions in terms of the participants, as a total group, then looked at the difference between male and female.
22. And we also looked at the military how much of the group. 15% of the group actually had military service. So some of the early questions, actually the first three questions about why join, why leave, why come back? We pretty much looked along gender lines, military service. The last question around technology that one we sliced and diced the data along age bands. So we only had 54 people, so we came up with three bands, 20 to 39, 40 to 59, 60 and older. And so we looked at the technology again because the research that we had done that suggests that there is an age bias in using technology.
23. CA: Did you face any particular challenges in conducting this research?
24. P8: I was hopeful we'd get more participants because amputees are not shy. But it was just trying to get as many people as possible to take the survey. And once people heard about it, most people wanted to do it. It is a bit biased in that group we reached for those that are in support groups for the most part. Although we went through the coalition, so a lot of people may not be part of a support group. But the whole coalition itself was started by support groups 30 years ago or 25 years ago.

25. So it really wasn't all that difficult. We were just hoping to get a slightly higher number. Actually with 59 people enrolled, but only 54 completed it. But it's still statistically significant and it gives us a little bit of insight and nobody's really asked these kinds of questions before for this particular type of support group.
26. CA: Why did you choose this as a successful example? What factors do you think made this successful?
27. P8: I think the results. Getting some insight as to how most amputees seem to have a changing need, driving them to participate in support groups. Early on as I said, it seems to understand their new life, their new situation and try to get things back and the only way they can do that is to talk to amputees because they talked to doctors and nurses and they're all focused on the medical side of things and to understand, how am I going to get a job or getting in around my house and things like that. How do other amputees deal with it? So again, why I think it's successful is it confirmed that early on, people want to gain more functionality, what was new and why I think this was successful, we found out, once people achieve that, there's a different motivation for either continuing with a support group or driving the departure from the support group.
28. And then that opens up the opportunity for additional research to find out how can we... Do we want people to be in support group for 30 years? Is that really necessary for this audience that we don't know? Is it good to come and go? Again, more standards. And we have to do a little introduction of the study. We also went back in history to find out what we brought in the first support group. And that was pretty interesting. It was actually a mental asylum in France in the 1800s where they decided to use former patients as orderlies and found them to be very effective, more effective in fact than the doctors working with the patients.

Case P9M Interview

1. P9: I'm the HR leader for a global organization. I currently support the IT function at [Name]. Every quarter, the senior leadership team does a talent assessment on a variety of different topics, succession planning, or leadership potential or whatever. The thing that came to mind that I thought was particularly successful was we did a assessment on manager/people capability. So, I can talk a little bit about what we did to establish the needs and what was the result. What were the outcomes. I don't know how much detail you want.
2. CA: What does the organization hope to get out of the work?
3. P9: Really, to increase the overall capability of the organization and to build bench. We have a lot of work going on relative to workforce planning and really increasing certain competencies. The focus of the quarterly meetings may differ depending on what it is we're talking about because there's different aspects, and we've been pretty consistent about making sure that we've had these things on a quarterly basis.
4. CA: How is the work structured?
5. P9: I have a global talent manager that works for me. She and I were really partnering in this activity. What we did is... And this is not... The reason it came to mind as a success is it's not... There's some practices and processes that [Name] does as a natural rhythm that everybody does. Whereas this particular needs assessment was one that we did that was really separate and apart from anything anyone else was doing.

6. So, what we did was we took the competency model that we're focused on those people leader characteristics and dimensions. We had every single one of our senior leaders assess their direct reports on the dimensions in terms of whether they had the skills or they did not have the skills. So we have assess the talent at an individual level, and then we did that work in advance of a facilitated session, when we then wrapped up all of the results and kind of looked at the organizational themes.
7. As a result of the organizational themes, we then deployed certain learning and development strategies or certain individual one-on-one actions relative to individual development plans. It was really very successful because some of the things that made it successful is we required the leaders to do the assessment work in advance and think about it so that when they came to the facilitated conversation, they were very well prepared to represent their team and their people. It was very successful. I was really proud of the work that we did.
8. CA: What were the outcomes?
9. P9: Both at an individual level and at an organizational level. At the individual level, there were specific actions back to an individual if there was particular areas that an individual needed to focus on from a coaching and development perspective. Or in some cases, we moved the manager out of the people leader role because they really weren't performing.
10. Then there were also some organizational outcomes in that we deployed certain training and development topics, one on career development and having career conversations. Actually we even measured that. We have a employee engagement survey, and one of the dimensions is career development. We went up 10 points after we had done this career development conversations.
11. The other one was a focus on executive communications, was a pattern of needs across this population where we did some focus development sessions, and we probably would not have done those sessions had we not done the assessment that got us there. Those are two examples of outcomes.
12. CA: Of the group of leaders where you gathered data, about how large was that group?
13. P9: About 40 people.
14. CA: 40. And then you mentioned they rated all of their direct reports. How much larger was that second-tier group?
15. P9: The first tier was like 12, 14, people.
16. P9: They rated their direct reports, which I remember... Only their people leaders. They have more direct reports than the people leader. So, it was about 40.
17. P9: Maybe 30 days. 30 to 45 days. I don't remember, but it wasn't long.
18. CA: Did you face any particular challenges in this effort?
19. P9: No. I think that because the leaders themselves aren't used to speaking in the language of competencies, that there was variability. And of course, you've also got grader bias. And this group of people haven't spent enough time together to really understand what good looks like and what good doesn't look like. So a secondary, I don't know that it was a difficulty, but a secondary outcome, was it really helped the leadership team come together in terms of the understanding of similar dimensions.
20. CA: Why did you pick this as your most successful example?
21. P9: Probably just because it was something that we did, that we saw as a need for the organization, and we had support to have these quarterly conversations and it was

separate and apart from the normal sort of operating rhythm of the company. We do performance partnership things every year. I've been in HR for a very long time. There are certain things that we do every year, in good days and bad days, cycles.

22. So, because this was unique and because the leadership team was so engaged and because they did their homework. Sometimes you have to push and prod, but in this case, there was good engagement at the leadership level and good conversation. The session itself was not long. I don't remember if it was half a day or... It wasn't like it was multi... It was done in a way that was time bound and was purposeful and had outcomes and really created some things coming out of it. So, I don't know why it came to mind, but it did.
23. CA NOTE: Contrast between cases for this participant is the creation of a group vision (most successful) and taking action on only an individual vision (least successful).

Case P10M Interview

1. P10: With the most successful, so this has been just a large part of my career is doing these. So, I'm trying to think of one that ... A lot of what I've done is internally facing with staff needs assessments and working with workforce. Probably, one of the more interesting ones that I've worked with is in the country of Georgia in Tbilisi. I did an assessment of nongovernmental entity. I want to get their name exactly right. Give me just one second.
2. P10: All right. I can find my file, but I don't see the final report. Just one sec. Oh, yes. Okay. So, one of the entities that I assessed was called GRASS. It was Georgia's Reform Associates. It's G-R-A-S-S. What happened in this specific instance was they reached out to USAID for funding, and they have quite a political agenda. USAID is conscious of not supporting specific political movements against others. So, they asked me to do an assessment of their ... I guess I was looking across the board at a number of different things. Do you know the organizational capacity assessment tool?
3. P10: Okay. So, I was using that predominantly. So, I was looking at their governance structure, their financial management approaches, everything from segregation of duties, to time tracking, to program management, field supervision, how they were managing other donors funds and things like that. Then, the ultimate goal was to report back to the client, my client USAID on whether they were an appropriate entity to support.
4. P10: So, I was the lead assessor. I developed the assessment tools, adapted the OCA, the Organizational Capacity Assessment tool, led all communications with the stakeholder with GRASS, and then conducted the interviews, did the analysis, and wrote the report with the recommendations, then followed up with them in implementation of some of the recommendations. There are certain elements of it that made it quite successful in my mind.
5. CA: Good. What was the duration of your engagement with that group?
6. P10: It was over two months. Yeah, I'm sure. I mean, I physically was working with them for a much lesser amount of time in their offices, but from desk research to finishing the report was two months.
7. CA: Were you a sole assessor or were you working with the team?
8. P10: No, I was the sole assessor.
9. CA: Were there any other roles involved? PM roles or a dedicated client personnel?

10. P10: No. I mean, I reported to the project director on the ground who sat in a project office. Again, these are projects funded by USAID. Then I reported, like I had an in brief and a debrief with the USAID representative, the cognizant, the contract officer representative, the COR. On a day-to-day basis, it was really more the in brief debrief and sharing the methodology, and schedule, and final report. Draft and then final.
11. CA: When you were collecting data, did you work primarily with the leadership of that organization, or were you working across multiple levels?
12. P10: It was definitely the latter. It was the leadership, and then the department heads. At some point, actually sitting with the personnel because we do evidence-based obviously, or not obviously, hopefully I guess. Evaluations where I was saying, "Show me the position description. Let's open the file. Show me where the time sheet was kept for last month of the event to make sure." If they have it, great, but if they have it in place and it's being used is a separate question. So, I was actually sitting with the HR assistant, looking at files to say, this has been evidenced, or it's not. It's been demonstrated or it hasn't been.
13. CA: So over the two months, can you walk me through again just the high level steps that you took?
14. P10: Sure, yeah. I think, I mean the first thing I did was research the organization and their request for funding to try to understand what they were looking for and what the rationale was for their request. I was looking at their imprint or footprint in terms of social media and web presence to confirm that they're nonpartisan. I'm looking at any reports that they've delivered or anything I could find online, and then tailor the assessment tool, the OCA for what we needed.
15. After that, I drafted the methodology actually probably before I even did the desk research and shared that very brief. Then, put together a proposed schedule of the different ... Since it was internally facing with one organization, just the different units within the organization that I wanted to meet with and why, and share the assessment tool with the entity because I wanted them to know transparently what I was going to be trying to capture.
16. Then, I physically traveled out and oriented myself with the team, and the tool, and talked about what they were going to see and how it was going to be shared. Then, I conducted the actual interviews and did some of the physical evidence-based reviews, basically file reviews and interviewed random staff walking by to ask them questions too about the workflow and their knowledge on certain policies that the organization said everyone was familiar with just to see if they really were. Then, I wrote up the draft and the final reports and did my debrief.
17. CA: What were the results from this effort?
18. P10: So fortunately, I guess I can say the client that I was working for at USAID didn't have visibility on the organization or its competencies. So, they were very relieved to hear how solid the organization was and that there was redundancy built in, a succession plan, which is often a challenge with smaller organizations. They might be a one-person show and if you give them funding and that person leaves, you've lost a lot. So, that was positive. I think the client really learned a lot and appreciated their focus on kind of this cross-sectorial dialogues and things that were just showing that they truly were impartial and nonpartisan. So, they gave them funding.
19. P10: The other benefit, this is quite specific, but the organization had a board and really wasn't leveraging its board the best way it could. The board was large. I think 12 people.

They weren't utilizing them to have interface with the media or to support fundraising, which is what we often use a board for in the US. So, I spent a lot of time talking with them about ... This obviously is beyond me, like an assessment. I was giving them technical assistance about how to leverage a board mainly for resource mobilization, for fundraising, and for externally facing media, et cetera. Also, that only one board members should be providing direction and guidance to the executive director because 12 people are reaching out to tell the executive director what their job. It's kind of a lose-lose.

20. So, I think that helped morale and it helped them have a larger vision about how they can drive forward funding.
21. P10: I can't speak to how they're exactly doing now, but they seemed to be doing well.
22. CA: Was that technical advice and assistance, is that what you meant when you mentioned earlier you've worked with them on some implementation items?
23. P10: Yes.
24. P10: Exactly. Also about that expectation management, I couldn't comment to the organization whether they were going to get funding or not, which was of course their main question was, "Did we pass? Do we get money?"
25. P10: It was above my authority.
26. CA: But you were able to give them general guidance?
27. P10: Absolutely, yeah. That was the other thing. We did a review of their donor applications and spent some time, this is again on the technical assistance side, but on how they can tailor their different past corporate or capabilities, their past successes and things, tailor those to be more responsive to donor requests because what they were doing was just kind of recycling the same application over and over and a donor sees through that pretty quickly.
28. CA: What were the other reasons that you call that this out as a most successful example?
29. P10: I mean, I guess the fact that the goal was to gain the buy-in of the organization and implementing it, so that it was seen as a value add and not an external audit that was going to cause them heart attacks. I think it was a real collaborative and substantive assessment that was done in a participatory manner. That's for me the minimum, I think definition of success that it wasn't forced upon them or seen as this external body coming out, telling them what they're doing wrong.
30. So, I had a lot of buy-in. They were very eager to implement straightaway the feedback and recommendations. So, there was a lot of just interest, and engagement, and commitment. Then the outcome of the actual assessment that it resulted in confidence by the client was great. I didn't have any preference either way. I didn't know how they were going to pan out because I didn't know them before, but that was a positive thing for them.
31. Then I think, knowing that some of the stuff stuck regarding specifically the board engagement and a revised investment, hopefully it created a better quality of life for the executive director too.
32. P10: Because he was getting calls from 12 people every hour on the hour kind of thing.
33. CA: Any particular challenges that you faced in this effort?
34. P10: I mean, I think anytime you're an external force doing an assessment, there is this fear that you're doing an audit that you're going to reveal something that makes them uncomfortable. So, I wouldn't say it was a challenge as much as it requires extra attention is that initial phase of really truly being seen as an honest broker, as someone that is

looking out for evidence-based, factual representation of reality. The goal is not to catch them in the act of doing something. So, that's much easier said than done. It's like building that trust and safety or comfort at the beginning. So that's probably the only thing, I think.

35. I found that I can say that almost across the board in my 20 years, that's something you cannot underestimate the importance of drinking tea and talking through like the real intention behind the assessment, and the utility of it, and how it will be shared, or else you're not going to get necessarily an honest response, speaking very generally of course.
36. CA: Any other particular techniques or components that you have found successful in building that trust?
37. P10: I mean, I think using comparisons without naming names of other entities that deal with similar or even worse challenges always makes people feel better. Where I don't necessarily use the sandwich, where you praise and then give them criticism and then finish up with praise. If there is a finding that is egregious, I always try to calibrate like put it in terms of, "You've got this issue and this gap. Here are ways that it can easily be fixed. Let's do the root cause analysis, really figure out why it's happening," whether it's retention, like they have massive attrition or whatever the issue is. Give them examples of organizations that have had an even worse experience and how they've overcome it, I think gives an entity some confidence that they can address it.
38. P10: Probably, where I've done it and the bigger challenge like I mentioned with the beginning is a lot of organizations are resistant to a succession plan, especially smaller ones because it means that you're replaceable. I've been predominantly 10 years in Middle East, and now in East Africa, Eastern Southern Africa for about five years.
39. The one man or one woman show is quite more common than having a collaborative group of leadership with deputies built in. It's just I mean, probably honestly the case in the US a lot too with small organizations, but really having that conversation can be touchy because people usually in cases, they've built the organization off with their own two bare hands and they're just so personally passionate about it. They couldn't imagine not doing anything else, but that doesn't give donors confidence.
40. P10: Yeah, I guess trying to be relatable, and accessible, and try to bring humor. That's always, I think ... Not always, not Somalia for example. It can help lessen or keep the environment more collaborative.
41. CA: Is there anything that hasn't surfaced in our conversation about these two incidents that you might share with newer practitioners?
42. P10: Sure. Just a quick comment. I have a new manager who literally became a manager about a month ago heading out to do a training on finance for a whole project from 70 staff to $70 million project. She just was overwhelmed. So, we were talking almost about that exactly like how do you approach the work. The first thing I asked her to do was meet with the key stakeholders. In this case, it's the program director on the ground, the finance director, or the operations manager, et cetera, and ask them how they're currently doing the financial management, what their experience has been managing the financials, or from the project leads perspective, what types of reports does he wish he was getting that he's not.
43. So, look at it as like a needs assessment before you just launch into training them on what you think is right. So, I guess making sure that it's clear you're open to any and all feedback, and that you're going to be judicious in deciding what you're going to focus on.

I think, listening more than talking is just critical. Also, not coming in with a bias. So, we talk about that a lot in our work.

44. Unfortunately it's an inherent bias, a thing where you already have an idea of how things are going to unfold and you shouldn't. You should go in as much as you can with complete objectivity. If you do have bias, you need to really rethink why that was. Why you came in with that perspective.
45. P10: I do also think I'm a big fan of anecdotal experiences, especially as I lead trainings on institutional capacity building. Do you know the HICD methodology, like human and institutional capacity?
46. P10: A human performance technology, I guess is what we call it in the real world, but USAID calls it HICD. So, I lead these trainings and I'm much more about anecdotal experiences, but a recent training I had, it was very clear people wanted quantitative data. So, when I was giving you that example of using stories to show that you're not doing that bad. There had been organizations that have had this, this, and this to confront.
47. Anecdotes will work with some people, but I can also say now safely that others might really want quantitative, more than qualitative or more than anecdotal. They want to know the actual numbers behind stuff.
48. P10: Yes. A lot of what we do is more one off, we're not doing a great job necessarily, except in the health realm and education realm, and having tons of data around the institutional strengthening we do. I wish I could say it was different.
49. CA NOTE: Least successful case here faced unwilling participants at multiple levels. Participant mentions pride, but does that generalize to the perception that the process will harm me (as target audience member) in some way?
50. CA NOTE: Interesting that a similar challenge shows up in most successful case. In this case it's fear that the assessment is really and audit to identify wrongdoing.
51. CA NOTE: Participant stresses interpersonal nature of assessment: being relatable and assessable, using humor (sometimes), gaining buy-in. Also mentions how success improved relationship between some stakeholders.

Case P11M Interview

1. P11: Okay. Most successful needs assessments, and I'll have to preface this with, again, I work in the corporate sector.
2. P11: Even though I've also been an academic, but primarily corporate.
3. P11: The problem with corporate is, they don't put monetary value into that. And I asked the professionals, contractors, boutiques, large houses, can't get them on their side. Corporate doesn't want to pay for needs assessments. It's basically, "I know what I want and this is it."
4. The follow-up to that is you would either, unfortunately, get too much information or too little information. Both of them are both problems.
5. P11: One was with AAA insurance, who I was an employee for about seven years and it was trying to figure out how to automate with secondary, trying to figure out how to let every new claims adjuster understand the process. It's literally a flowchart and flowcharting has been, if I can get the clients to give me the time with limited SMEs, primarily one lead SME who makes the call and they can flow chart it, then we have content to work with that's approved.

6. So in that example with AAA, we took the whole, for example, home insurance claims process, flowcharted it out into about probably 15 pages of Vizio.
7. P11: And then ended up able to program that, but that was pre-easy applications. So I hard coded it in HTML pages so that even newbies and report takers could simply click through the process and all the decisions were in the background.
8. P11: In that example. The second best example was with a rather aggressive startup that got sold about a year ago for a great amount of money. They needed personal internal business processes documented so they could find out where their gaps were. So it's gap analysis, task analysis, and also we found out an awful lot about office politics in the meantime, but again, it was a flowcharting exercise and those have always been the most productive, least cost exercises I've ever been involved with. It's lasted the longest, it cost the clients the least amount of money and they had the longest run and return.
9. CA: Great. So let me first dig into the insurance example. So you mentioned that the goal of the assessment was, you were trying to give new claims adjusters ... Increase their understanding of the process. Any other goals that were associated with that project?
10. P11: Yeah, it was also so that with the logic being built into an online system, which is where I eventually took it, was so that report takers, who are basically call center folk could, before they deliver the claim report to the claims adjuster, would have accurate information for the claims adjuster to know, i.e. codes of what type, what format, what level of damage, et cetera. So this allowed the call taker to understand what the code was and send that email to the claims adjuster that would say, "Oh, okay, I get it," and everybody's working off the same workflow.
11. CA: And do you recall how that effort or how that initiative came about?
12. P11: Well, I was working for AAA at the time and was charged with doing this and we were lucky to get a single SME and I worked with her over the course of probably three months to nail down this literal Vizio workflow, and then have it run up the chain to verify that it's correct.
13. P11: Probably one of my most rewarding experiences in terms of being precise.
14. P11: I had a partner in instructional design, but she wasn't the lead.
15. P11: She was a support. So it was me and one other instructional designer. We were a team, but we were working on other projects together. I was the lead on this project, and we were a great pair, and she knew to let me do what I needed to do and it was basically my support.
16. P11: About three months because this was not a ... I'm surprised they didn't put this, this was not a rush project. We just convinced people saying, "This is going to help and if we can carry it down into the next level of employee from claims adjuster, who's a full insurance claims adjuster, down to the report taker and get it out electronically," so they don't have to be pouring through a document or making phone calls to other people. Both parties are working with the same business logic, off the same single web link.
17. CA: Do you recall any particular challenges that you faced over the course of that three months of work?
18. P11: Well, in the course of the project, one of the possible complaints was that we were only using one primary SME, i.e., the world according to this SME. However, we dismissed that because in insurance, we all have to follow the policy and the policy language and the policy rules. So regardless of what she's saying, what she's saying has to follow the policy. So we were challenged in terms of, this SME might not be the best

person or does she know everything? Well maybe, maybe not. But everything that she gave us was according to the insurance policy.

19. CA: Are there other factors that cause you to recall this or to choose this as your most successful?
20. P11: Well again, this is, this one was quite a long time ago and it was working with an organization that did not have an e-learning or a web based development infrastructure. So I was basically using my own programs and I hard-coded this in HTML and was able to deliver it so that everybody could use it, right? So that was a double whammy for this. I should have gotten paid a lot more to do what I did, but the opportunity was there. I was able to make it clean. It still works. I believe they're still using it and that was probably, like I said, about 15 years ago. But just the sessions with me, my colleague and our SME figuring this out and clearly documenting it in business process flows and then verifying it had a huge payoff and that basically is all needs assessment.

Case P12M Interview

1. P12: Well, I'm going to give you a very successful one because it was done but I would say using all 10 standards of ISPI. I'm an avid believer in, so there was a two fold thing. I was tasked with doing an assessment of needs of churches. So I worked for a company and we support basically churches, the Episcopal church nationwide. And so if you're employed by the church, you may have benefits, retirement, health, dental, life, disability and all of that. And if you think that there's 5,000 plus churches and schools and institutions and all of that, of all these employees that are eligible for benefits and there's an administrator at each of these organizations, sometimes the administrator is a paid position, sometimes it's a volunteer, it's all of the above.
2. But there was someone responsible for enrolling employees, reporting salary changes, retirement, and all of that. So we looked at the service model for administrators and how we serve them. And there was an opportunity, there are two opportunities. One was how could we better serve them? Because we were hearing was our efforts were appreciated, but we weren't fully giving our administrators what they needed. And we had a model in place, were about 350 administrators, were getting a little bit more robust support, but there were 5,000 others that were not, and that was just dependent on how big or small they were.
3. So the assessment was to figure out a model so that our administrators could better understand, evaluate and articulate the value that we give them and that we provide them and what that would mean to meet their needs. So the assessment was what do administrators need? And what are we going do to fill that need? That was the project.
4. P12: Right. So in this one I was the lead. It was my responsibility to do the assessment. And so I primarily, it was me, my manager and a colleague, we were the core team. And then when I talk about taking a systemic view in partnerships, which are two of the standards of ISPI within ... I partnered with many people to gather information to implement a solution, build a solution, be a part of a solution. I partnered with everyone from IT to legal, to compliance, to policy, to web strategy, to research and all of that. But the core team was with me, my boss and another colleague.
5. CA: And what was the duration of the project?

6. P12: I would say about six to nine months. We start implementing some of the low hanging fruit early on? But I think that's the final assessment. It was probably nine months later.
7. P12: So what we did is we started to look at the service that we provide and then we segmented our clients. So we looked at different things first we looked at how big ... so within the church sometimes people assess different things. They always start off with, how many people go to church on Sunday or what's the net operating income? Well, we are looking really about benefits administrators. And what we realize is not how much money the church has, it's how many employees they have?
8. They only have one employee, the administration aspect it's not all that grueling. One person which means they might have an annual salary change and a occasional marriage or a dependent, and then they're going to have a termination or retirement and that's it. Whereas if you have someone that has 20 or more, they're probably calling us about once a month for a question about how to do something and then you also have within the Episcopal church on what's called the diocese and that it's a regional thing where you have diocese has jurisdiction, parishes and schools and institutions. So the diocese could have anywhere from 50 to 200 and so if you're an administrator in a diocese, you're doing a lot more work because not only are you supporting your own institution, you're a support system for the parishes within your diocese.
9. So we looked at this segments and then we did focus groups and we asked our clients, what their needs were and why they call the ... Went to the call center where we pulled data, trying to understand how often our clients call. What they ask when they call? So we did a full on needs assessment and then we did our gap assessment from there. So why are we not providing what their needs are and figuring out how we could from there start to look at some solutions as to how we could start providing what they need?
10. CA: And the gap analysis, what methods or measures did you use to gather that data?
11. P12: Well, so for the gap analysis it was sort of interesting because one was the model simply to support it. We didn't have people, so what we found was, here's an example, we said that if you're a diocese, you get one of the service that you get is actual an account manager. So when that's going to visit you once a year or every other year, there's going to be your dedicated resource to call because you're a diocese and you have lots of responsibility. But if you're a parish you don't, because we say a parish ... there were multiple parishes that lead up to a diocese. So our analysis was incorrect because some parishes had more employees than the diocese, so part of that was really realizing. What if you're a parish and you have more than 10 employees, you should actually have your own account manager too.
12. So that actually led to one of the solutions, which was to expand the account management model, which actually led to hiring two more people so that we can provide account management services to parishes with 20 or more employees. So part of that was one of the gaps. The other gap was information, was inconsistent within the call center. And so we had to look at why with information, like information on our web didn't match information that was other places, so some of those gaps. When we did the cause analysis it was just that there was a lack of coordination so we streamlined information so that we make sure information changed one place, that it changed everywhere else.
13. The other gap was timely information. We weren't giving information out timely, so we built like newsletters that go out every other month or every month with what we would

call just in time information. One of the gaps is again that goes back to timely information is whenever there's a new administrator hired at a church and that person needs something much more urgent. And we didn't have the support to training someone, we're a small company, we weren't staffed where we could actually train an administrator hands on. So we built a new administrator online onboarding program so that if you're a new administrator you could go online and take seven very short online tutorials and onboard yourself.

14. Some of the gaps were timeliness and service. We weren't meeting our client needs in a timely manner. So if something was escalated it might take five to 10 business days for a resolution. So he worked with the call center on building better service level agreements and setting better expectations for our clients.
15. P12: And then the other was that clients did even know that we had a support model. Like they didn't know we had a resource for administrators, which had already existed. So one of the solutions there, it was just advertising. Sending out a little postcard to all 5,000 churches and institutions saying, we have administrative resources, here's your one stop shop, here's special section on our website. So education was one of the things where, I guess the gap was people don't know what they don't know. They don't know that we exist, they don't know that we have support models in place and so it's advertising that support.
16. CA: What challenges did you face during this project?
17. P12: Well, for this project, some of the challenges were just time. We were a small team and so trying to get a lot of work done in a small amount of time and having just the resources to do the analysis that we needed to do. Many cooks in the kitchen, well, one of the solutions was building a better service level agreement between client services and the policy team and IT. It just took a lot of time getting folks together and building these solutions together, when it came to building the resources working with legal and compliance to give us a quick enough turnaround time. So I think it was more like the design didn't take long, but the implementation did just because it took a lot of resources to get this implemented and ... fighting for time and resources.
18. P12: So, well, I'll say we collect client feedback in multiple ways. We have surveys that we do, with informal feedback loops and formal feedback loops, and prior to this, what we identified was in terms of customer satisfaction, our members those who get the benefit were very happy with us. And the administrators, those who administrate the benefits were not and actually at the time a position was created, which I assume the role for which was specifically focused on support for administrators.
19. P12: So one of my first roles was to do the assessment.
20. P12: Yeah. I would say this, the survey that ... before this position was created, there was a project that I was on which was to focus on administrators and I would call it a mini assessment. Then this role was created to basically run that, because the assessment was, we need support and we built a little special section on our website and we build a couple of job aids and resources. It's like, Oh now we really need someone to run and maintain this. And then I got the job and then it was like, okay, well now that you're in the role, let's do a much bigger assessment.
21. So before we did an assessment and we came up with a solution which was like to build some website resources. Then when I got the job, assessment was redefine the service model, actually define what it is administrators get from us in terms of service.

22. P12: And so it might be, and we segmented that into three groups. Like I said, diocese in very large parishes with 20 more employees and those with 10 more employees and those with one to nine employees. And what we said was based on your segment here is what you bet. So those in the top tier got an account manager but they also got website resources and webinars and newsletters and we have conferences that they're invited to. It was in the second year got an account manager and conferences and everything else. Those in the bottom tier, they didn't get an account manager, they were not invited to conferences, but they were still invited to the webinars, they still got the newsletters and access to our new administrator onboarding and all of that. So it was like a tiered approach and I said, we defined the model.
23. P12: I think what made this the most successful was reaching out to our clients and understanding what their needs were and understanding the differences that the difference clients had so that we could ... we didn't know that there was going to be a tiered approach that came out after we gathered all the data, then it became very apparent that it would be a cured approach. But involving the client really contributed to the success of this.
24. CA: Is there anything that we haven't surfaced through this discussion of these two incidents that you feel would be helpful or meaningful for those new practitioners beginning to do needs assessment work?
25. P12: I don't think there's anything that we didn't touch on. I think hopefully what the examples that I showed and purposely picks them is, when you're working in a backroom and you make assumptions they can often lead you down the wrong path. If you look at what your desired outcome is and then you know how you lead up to that and you involve all the right parties, you need to involve the people that it's going to impact.
26. So in the first one we were so focused on what we needed. We needed people to use an online system but what we didn't consider is what they needed in order to support them so that everybody within their organization would use the online system. Looking at future needs, including the people who haven't even been hired at that church yet. Right? So, taking that systemic view and really looking at the needs. If you're doing a needs analysis, who are you building that need for? You need to involve those people as part of your ... I wouldn't call them stakeholders, but you need to involve them, and when you don't involve them, then you're very often, already going down the wrong path or have the potential to go down the wrong path. And then I add value.
27. CA NOTE: Least successful example is rooted in leadership. Participant talks about tension between doing what's right and doing what you're told to do. Hard work on assessment, but with no support.
28. CA NOTE: Most successful includes a long, protracted implementation of solutions – first "low hanging fruit" identified easily and then more complex solutions later, as more was understood about the target audience. Is this cyclical? Learn a little, take action, learn more, additional action, etc.?

Case P13M Interview

1. P13: So it was working with a technician's services group. So I work in the technology area in my organization and it was related to the leadership team learning how to set annual goals using a framework that would work well for them. So I feel like that was

probably one of my most successful engagements, and I would say it's on the cusp of L&D as well as little bit of OD as well. So that's the one that comes to mind.

2. P13: So it came from the vice president of the area of desktop collaboration. And I worked directly with, I want to say, the next level down. I want to say director level, and it was his immediate leadership team that reported into him that was needing this particular type of training.
3. CA: Okay. The target for this was the leadership team in the technical services group?
4. P13: Yeah, technical services. They are in charge of the area that manages all of the technical issues that happen in our organization, making sure that everybody has laptops, making sure software is running properly, that it's been properly administered in our organization. That kind of a team.
5. P13: It was a relatively small group. It was about six people.
6. P13: Interestingly, there were six people but three resources assigned to this particular type of work just because the work that the technicians services team does touches the entire organization which is about 11,000 employees.
7. CA: A very important six people.
8. P13: Yeah. Yes, very, very important six people. I would say I was leading the engagement. I had my immediate leader at the time also involved as a facilitator more from an OD perspective. She had a broader depth of knowledge of technology strategies, and then we also had a specialist on our team also engaged out of Winnipeg.
9. So our organization, as you saw, I work at Canada Life. We have headquarters in Toronto, London, and Winnipeg. So I'm based out of London, Ontario, and the director that I was working with was based out of Winnipeg. So we thought it would be good for the Winnipeg L&D specialist to have a relationship.
10. P13: Okay. So it started with a needs conversation with the vice president and the director. And my question really to them was at the end of this engagement, what would be some success measures for you? So I just went right to the thing. And when they talked about having a really good grasp on their goals as well as being grounded in a framework, and so I said, "Is it because they don't understand their goals?"
11. So I dug a little bit more to really get at what was it that they were trying to do in it? And it turned out that this particular group, a lot of the leadership in the group started out in a technical role and worked their way up into leadership. So they didn't have a lot of that academic grounding to help them propel forward or get a cohesive vision. I think they also had a bit of team dynamics issue as well. So it's really hard to separate the learning and development OD work, always.
12. So once I was able to really peel back the layers of the onion, then what we decided to do is we would indeed deliver a hybrid of a framework. And I'm sure you may have heard of it, the four disciplines of execution. We taught that framework, put them through the exercise, then we made them build their goals based around it. So that turned into a two-day workshop that they had to take in person in London.
13. And then, following that, we followed this team for a year and we would have regular monthly check-ins to see how things were progressing. Not necessarily seeing how they were progressing on their goals, but more in the sense, are the goals still making sense? Are you following the framework? So a bit of sustainment element that we built in there and some team coaching to help them be successful.

14. And in the end, I feel very happy to say that we held the session in early January and when they set their goals, they were like, "Well, these are really lofty numbers. We'll never reach these goals." And then by June, they had to adjust their goals to a higher number because they had already reached their goals. So to me, that's really successful.
15. CA: What was the timeframe from when you started the effort, when you first were engaged by that VP, to the point to where you were doing that two-day session?
16. P13: I would say it was about two and a half months by the time we got everyone's schedules to line up to travel to one location.
17. P13: Yeah, I had conversations with the leaders that report into the director. I also had conversations with the director just to get a sense of the team dynamics. And indeed, there were some team-dynamics issues, starting with the director. So over the two days, while they learned about 4DX, I did build in elements related to team building.
18. And in the end, I think it was really helpful to have a team of three supporting this very important team because, as you can imagine, regular work happens. And so if I wasn't able to make a monthly meeting, then my counterpart in Winnipeg would make the meeting. And our goal was always to be face to face whenever possible. So if it was happening in Winnipeg, then the Winnipeg specialist would be there. If it was happening in London, then I would be there. And if we could both be there, it was even better. And that was the time that we took to coach the team through.
19. CA: I wonder. You mentioned some of the team dynamics things and that work that you did as far as challenges for the target audience. Just in doing this work, were there challenges that you and your two other co-team members faced in just doing this work?
20. P13: Yes. So the other facilitator that was my direct leader at the time, she really stayed involved for the two days and then after that, she dropped off just because of her workload. And then when it came to the 4DX model, I would say that I was probably the expert. So whenever there was reference and talking about the 4DX model, in the beginning I felt that I was the one that was bearing the brunt of all the work.
21. But then, as the year progressed, I would say my counterpart was able to do a bit more of the group coaching. So it balanced out in the end but I do have to say that in the beginning of the year, I was really busy with other teams and their goal setting. And then having a two-day session, it felt like a lot. So that-
22. P13: Right. So I think the other that was really important for us is my counterpart in Winnipeg, we would meet regularly to stay informed to be on top of what's happening with the team, what challenges. We had a shared notebook so that we could see the notes from each meeting.
23. CA: Why did you pick this as your most successful example?
24. P13: It's the one where I could share the results. I have others that I could share, but I can’t share results.

Case P14M Interview

1. P14: So that's the background of that. So the one group that we worked with and did a needs assessment that I believe was very successful was a group that works with non-proliferation and we worked our contract through one of their contractors so we were a sub. So I worked with a team of about four or five individuals and in that contract we began with interviews of federal staff as well as their supporting contractors at the national laboratory. And the purpose for the needs assessment was to determine what the

actual training needs were for the federal agency because they worked globally. And so they went into countries around the world instead of physical protection systems and they had been doing training for a while and a needs assessment had never been done. And, any question?

2. P14: Okay, that's fine. So we actually submitted a proposal as to how we would conduct the needs assessment. So did in person interviews, phone interviews, and like I said, a federal staff as well as their contracts to their contracts support folks. So while the federal staff had oversight, the contractors were the actual ones that went out and worked with their partners in other countries as well as did the training. And like I said, I had never had a needs assessment done, I had just jumped into the training and started producing, designing, developing training and taking it out on the road.
3. They had a new individual who was coming in and who was very knowledgeable about training and about needs assessments and she was the one who had actually pushed this. So I think the success of the project, and I will tell you this, it was finished within 10 weeks, which was really a push and resulted in a formal presentation to the federal staff in D. C. as well as to the contract support staff. And they had specifically asked for what, I would say, strong recommendations and to break them down into what we felt could be immediate work and projects to support their training and then also a three year, five year, and then long term.
4. I would say the one thing that didn't work as well, even though the project was really successful and led to many things, was the one group of individuals that we could not interview where they're actual international partners. So these were the individuals receiving the training and we were not able to, one, interview them either by phone or in person. Regardless of that, what the needs assessment really showed was that there needed to be a stronger focus on analysis, which there had not been at all. And that meant analysis not just of what needed to be taught to the partner countries, also how it could be taught. And so my recommendations were presented, and this is why I call it successful, they actually based their work and the accompanying budgets, I would say, let's see, for the next four years.
5. So this was conducted at the end of 2013 into 2014, so right at that five year mark that you're looking at, and the other part of the success is that over the last four years, by the time they started implementing everything in 2014 and into 2015 they have made great strides and really significantly had an impact on all aspects of their training, design and development and really a strong focus on instructional design methodologies from analysis all the way to evaluation. The real success of this is that they are actually in the process now of doing another needs assessment, one, to take a look back at the baseline that they've had from the first one and in a sense refresh their plan moving forward.
6. CA: Who was the requester or who was the client or was sponsor for this work? Who thought of this work?
7. P14: I would probably say it this way, the sponsor for the work was the federal agency, the program director, the woman who was directing the request for the needs assessment to be done. So with most federal agencies, they actually go... In this case, this federal agency works through their national laboratories and their accounting and budgeting offices to secure proposals and then select who's going to do the work. And so the team that is based here in Albuquerque that I worked with up until December, that I've worked with for many years and I actually was their lead or team lead when we were doing this,

they are then hired by the client. So the client was actually the national laboratory while the sponsor was the federal agency. Does that help?

8. CA: You mentioned a team of four to five, can you tell me what your role on the team was and what other roles were present?
9. P14: Sure. So there were five of us, I'll just say five of us. My role at the time was I was a team lead at this group. So we've been a co located group of instructional designers in Albuquerque metropolitan area since 2007 and each of us has our own business plus we also come together and work as a group and we are under contract to another company, I would say that holds our clearances and in a sense is our parent company, right?
10. So of the five of us, my role was team lead. We have actually built our team this way where we actually had individuals who were all knowledgeable and educated within instructional design, all of them holding their master's degrees and a few PhDs in that arena. And so we had one person who specializes in analysis and two others individual, including myself and one other more specifically in the design and the development phase.
11. And then we had... For the needs assessment, didn't really need anybody within the implementation phase other than to produce and then present and that was my role. And then we had two individuals, both with PhDs who were very strong in evaluation. So we had that group pulling together and putting in a structure and a plan for the needs assessment and then the implementation of that throughout. All of us, I would say three of us were very engaged in the interview process of individuals and then of course our evaluators were the ones who were really driving the questions in what we were going for. So does that help?
12. CA: Can I ask, you described that it was fairly time compressed, 10 weeks. Can you break down those 10 weeks to mean, did you have discrete phases of work during that 10 weeks?
13. P14: We did. So the work actually started in the very beginning of December. I happened to be working in D. C. on another contract. I was out there for a week so the proposal process took probably longer than the whole work process for us. So, once we got the okay to do that, since I was in D. C., I was actually in November, so at the beginning of November, I started interviews there and then another colleague and I, when I came back to Albuquerque, then we went up to Washington State and conducted interviews at the national laboratory that was up there.
14. So I would say we probably spent about three weeks, maybe a little more than that on interviews either in person or on the phone. We also did a very intensive document review at the same time. So while we were trying to catch up on the interviews, we were also doing document reviews and doing a mesh of that. So that went until the middle of December, sorry, I would say probably about five to six weeks within that process of document review and the other. Over the Christmas break we were focused on taking all of that information and starting to compile and put all of that together. Follow up questions came and any kind of follow up that we needed to do came after the Christmas break in mid January and we actually presented the report in February.
15. CA: You mentioned that there was one group that the actual international receivers of the service that you were not able to interview. Were there any other challenges that you faced during this effort?

16. P14: Fear of the unknown from the client. So the actual group that was providing the training to the partner countries really didn't understand and nor want to understand the need for having a needs assessment since they had already been doing this work for about 10 years. So their pushback was, nothing's broken, what are we trying to fix? And yet I could tell you that there were many things that were not in place that would contribute to having a really strong program. What I know, having worked after that needs assessment was done and having worked with the federal agency and their contractors are actually not just at one laboratory, they're spread through many labs.
17. What has happened is that they have not only strengthened the program that they have in place, but they have also started to expand, and so they've moved from just the training of operational topics and subjects to now into leadership development, into the trainers with their partner countries, all of that was not... I wouldn't say that it wasn't in place, but it was so haphazard and it was just off the cuff that there was nothing documented for it, that people would just go in and do it and it was not consistent nor was there any say reliability on what they were receiving from country to country.
18. CA NOTE: It is interesting that the successful assessment, now about 5 years on, is being repeated. Is there something about durability, validity, and cycles?
19. CA NOTE: Least successful was not participant’s own - or at least they could claim less responsibility for it. Not the first time I've encountered some resistance to sharing less successful incidents.

Case P15M Interview

1. P15: Yes. So the most successful one, in the past five years, is the secretarial technology training program that's designed to assess the skillset of a job candidate for the secretary roles. And so we were hiring some secretaries, and we initially hired part-time or temporary secretaries, and they did not work out well at all. And so I offered to the HR team that we could create an assessment program and they at first hesitated and then when they realized that we continued to hire poorly dealt secretaries, they agreed to move forward.
2. So I put the program together, we used it to assess several secretaries, and those secretaries who passed the assessment were hired on. It did such a phenomenal job that our managing partners and attorneys went to use the same assessment for their own secretaries, even though their secretaries have been there for 10 plus years, as a way to help the secretary to improve their technology skills.
3. So the attorneys caught onto that and loved the idea that they... Well, they had complained about the technologies to overlap technologies built for their secretaries. And they knew that they were not technically inclined, the refusal to come to my technology training, but if their secretary can learn it and do the work for them, then you would solve all of their problems.
4. CA: So if they built that skill into their team, they didn't have to learn that skill themselves?
5. P15: Yes, right. Instead of them saying, "[Name], [Name], why don't you guys set up the video conference. Invite these guests and then you guys can conduct it while all I have to do is talk about..." Which is a lot of work for them, but I understand where they're coming from. It's just that oftentimes, when you want do things impromptu, rather than

telling you somebody to do it for you, you can do it yourself. And sometimes your clients, if they're meeting with you at eight o'clock at night, your secretary is not going to stay there until eight or nine o'clock at night to help you out. But the secretary program just caught on and other offices wanted to use it as well.

6. CA: Can you tell me, again, who was the sponsor for this work?
7. P15: Human Resources.
8. CA: And then when you did the first round, when you were looking at the data for people being hired, was that primarily you or, again, did you work with a project team?
9. P15: Oh, that was just me at first. And then when it caught on we brought in more trainers. But a lot of the work had already been developed, I just reformatted some stuff.
10. P15: So to conduct the needs assessment, I looked at all the documents that were producing and then I figured out what kind of technology knowledge would be required to do that kind of work. So for example, our legal documents contained a lot of tables: table of contents, slip notes, table of authorities. Then those are the skill sets and knowledge that a secretary would need to have in order to do that kind of work and be successful. And so there some one-offs, but it was very easy stuff, like a memorandum. But because, drafting a memorandum required you to know where our templates are saved and that you used the correct one, that's more of a knowledge base skill.
11. And so that's something that I couldn't test new secretaries because they would not know where we save our stuff. But for existing secretaries, it was a good way to refresh their memory, because what the secretaries were doing was they copy templates from 10 years ago and reuse them. And that's why we had so many problems with formatting the date, the footer, and all sorts of corruption within our document. And our attorneys wouldn't really know that there was a problem because the secretaries were pretty sneaky. They would send those documents off to our word processing team to fix it for them.
12. So they never got caught with a problem. And eventually, though, they did get caught because our word processes team couldn't catch up with all the workload. And so we started to look at how many we've dropped and end up coming into our processing team, and we realized the volume was enormous, and it was coming from the same group of secretaries. That was another area of needs assessment: targeting your audience, your population. And that's how I went about targeting the group because you can't roll out a program to every single secretary because otherwise it will be perceived as a punishment. Because if I'm doing a great job and you make me come to a training, why are you wasting my time? And so we had to make it a performance management issue.
13. CA: It's really fascinating to me. How did you get interfaced with the word processing team? Did that come up in the course of your assessment? Did you look at the documents and, once you had an idea, you went out to try to vet that idea?
14. P15: It's exactly what you described, because before things, I looked at the document and I saw... You can see the history of a document. And so when I looked at the history, I kept seeing it got emailed to word processing, emailed, emailed, emailed, everything was emailed towards to word processing. And the before picture and the after picture were very different files. The before file had all sorts of formatting errors, but once it got sent to the word processing team and came back, it was a beautiful document.
15. So I started to see that trend and I also have a good relationship with the word processing staff. I called a few up and I asked them, "Hey, do you get a lot of stuff from these various secretaries," and the conversation said it was organic, they just can't, this is our

troublemakers, if there's a way that you can teach them... And I said, "Why didn't you bring this to our attention before? And there were two main reasons. Number one: it was tough security for them. Number two: they didn't want to get anybody in trouble.

16. P15: We had a pilot group of secretaries. Those secretaries completed the assessment and they were existing secretaries. We couldn't pilot, again, incoming secretaries. But for the existing secretaries, we piloted the work itself, not the actual needs assessment but the-
17. P15: The ones that we thought couldn't do the work really didn't know how to do the work. Then there were a few that actually said, "I don't do this stuff, I just send it off for word processing. Can I just skip the assessment?"
18. CA: That is fascinating. Can I ask what format the assessment itself took? Were you having them complete actual tasks or did you give them scenarios to work from?
19. P15: No, they were actual documents that they had to reproduce using a good product. You have what the document should look like when they're done with the assessment. And then I also had an instruction sheet so for example: open this file and in the top right corner of the header, type your name and then the date, save the file to this folder, name it this way.
20. CA: So you were giving them authentic tasks, but you were basically breaking those down and saying: do A, do B, do C.
21. P15: Yes. And then when it got to the real technology needs, the instruction was: now create a table of contents with level one headings. So if you know what you're doing, you would understand that and you would just do it. It's not a big deal.
22. CA: What was the timeframe?
23. P15: The discovery work, I would say, took about a month, and then production work with maybe three or four months. And there was also a push for it because once they realized that my initial draft, when I rolled it out for existing secretaries, in time the managing partners and attorneys liked it so much that they pushed me to move more quickly on the subject. So that became a priority.
24. P15: Then I shared it with the training manager and we were able to get more trainers involved to help out. All together, there were about four trainers working on the project.
25. CA: Were there challenges that you faced that you recall, as you worked through this project?
26. P15: Yeah, the same. I think it was the resources, the time, just not having enough people, not having enough hours in the day to do the work. And then the secretaries did not want to come to the assessment. They were offended by it because they had been in this line of work for 15 plus years, and here I am asking them to do something that's so silly, especially when we have the word processing department to help out.
27. P15: I did give them an option to opt out from the assessment and do the class and do the training. And then for the ones who didn't want to either, I tried to motivate them. I just kept saying, "There will be a time when we will not have processing staff or when the processing staff will not be available."
28. P15: I think for the new hires, the top candidates, it was tough with some of them because it was very clear: they just didn't know or understand what was being asked of them. And so some of them were very defensive and they'll say to me, "I've been doing this job for a year and I just don't understand the way that you have framed the question."
29. CA: Why in particular do you feel this was most successful for you?

30. P15: This one was most successful in the past five years just because they caught on fire very quickly. People wanted a program and it's still going on to this day.
31. P15: I think that the reason why I was so successful in my needs assessment, even though I had one negative one, is that because I understand the industry. I understand the attorneys' behaviors, secretaries' behavior and I know the work very well. And so that helps me to frame the questions and to design the program in a way that would benefit the participant. So even with the attorneys, I couldn't get the managing partner to give them a free one hour, but I knew that and I already knew that was not going to help us. I shared that with the managing partner and she's like, "Well, I have to bill, I can't give away free hours." So they need that culture. It's one thing that we sometimes have to understand that we can be the best trainer and the professor, but it doesn't mean that we're going to produce great product. Those are two different skillsets.
32. P15: Just be patient and listen more, listen carefully and listen to what's not being best as well as what's being said. Look at the body's language and behavior.
33. CA NOTE: Participant stressed knowledge of context as enabling factor. Talked about deep knowledge of industry, understanding culture, listening to what's NOT being said, even body language. Maybe this is art for participant more than science.

Case P16M Interview

1. P16: Sure. Okay. So this one has to do with an enterprise tool, actually, it's called a DRT, a document request tool. And so just to give you a little background so later you understand what I'm talking about, but basically this is something that the MSRs use if a member calls in and we need a document from them. It's something that they send to the member that they attach the document to and it comes back. And it's electronic and it's instant. And so it makes transactions very timely. Well this is an enterprise tool and apparently the usage was only at about 30% and it's actually one of the least costly of our document returns. And so there was, the project was wondering why people aren't using it and what's really going on. And so they thought, "oh, people don't know, they need to be trained," right?
2. Cause that's everybody's fallback. And so they contacted my department and again, I was assigned to look into the root cause of the usage problem. And so I did a full comprehensive analysis on the tool and because it was enterprise, I actually went out to several of the call centers within the bank and the finance, the insurance, all over. Still unfortunately in San Antonio, that is where the majority of people are. But went out and sat and did countless focus groups and asked people about it, looked at the performance support, the knowledge delivery, our information system and what was written about the tool, how it was actually deployed and the history of it, and basically just gathered a bunch of data. And this one actually went a little faster than the other effort because it was kind of easy to start pinpointing why people weren't using it because it was a tool rather than critical thinking, so it was a little bit easier.
3. P16: And so basically, we gathered all that data and finished my assessment, went back to the project team and actually told them that I didn't feel that training was the answer. There was one small portion that I wanted to update in the current training for new employees coming in just to advance it up and help a little bit. But the real main problem that I found was that when it was communicated out, it wasn't communicated out in a fashion that went to everyone. And so it was very choppy. And so people that weren't

using it either didn't know that it was available, and so we showed them and they thought it was great, or they didn't think that their department used it. So there was just a huge lack of communication and especially to the benefit of the tool.

4. People were just very unaware. And then also some people that did know about it, when they went, they didn't even understand that there was a what we call [inaudible 00:17:39], our information site, they didn't even know there was a site with information on it, with screenshots and all sorts of performance support. And so just again, very lack awareness kind of across the floor and not knowing what forms actually were available. And so basically the recommendation came down to updating the performance support, because when we did look at it, it was, it was like a dictionary entry on a page. It was not user friendly, especially in the moment of having a conversation on a phone and looking for information. So kind of outlined how I would redesign that information page and make it very user friendly and easy. And then got with a communication advisor to come up with a large scale communication plan basically to go out and inform leaders of the savings and how they should be pushing for use of the tool and how it would benefit both the members and the company and also the employees because it's easy.
5. And everyone who did actually use it, they love it, so there was not any negativity around it. They think it's great. And so to push all that out and then after, of course, all the performance support is updated and just kind of have this re-roll out of the tool is basically what the suggestion came down to. And it was more of a communication plan, again because the tool was so easy. I mean it was like a 30 second video that basically walked you through it and you got it. So it was really easy and so they're actually, unfortunately I don't have enough information to share if that has been super successful yet. But as far as my analysis was very successfully, the executive client loved the ideas, went with my rollout plan completely. The project team just finished the updates and are starting to communicate that plan out. And so we plan to go forward here in the next couple of months and obviously monitor usage and see if it's increased. And I'm very hopeful that it's going to go well. But of course, again, I don't have the data to show that it was successful, but at least it was successful to my client, if that helps.
6. What was the actual duration of your assessment?
7. P16: The assessment probably was about a month.
8. P16: There was actually a team this time with a head executive sponsor, but for the most part I worked with the project team that, you know, the process owner [inaudible 00:21:10] the tools. So there were three of them and myself and then the executive sponsor was kind of the final, you know, met with them at the beginning to understand the effort a little bit more. And then at the end with the final presentation. And of course I presented to my project team once I had everything I was going to present to the executive leader. I wanted to get their thoughts first so there wasn't any pushback in front of the main client, between us, a united front. And so went to them and they thought everything was great. And then we went to the executive client together and he thought it was great as well.
9. CA: Did the project team perform any of the assessment tasks or was that all you?
10. P16: Mainly myself. And then we also had a, it's hard to explain, but basically an intern that was assigned to me to work the project with me and I was the lead and so she was helping me as well. But the project team already had pulled a lot of data, especially about usage and about even number usage and were able to give me which groups to go and

interview that are using it, which ones are not using it. They pulled a lot of the data they were able to to help me kind of in planning out my assessment.

11. CA: And what was, what role did the intern play?
12. P16: She helped out with a lot of times during the focus group, she was kind of my scribe for me and would gather that data together. And then basically we kind of just brainstormed a lot together once we had the data and were analyzing it together just to bounce ideas off of each other.
13. CA: Did you face any challenges as you were conducting the assessment with this effort?
14. P16: A couple of the challenges were just the, I guess, capacity concerns because the focus groups that I put together and just attendance to those started out a little bit rocky. You know, because pulling the MSRs off the phones to come in and meet for an hour was maybe a little tricky when it was busy, so just the participation in those. But the last several, probably eight that I did had much higher attendance because I was going to start thinking of a different method because I wasn't getting as much participation as I needed to get a good sample.
15. P16: I reached out to the leaders because I started to see the attendance not going well [inaudible 00:24:28] my feature groups. I reached out to the leaders and asked again, does this time work for your people? Do you need me to schedule it at a different time? Because I've had low attendance. So I think them understanding that, that they made sure that they reiterated to their people hey, this is important. You need to go.
16. CA: Why did you choose this as your most successful example?
17. P16: I'd probably say the reason I like this one is because the client did already come to us initially with a solution in mind. You know, came in thinking that training would solve the issue, just like the previous example. But when I came back with the analysis and kind of went through the six box and explained all the different pieces and how they sit in and that training really wasn't an issue, the other were, than they kind of like "oh wow, that's very interesting. I really like all of this." And they were very open to it and changing their mind that maybe they didn't have the right solution. So rather than staying closed minded and thinking, "oh, your data is going to confirm that my solution is the right one," they kind of let me do my job and trusted that I knew what I was doing.
18. CA: Okay, good. So can you account for, have you reflected on what the difference is between the reception of these two different clients? What made one client or one client team able to be open and the other one resistant to being open to your recommendation?
19. P16: I think, at least just what I think, cause obviously I don't know, but the second group, with the DRT tool, they had never worked with learning and development before and so they hadn't worked with our department at all. And so I think they didn't really have an understanding of what we do. And so when we were explaining to them it was new and it was, oh this is something that's always done is, this is the process. And so they kind of trusted it a little bit more, if you will. The other client in the call center, they're constantly having new hire training, and [inaudible 00:26:55] skill training and different things. And so they see learning and development as a training department and that's kind of it. And so when they call our department, it's already in their mind of "you're the training people, do what you do," and they don't open it up to.
20. P16: Well, when they decided "oh, it must be a training problem," then they reached out through our front door and they put a request in and then actually [Name] reached back

out to them and asked if he could assign it to one of his consultants to do an analysis and kind of explain the process. And so they agreed and then it was assigned to myself.

21. CA NOTE: Least successful example was challenged with an initial push back on gathering information. Target audience didn't even want to meet with participant.

Case P17M Interview

1. P17: My best one I have off the top of my head. That one's easy. It's funny. It's funny that as we talk about this, needs assessment is done rather infrequently, especially in sales, and especially where we are in our maturity in sales, at [Name], from a training and enablement perspective. And so we're building stuff that is kind of obvious, like sales onboarding. Okay. Obviously we need some of that. Consultative selling. Yes. Yeah. We need some of that. Right. So it's not like we're doing a ton of needs analysis to determine if we need to do these things. They're very obvious.
2. And then we get to work and we do most of our diving into the needs and stuff more as a part of the development process versus the initial assessment up at the front. And so I do have a case where we did a really good needs assessment, trying to think of a case where we did a poor one.
3. P17: Yep, So let's start with the best one. The best one I think we did was around sales onboarding. When I joined [Name], they had a five day bootcamp and that was it. You just came in, they talked to you for five days. They ran a bunch of marketing people through the room and it's very common in IT world. And it is something I swore I would rather get fired than ever attend one of those. So when I came to work here, my boss asked me if I had gone and seen it. And I said no, and he's like, "How can you change it if you haven't seen it?" And I was like, "That's why they created grenades." Right?
4. You don't have to see it to know it's going to be miserable. And so what we did was, so it was obvious to us that we needed to fix it. And we tackled the needs assessment from a couple of different directions. One direction was, what are the industry best practices? What is the adult learning side? What's the science and the research and those types of things? So that was one thread. Another thread was, we pulled together a core group of about 25 to 30 people in different sales roles and different longevity in the company to be our core group of users. And we did have, within that, we had some top performers and we didn't tell them they were top performers. And we also didn't tell the middle ones that they were in the middle and the ones that were a little lower, We didn't brief them on that.
5. Because of the roles, your inside sales tends to be less experienced and less capable anyways. So we had some natural splits just by their role from a sales capability, but we did also know who was better, who was worse. So that was that crew. And then we had another group of all of the supporting players. So all of the enablement teams and the managers, things like that. So when we went in to developing this, we did some interviews, a day in the life interviews. How do you do your job? What are the things you focus on? We worked with managers that says, what does good look like from your perspective? We evaluated the difference between the ones that were good and ones that weren't, especially as we saw people that were coming through the bootcamp, right, as they were flipping that and turning into productivity faster, we asked them, what were they doing to get to that?
6. And we tackled it from a lot of different directions. Then we put forward a point of view that says, we think sales onboarding should look like this. And we made a decision that it

was going to be 90 days. And we would say, what are we going to do in the first 90 days? We know that it takes up to a year, 15 months for somebody to get fully acclimated to their role. But for our perspective, we were going to tackle that first 90 days. I wish to say there was some thought in that, but it was an arbitrary timeframe decided by the head of HR, but we did it. And then we said, then we took the best practices together with what we had learned from the field, then we put forward a point of view. And then we went back through the teams.

7. [Name] is very much about being open and we collaborate. And so it took us a long time as we met with all of these different teams. So we started with that. We had that 30 person group, but we had a couple hundred of other people that were a part of our larger extended community that were giving us feedback into each stage of this. So at first we're like, here's the idea. And then we said, this is the wire frame. And then we said, these are the details, and this is how it's going to be deployed. And each step of that, we were getting feedback in surveys. If we had to get their feedback, we would do one on one interviews or group interviews. We tested a couple of pieces of it. So we brought in about six salespeople and we test ran a couple of pieces. We brought in our facilitators to test run pieces.
8. And that's how we ultimately got to the outcome. And for us, the first release is just, release early, release often. So once we released it, then we tested the assumptions that we started with, and we double checked it against the needs that we are trying to tackle and to say, "Hey, listen, did we actually achieve it? Did we hit the right needs?" Because we work at such a high velocity, we knew we weren't going to get all the needs right up at the front. And so we actually built that assessment modeling actually is more of a cyclical process than it is more of a waterfall. At [Name] that's how we build our software. That's how we do our business. So then the feedback that we got, we stacked that against our initial assumptions and we made those changes. And each time we iterate, we go back and I don't know if this is useful, but we've been doing it for about three years now. We've run about a thousand people through the program. We found that within the first nine months, we've generated about 15% more revenue through the people that went through the new onboarding versus the bootcamp model. So those were all indications that we had nailed the needs assessment pretty close. And it was about an extra $34 million out of about 30 people. And that's just within the first nine months of them being in the role.
9. CA: Do you recall, what was the impetus for doing this at the time you did it? Was it you moving into a new role and you decided to do it? Was there a mandate from somewhere, what started the work and started the project?
10. P17: We're a company that has been growing nonstop for about 17 years. Every quarter we have consecutive growth. We're expecting that growth to accelerate. And basically we're hiring at about 20 to 30% year on year hiring rate. And so what we needed to make sure is that those new people that were coming on board were getting up to capability as quickly as possible so they could carry their weight. And the company was starting to realize that historically, because we were a smaller company, the new people coming on board, there was only one or two coming on each team. And so the team could wrap around them and ramp them up. But when you're two years in and 30% of your organization is new as of two years ago, everybody was losing that tribal knowledge, right?

11. And we didn't have a lot of attrition. Our attrition is at about 10%. So we weren't losing people. They just couldn't cover all those new people. And so because of that business direction, we were like, "You know what, we need to really codify the tribal knowledge into a mechanism that ensures that it actually sticks." And that then led us to saying what we were doing with the bootcamps, might've worked when we were selling two products, but now that we have 60 products, it's not going to cut it. We have to do this different. And so that was a reason we started with that versus something else.
12. CA: Do you recall just approximately, what was the calendar time as far as effort from when the decision was made to go in this direction of your first iteration?
13. P17: One year.
14. P17: The core development team we had... So there was times where we had to throw all hands on deck. When we got to the end of it, we stacked it up pretty high. So we pulled a bunch of resources from other projects, but we had a learning strategist, portfolio lead, program manager, instructional designer, and one person helping from the delivery team. So, that was the core team. And then we ended up adding more facilitator support over time. The people that were going to be delivering this started helping us with some of the development work. So we had two facilitators closer to the end.
15. CA: And your role?
16. P17: I was acting as the learning strategist. My official role that I was supposed to be was the learning consultant. So I usually start at the beginning with getting the needs in from the business is usually where I sit. But in this case we didn't have somebody that could design the program, not each module, but as a holistic design. And so that's the role I've played in this case.
17. CA: What were some of the major challenges that you faced, or that emerged?
18. P17: Some of the big ones were we didn't have an agreed upon sales process. So how do you stick this new content to stuff that salespeople would already know when you don't have a sales model? And so we stuck it to the buyer's journey. So rather than focusing on what the seller was doing, we were focused on what the customer was doing. And then we then could connect the behaviors to that. That seemed well. So we had a framework. We also really bend heavily into, we've always done it this other way. Why would we want to change it now? We also had a lot of the, I need my people ready within a week. I need my people talking to customers within two weeks on the job. And we always ask the question, well, what are they telling them? They don't know anything about [Name]. What conversation are they having with the customers since they don't know us? Those were probably the big ones. Yeah.
19. CA: Why to you personally, is this your most successful example?
20. P17: Yeah. It's the one where we knew what the right thing was. And we had the latitude to do the work properly. What's happened since then is that we had got to know everybody. I was brand new on the team and my colleague, the portfolio manager, she was new on the team. And a lot of us were in new roles. So everybody wasn't telling us what to do. They didn't know what they were doing either, but since then, we were really successful with that. So then everybody had an idea of what we should be doing. They're like, "Do it quickly, do it quickly." We haven't been given the latitude to really do the work. So we're coming up with solutions before we even actually identified the need.

21. CA: Do you think that your success in this case has limited you in engagements going on? You think you set a bar and then people are looking at a particular part of that bar and say, do it fast, do it fast?
22. P17: I don't know. It's a great question. I think the success in this gave us some permission to push back, but I think there's this natural tendency especially in a sales organization to want more and faster. And in learning, it just doesn't work that way. Right? To get somebody to change behavior is incredibly difficult. We think of all the bad behaviors we have as humans. And just try to change one of them, just try to get somebody to go to the gym twice a week. I lost 50 pounds a couple of years ago. I went to my heart doctor and the heart doctor's like, "Well, here's a pill." I'm like, "But what if I lose weight?" He's like, "You won't. Take the daggone pill."
23. Because he's like, "I've worked with enough people to know. You may want to while you're in my office. But when you go home, you're going to pick up a Kit Kat." And so when we're trying to get people to sell better, something that they've been doing as a profession and asking them to do it differently and more effectively and stuff like that, even if they want to, everything is pushing against that. And so that's the difficulty they're like, "Well, just give them the content. They'll figure it out." You're like, "That's not how this works." And that honestly has been huge because they don't understand how adults learn, because we train our children poorly and we've been training adults poorly. We don't even use the forgetting curve or space repetition. That's one of the easiest ways to memorize stuff. We haven't used it. And it's a theory that was discovered in 1850. We're not even using wisdom and insights that we got a hundred years ago. Come on.
24. So then those are the big fights that we've had. So I think the larger issue is a lack of discipline and self control on the sales team. I think our success in this project made people realize how good we are. So it did give us a little bit of latitude to push back, but we had to push back all the time just to get the space to do our jobs. And incidentally, this is just a sidebar, but I hate the expression, 'don't let perfect get in the way of good.' Because that's just an excuse to be bad in most cases. Right? Sometimes you have to be pretty close to perfect for it to even work. Trust me, almost having a wing that works is not terribly helpful when you're in a plane flying somewhere

Case P18M Interview

1. P18: Okay. A while back, it's been a few years now, [Name] started to branch into the container market. It became apparent really quickly that we needed to enable our entire sales team to have container related conversations and to sell container related products that we were poised to be the leaders in container solutions. We had, there's a department within [Name] called the sales enablement and development team. They came to us and said, "Hey, we need to enable our entire Salesforce on how to have container conversations, and sell more OpenShift. How do we go about doing this?" So they came to us with a general business need and asked us, "What do we do?" Very open ended.
2. P18: It was, yeah. The head of the sales enablement group would have been our internal sponsor. Then our business sponsor was actually the head of the OpenShift team, which is another product business unit within [Name].
3. P18: It would have been a similar role to the director of the RHEL team.

4. P18: My team was pretty much the same. [Name], who was the learning consultant who brought the initial need in. Then [Name], who is the portfolio manager, who's looking at all of our solutions. It was the three of us, and then the SME team. Then, we also had a program manager we were working with in sales enablement development. That made a difference that we had another internal program manager helping us manage those SME relationships and timelines. Then the SMI team was gigantic. I had 24 SMEs, it was huge. We had people from a different product business units who had a stake in this conversation, and then we also had some sales marketing people in the group.
5. P18: [Name], I think did the initial analysis to find out what is the business need, and scoped it out and came back to [Name] and I. Said, "Okay, the need is that we really need to enable people on containers and the audience is extremely varied. So, we need to keep in mind, some people have a ton of container knowledge, and some people don't even know what a container is." Then, he just gave it to [Name] and I to go back to the sales enablement team and start from there.
6. We had some initial meetings where we were just trying to scope out the work. We took an approach, [Name] may have even talked about this a little bit, the know, think, say, do approach to this project. We met with the key stakeholders and SMEs and we asked them, "What is it that our salespeople need to know? What is it that they need to think? What kind of mindset do they need to have? What do they need to be able to say to the customers and what do they need to be able to do?"
7. P18: It was group interviews. We divided it up into three different project teams. We had an OpenShift product team that we started with. Then, we also had a couple of salespeople and then some marketing people, and so we used them as a project team. Then, we separated out all of the other products as their own project team. We had one lead SME who got final sign off on everything, and he was the director of the OpenShift BU, so he was a part of each project team.
8. Then we also had two, I called them worker bee SMEs. One of them was a sales professional, and one of them was from the marketing team, and they helped, they were the ones who really dug in with me to do most of the work and everyone else was just a reviewer.
9. P18: Those three people were a part of each of the groups.
10. CA: Did you, any other data gathering, or talk to any other groups?
11. P18: No. For the initial work, those are the key groups that we worked with because we did have a couple of sales representatives in there, and the marketing people, and then the business unit people. Yep, that was it.
12. P18: Then we took the data and we put together a high level outline. I took all of the information they had and I pulled out all of the similarities, all the common themes, and I wrote learning objectives. Then organized those learning objectives into a high level outline. Then we met back with the project team, and we met back with everyone. I think we had two or three different meetings that they had an option to attend one of them. They had an opportunity to provide feedback one more time before we sent out the final version of the outline. So the outline just said, "Okay, these are the learning objectives, and this is how we're going to organize them." We ended up having four, I think, five different courses, some practice activities and an assessment.
13. P18: Yeah, we emailed it out. Our process for that is usually, we email it out. We give them a deadline. Then, we usually have the meeting, or meetings, on or around that

deadline. We asked for them to provide feedback in advance, if they do, they don't have to come to the meeting unless they're a SME who has signed off on something. But if they don't provide feedback before the deadline, then they are expected to attend the meetings. Most people wait until the meeting and then come to the meeting to we discuss it.

14. P18: Once we had the outline approved by everyone, we identified who would be my key subject matter experts for each area. I had my two worker bee SMEs, and they helped me gather content from everyone. They helped me organize the content, and we did our storyboarding phase. We had the storyboards for the eLearning courses.
15. Not everyone in our SME group was assigned to every course. We had some of them focused on different areas where their expertise was most warranted. So we had the five different courses. We did the storyboards for them, and we just engaged in the process of, "Okay, storyboard review, make changes, review again, final sign off, and then went into building the eLearning courses, review, make changes, review one more time, and then final sign off.
16. CA: Great. Can you give me a general timeframe?
17. P18: Yes. This project took close to six months from the time we'd gotten the initial request to the go live date.
18. P18: [Name] probably did the initial data gathering over the course of a week. Then when [Name] and I got involved and did the more detailed, know, think, say, do that was probably over the course of maybe three or four weeks of us having those SME meetings, and organizing the content, and getting the reviews and approval on that. This is what we heard. This is your opportunity to say something. We analyzed what they said, and then share back, this is what we heard you say. It probably took about, close to four weeks to do all of that.
19. CA: What were the outcomes?
20. P18: It was very well received. In addition to having a couple of salespeople in our SME group, we did field tests in the field. We had as part of our review audience, before it went to QA, we had some salespeople come in and tell us, "Oh, this meets the marker. Oh, I actually would like more information about this." We started with asking the team, "What do you actually need to be successful in your job?" And then, we ask them before we released it, "Did we hit the mark, or did we miss something?"
21. So, we were able to identify a couple of more opportunities to just really tighten things up. Then, once we released it, it was very well received. It actually, also won a Brandon C. Hall award. That was very exciting for us. It really kick started, it's really hard to tell, to do that correlation with, "Okay, did this training have a big impact on our container product sales or, is other market factors and stuff?" But we did see an increase in sales after the training was released.
22. CA: What challenges did you face as part of this work?
23. P18: Yes. I think the biggest challenge was that our lead SME who had final sign off was not part of the day-to-day conversation. Anytime we had to go for final sign off it required either rework, or more often than not, multiple conversations of us trying to influence him. "This is what we actually need."
24. It took a while in the project before he finally came around to say, "Okay, I think you guys know what you're doing, and I trust you that if you say this is what we need to include, it is." Because, at first he wanted to provide a lot of technical specs and things

that he thought the learners needed. We kept having to go back to the know, think, say, do and say, "Actually, this is not what you said we needed. This is not what the team said we needed." So we kept having to have that influential conversation with him. So, that was one of the biggest challenges.

25. P18: I think the other major challenge was having a SME team of 24 people. It was a lot, even though not everybody was commenting on every topic area. It was intense to have to review all that content, have meetings with the lead SME to say, "Okay, do you agree or disagree? Do I implement this, or not implement this?"
26. CA: Yeah. I'm curious, was there a fair amount of consensus about this content, or did you have to kind of craft it as you narrow it down as you went?
27. P18: Yeah, it depended on the topic area. Some topic areas were pretty cut and dry, like our services. "What services are we selling with containers and how do we position that?" That is very simple. But some of the things that I thought would be really simple were actually a lot more tedious, like even, "How to describe what containers are. What is container technology and why does it matter to customers?"
28. A lot of people had different opinions on how we should explain that. So, it took a lot of research to see what the industry standard analogies were, and that type of thing. Once we got that research to say, "This is actually how our customers are talking about it, this is how some of them are already understanding it. Why don't we lead with this? Because, it seems to be market tested already."
29. CA: Why did you pick this as your best example?
30. P18: This is one of the projects I was the most proud of. It was the first project that I worked on when I transitioned over to sales training, before I had worked on mostly leadership and management training. I wanted to make a change and do something different. I was proud to be able to come into a new field of topic area and be able to add some value. I'm also proud of it, that it won some awards. I'm most proud of how well received it was. People still will, I'll meet them, I'll be working on a project team with someone and they'll say, "Hey, weren't you the one on the containers project?" It gives me a sense of pride to know that, "Hey, that was a very well received project, and now these people are looking forward to working with me on other projects."
31. CA: What do you think about this project, enabled you to be so successful?
32. P18: I think, one of the first things is that the leaders in our business units identified an opportunity. They had a need, but they didn't come to us with a solution already. They came to us to say, "Okay, this is what we need. How do we go about getting there?" They were open to us doing a more thorough needs analysis. They were open to us asking questions that, at first they thought, "Why does this matter? What do you mean? What do they need to think? Who cares what they're thinking?"
33. They were open to us doing that kind of thing. Then, they were also open to us having the conversations, especially the lead SME, it took a lot of influencing at first, but once he realized like, "Oh, they're going to keep pushing me back to this original analysis and outline that we did, maybe I should check that before I start pushing back on what they have in here." I think, just everyone's willingness to do what we recommended and to take the time to do that thorough analysis.

Case P19M Interview

1. P19: Yeah. So this one was actually, I was leading an employee through this, so I wasn't doing the work myself. About nine months ago, we switched to a more of a learning consultation model. So in the previous example I talked about, I was leading the team that was responsible for corporate. Well, that's not how we operate anymore. So now we operate from a lens of, we have learning consultation, we have a team that does the design work, and we have a team that facilitates work. So now leading the consultation portion of our learning team. And so, I mean, it's pretty self explanatory, but our work in that is to work with our business partners to find out, "Okay, what do you need? What problems are you trying to solve? What are you trying to accomplish?" And working with them and figure out, "How does learning and development show up in what you're trying to do?"
2. So in this example, we were working with our marketing team who came to us in the traditional way. And we get this a lot. When people come to us and say, "Hey, we have a problem in learning. Some of our employee engagement surveys have showed us that employees want more learning. And so we would like you to build these eight modules. We've talked to people, we think we understand what they need. They've told us a few things. And here are the eight things that people want to learn from learning and development team." And so I don't remember all eight of them, but one of them that I'll probably come back to a couple of times in the example was around negotiation. I'm so sorry not the marketing team, it was the merchant team that works with some of our vendors and negotiating different deals and bringing in products and agree on prices, things like that. So it was the merchant team.
3. So they came to us with these eight things, one of the big negotiation. And they said, "Will you build us these eight things." And it's similar to how we worked in the past, is somebody would come to us and say, "Hey, will you build us a thing?" And we would build a new thing and everybody would go along your way. Not necessarily the most effective way to approach learning problems and learning objectives and what people are trying to do.
4. So [Name] on my team was given the task of, well let's going in and dig a little bit deeper. So as part of our consultative approach, I've really tried to promote the idea of design thinking with my team. Are you familiar with design thinking?
5. P19: In general. Okay, perfect. So part of, kind of our needs analysis, really centers around empathy. And a lot of it is very similar, but I like that shift because it really focuses on the human need and the people that are involved versus collecting data. I mean, even though the tools might be the same, it's just that mentality or that mindset going in around learning about people.
6. So during that kind of empathy stage, [Name] on my team, instead of confirming what they thought they needed, she went out and they kind of a 360 needs assessment where she did some small group work to talk to people. She did some one on one interviews. And then she also collected some survey data. She talked to leaders and really tried to dig into what are the human needs that people have, regardless of these eight things? She didn't even talk about the eight things so to speak. She just learned from the merchant team, what do you need from learning and development? And in doing so, she was able to gather a lot of data, a lot of thoughts, a lot of anecdotes, a lot of stories about what people

really wanted. And as a result, she learned that what they needed, wasn't what they thought they needed which is often the case and learning and development.

7. So going back to the negotiation example, they told us, "Look, we don't want the training team to deliver us a negotiations class. Most of us went to college. We learned about basic negotiation 101. And no offense to learning and development, but you don't have the expertise and experience in negotiation to be able to give us the level that we need. What we were saying to our leaders. We want to learn about negotiations from people who are negotiating with Samsung and Sony and some of the big players in the consumer electronics market. How do you approach that? What's different about that? What can I learn from your experience as a negotiator that I didn't pick up in college or that I haven't picked up from my experience? That's what I want to learn. So what I tell people in that survey data, I want negotiation training. That's what I meant."
8. And then you can take that across all eight of the things that they were asking us for. But what [Name] was able to find out is instead of building them the eight things, that is not at all what they wanted and have we done that, it would have placated them from a check the box mentality of, "Yep, we have more learning opportunities. That's what we set out to do." But it would have actually impacted any behaviors or change the way people did their jobs. So instead she found out that the things that people wanted to learn, they wanted to learn through experiences, through hearing from leaders, through things like lunch and learns where somebody who's really successful comes and talks about their process and things that we still help them with.
9. So we still help facilitate and lunch and learn for example. By facilitate I mean set it up, get the right speakers in and market it and draw people in and all that kind of stuff. But when it came to delivery, it was [inaudible 00:16:19] that was going to deliver that lunch and learn. So we supported it, is probably a better word. And all across the different things that they wanted, that became more of our role is, "How do we support this? How do we enable you to drive a learning culture without us actually doing most of the stuff?"
10. CA: Okay. Let me ask for some detail there, you were working with your merchant team. Did you have a particular sponsor that made the original request?
11. P19: Yeah. It came through HR, so our HR business partner that was working with the merchant team. So she had gotten feedback from the merchant leaders saying, "Hey, we've got this employee engagement data that they weren't more learning, et cetera." And it came through HR that way. Our learning and development is part of HR as well. So we're under the same umbrellas as a lot of folks are.
12. CA: Okay. Did they group, or did in general, all of those merchant team leaders remain involved as [Name] did her work?
13. P19: Yeah, absolutely. So one of the things that made this so successful in my eyes anyway, was after [Name] did all this work. She put together just this beautiful recommendation about how we can support and what we feel that is the best way to go. It was a bit of a risk because leaders, senior director of VPs some pretty high up leaders within merchant org, we're saying, "We want you to build us eight learnings."
14. And she was going into a meeting will tend to say, "Actually, no, here's what we're going to do instead." And there's a bit of a risk and she kind of blew them away with her presentation because it was backed by data. It was backed by not hunch, but actually talking to employees, talking to leaders and understand things.

15. And at the end of the day, all very much aligned and said, "Yes, you're right. That's exactly what we need. Tell us what to do. Lead us through this work and help us to get this out." And it was really cool to see them shift from that, check the box mentality of, "Build us eight things." To, "No, help us build a learning culture. We're all in."
16. CA: What was the audience here?
17. P19: I would say roughly two to 300, I think merchants in the org. And I mean, the audience that who receive the training was primarily kind of an entry level to secondary, lower level management who are looking to advance their careers. Is really the point of what you're were trying to accomplish is, "How do we prepare people for the next role?"
18. CA: You mentioned, it sounds like [Name] was doing most of the work and you were providing guidance to that work. Any other people involved in that team?
19. P19: Nope. Pretty much all her with, again, my help a little bit, but she did most of the work.
20. CA: Was there a client team that was engaged the whole time? Or was she really just working with different groups of clients that she did the interviews and surveys?
21. P19: She had a few [inaudible 00:20:08] client. But she had a couple of stakeholders from both the HR team that I mentioned earlier, as well as a couple of leaders on the merchant team that were kind of designated as A, this manager, that manager, I want you to help [Name] with this coming from the merchant team. So she could have a couple of business partners in that perspective that were just kind of helping advise and help you pull people together. Right. So if [Name] reaches out and says, "Hey, I'm trying to get some small groups together to come in and talk, if nobody knows who [Name] is that's a little bit more difficult to get people to buy in. So she leaned on some leaders to help get some of that going as well.
22. P19: it was at least a month, maybe a little bit more. I might've been a month and a half.
23. P19: Which was kind of the other, the risk you're going into it is let's just call it six weeks. So six weeks later they're expecting us to walk in and say, "Yep, here's the things that we're building for you." And instead we walked in and said, "We're actually not building you the things." And again, they were all okay with it.
24. CA: Were there challenges that [Name] faced as she tried to do this work?
25. P19: Yeah, there were. Certainly some resistance to her approach because especially at first, like "Why do you want to talk to all these employees? We already told you kind of what we want." So that was a challenge to overcome. And she had to kind of, again, lean into that empathy and talk about how, what we're trying to accomplish here is just hear from employees what we're trying to do. But that was certainly an obstacle to overcome is getting past that initial or getting people to buy into the approach. And then getting people to participate as well. So even then when we leaned on leaders, it's still hard to get people to take time out of their day to come in and spend a half hour to an hour talking to you about what your learning needs are. So sometimes gathering that data became a bit of a struggle to get the right people in.
26. CA: What were the outcomes?
27. P19: I don't have measurable outcomes, so to speak, but from just a learning culture, I mean, she was able to successfully work with them to start implementing some of these solutions and getting again leadership, buy in, getting people to attend. So we had a couple of lunch and learn sessions for example, where we had experts come in and really they could talk about their approach. So again, I'll come back to the negotiation example.

So we have one of our leading people in that area come in and talk and fill the room with probably 75 to 100 people to learn about that. So we were able to successfully get some of the things off the ground. But didn't actually, I don't know, from a measurable standpoint, what impact that had on their business.

28. CA: So what would you say in this case, as it was presented to you was the goal that sort of came to you?
29. P19: Yep. Their goal was, "We want these eight learnings built to impact our employee engagement results that we do every year."
30. CA: So there was some shifting in that you weren't just pushing back on the solution that you were kind of helping them explore their goals as part of this work.
31. CA: Why did you pick this as your most successful example?
32. P19: Yeah. I'll just go back to this shift that we made within the business. So we were pretty new to consultation at the time. And everybody, like I said earlier, we're so used to operating in a, "We're going to come to you and ask you to build a thing. And then you're going to build this thing."
33. And then to get a group that was very much bought into the old model to completely shift their perspective and say, "I get it now. I get what you're trying to do. And the us lead us in learning and development." So even though it wasn't a huge splash from a [Name] company perspective. So it was a small corner of what we do. It just stands out to me because it made such a mental shift for some of those partners.
34. And really helped my team buy into the process a little bit more too. Because we were relatively new at the consultation model and they saw, "Wow, this works." And it's a lot more fun this way than just building the thing.
35. CA: Just to ask that in a slightly different way or to build on what you just said. Do you think that there were some factors at play here that enabled you to be so successful in this particular project?
36. P19: I'll try to answer it, but tell me if it's not quite hitting. But there's two factors. I think that helped make this successful. Number one was [Name]. I mean, she really bought into the design thinking slash empathy slash performance consulting model. And approach as a consultative professional, versus just a traditional learning professional. And the way that she showed up to the business partner. I think she's in our org, she's a little six at the time. So just above entry level and working with again, some directors and VPs and influencing up in that way. And she just knocked it out of the park. So that was, I guess, one of the factors that really stood out to me.
37. And then the other one was just the process itself. So being able to going in with more of a consultative approach and utilize some of the processes and tools to dig a little bit deeper and consultant. And have some of that, I don't know, I guess, courage and leadership to be able to say, "I hear what you're saying, but I want to slip it a little bit deeper and learn a little bit more." So using some of those tools really helped make it successful.

Case P20M Interview

1. P20: Okay. This was not at my current company, a previous company, Call center collections work was what most of the operations of the company was, and the problem that was brought to the training department, to [inaudible 00:01:22] was the call center reps were not sufficiently documenting the calls they just finished. So then the

subsequent calls, someone calls in or they call someone else, they should be... A caller should be able to reference the notes for this call they're on, but there weren't any notes or they were really, really poor notes, which ended up with frustrated customers and the frustrated representative on the phone. So yeah, which I'm betting is probably pretty standard at any place that operates as a call center. So they came to us with a problem on that of, "Hey, we've got a lot of customer complaints, we've got frustrated employees, we've got..." And they did thankfully, they did come with some data on that. Just there were some specific number of complaints from customers on this specific issue.

2. And so kind of along those lines and then came to us, "Hey, we need some training for this." Which is a pretty popular approach, that's a very common mentality of most leadership in companies, every problem has a training solution, which we know is not always the case. And in this case it was an issue, and we did, thankfully... I was very grateful that they came with a clear problem that to me needs analysis, if it starts, and there's already a clear problem. I mean, that's half the battle right there. If you have to spend time sorting out what the actual problem is that definitely can take a lot more time and more meetings and more analysis, but they came with this problem already, great. So then we started asking the questions. "Why don't employees take the time to document?"
3. "Well, that's just it, it takes extra time." "Okay. Why don't they want to spend that extra time?" "Well they're trying to make more calls," and then it ultimately boiled down to, "Why are they trying to make more calls?" Well it came down to a bonus issue. The more calls you made the higher your bonus was. So there was a financial incentive to not do the thing that they wanted them to do. Well, that's how the business works. They weren't going to make less calls, they needed to make more calls and we couldn't tweak a financial incentive. So what were some solutions to this? So we started thinking about it and talking through and training was going to be part of that, just clearly outlining, what do we need people to document? They need to document why someone called, how they resolved it, and what needs to happen with follow up if any.
4. So those three things. So we needed some training and be pretty clear on the expectation, but then we needed some other solutions. We needed something within the system itself that would give employees a required field. These three fields may need to be required, an employee could not leave them blank. We also needed some type of something added to the quality analysis process just to find out, were they doing this? Was someone checking on it? Were they being scored on this? Was someone coming behind a reviewing? Are you documenting the way you're supposed to? So we all got on the same page we were going to... I was going to get started on this training. It was going to be a CBT. That was e-learning to get everybody up to speed on what the expectation was. There were going to be some sample calls to listen to and put in their correct documentation for that type of call.
5. And they were also going to add some criteria to the QA process to review for documentation. And then the big chunk of it was going to be updating the system to have these three extra fields. And ultimately it was working pretty well from a quality now... I'm sorry, for a needs analysis standpoint, that process, I thought was awesome. It ultimately did not turn out great because some priorities shifted in the company and then it became, "Hey, we can't update the system." "Okay, fine. Can we still have this as part of something people are scored on from a QA standpoint?" "No, we really don't have any mechanism for updating our QA process at this time." "Okay, so the only piece left to

solve this problem is going to be my e-learning module." "Yes. Hey, I make good e-learning, but no e-learning I make is going to successfully talk somebody out of a financial incentive."

6. My e-learning is basically becoming a very elaborate way of saying, "Hey, please do a better job documenting." But we tried, we could not. I mean, my leadership, we could not get any headway in either of these areas to add them to the solution. It was just my e-learning, and the results were exactly as we predicted, they'd be nothing actually changed.
7. P20: Roughly, I would say that kind of, "Hey, these are options." That was I would say, three weeks to a month. The ideas for it came pretty quickly. After a couple of meetings, here's some ideas. And then when we had the ideas for a system change and a QA change, it was like, "Okay, great." And some other people in the group check to see if that was possible. And at first it was all those things, had a green light. So, that all happened pretty quick. I'd say yeah, three weeks to a month, everything was a go.
8. CA: When the request came in, was there a particular sponsor or a particular business leader who was driving it?
9. P20: Yes. I cannot remember what her title was, but yes. And unfortunately she actually did agree with our assessment of it and with the solutions we had. Just, I think she ran into opposition when she went to head of the development team for updating the system and QA as well. So getting buy in from other departments is I think, where we failed.
10. CA: Were you working with a team?
11. P20: No, that was me and my immediate manager as well.
12. P20: And at the time I was a senior instructional designer, so it was me, senior instructional designer and instructional design manager.
13. P20: A lot of it came all... Again, the requester came with some data in hand with some of the just number of complaints there'd been, and some of the content on those complaints. But as far as the steps, the needs analysis, it was as far as if I had to file, put it into a specific model, I'd say it was probably the five why's would be the closest thing I can say is... Yeah, with this system, it was just asking those questions and really trying to nail down on why this problem existed and then that gave us some clear pictures of the how.
14. CA: And were you asking those questions of the original requester or were you like working with a client or a stakeholder group?
15. P20: Oh, that's a good question. I know it was that original requester. At the time I was... Yeah, I was not an outside instructional provider, I was part of the company itself, so in the training department.
16. CA: And then the call center itself. So can you give me an idea of how many people? What was the scope of the target audience you were impacting?
17. P20: At that company, that would have been the collection's department, which would have been about 2,500 to 3000 employees.
18. CA: You felt this was a successful needs assessment effort, but did you still face challenges?
19. P20: Honestly, that needs assessment thing was not really challenging because again, part of that was, I don't remember there being really anybody personality clashes or we didn't really have to convince anybody or I mean, the people we spoke to and the requests that they were very open to ideas and suggestions. And so that flowed really well. I was blessed that, that part of it went pretty well, but the challenges came later with trying to just actually implement the ideas we had.

20. CA: Why did you pick this as most successful?
21. P20: That one, I think because it's one of the projects that we're... Let's see some context for this. A lot of the projects I work on in training both for good and ill, seem to revolve around a lot of compliance issues, than compliance training, which is nobody's favorite. It's no one's favorite to work on. And it's no one's favorite to actually do the compliance training. But that's kind of where I've kind of landed on a lot of things. Compliance, I'm not a huge fan of working with because it doesn't go after a specific problem. It's mostly awareness and checking a box. But this training, that one, I loved it, because like, "Oh, this is a specific problem. This is something we can fix." And yes, training obviously is part of that solution. So great. And it was good, being listened to, it was good ideas and I really do feel like it could have been great, I'm sad it did not get the buy in that it needed. But just from a needs analysis point of view, that it did flow pretty well. It was a really smooth process

Case P21M Interview

1. P21: Okay. This is an operations requests and we have an app that our drivers use. At each of the stops that they make, this app records a lot of information about the stop. They are able to take pictures because a lot of our deliveries are not directly to the end user. It's through a third party, and our actual customer is maybe not in market so they want to be able to see that everything was delivered appropriately before their end user, their customer moves in. So this app allows them to take pictures, allows them to note any safety concerns that they might find, where they parked the truck, all that stuff about the stop.
2. We were only trending at high 80s, 88, 89% in what they call report completion, meaning that, for each delivery, they call it delivery report, for each delivery, the completion of that stop. Either be missing pictures or the pictures were fuzzy, or pictures were turned around, or they didn't answer all the questions or they didn't get a signature. Whatever it was, it was creating an incomplete report and they want to be at 98% completion. So there was a gap in the performance that was needed.
3. CA: Who sponsored the effort?
4. P21: Okay. It came from what we call it in our organization a group vice president who was leading what they called a onsite, which is the name of our app, onsite triage team. Our COO had contracted him and said, "You're in charge of this. Let's get this fixed." So he was to marshal resources to move the organization from this 88% to 90, 98.
5. Were you working alone or who were you working with and how was it structured?
6. P21: Initially it was just myself and the group vice president. When he called me, we set up, we had three phone calls and do what I call project initiation document, then the project intake. Once that, then it branched off into the team. So I had my ID team as well as the SME's that were named and deemed appropriate and turned over to that group to work. So there was a large team, but then everybody was working in smaller groups kind of thing.
7. P21: It was one, two, two on ID, myself and the stakeholder, and then the SME's, there was four SME's, I believe. One that was a technical person from IT on the app. Then ... I'm sorry, three. Two field people that are actually using the app, distribution managers, and then one from IT, the two ID people and then myself and the VP.

8. P21: Yeah. The first step was, got on the phone with him. We have a project initiation document, as I mentioned, and it just walks through really understanding what the goal was. Why is this training needed? A lot of this I learned from you, to be honest with you, but understanding the objective. What was the business need that the 89%, 88% in completion for these reports was creating? Well, it was creating a customer satisfaction issue, which in turn ultimately could affect the revenue. It had not, we had not lost revenue as a result of it yet. No account came to us and said, "That's it, we're done," and we've lost $100,000 of revenue, but we were having customer satisfaction issues that were bubbling up from the national sales team. So the performance need was clear, move from 88 to 98.
9. He had a timeline, August 1st of that year. So we went through the objective, we went through the subject matter experts. I asked who's doing it right? Who's doing it well? He gave me the list of those people. This is in no particular order, but we eventually interviewed those people to find out were they actually subject matter experts because we've been burned before where somebody goes, "Oh yeah, call [Name]." Then we're like, "Well, [Name] is doing it, but he's doing a workaround and we don't want to teach work around. We want to teach the way it should be." So we have an interview process now for our SME's to determine if they truly are an SME. We spoke a lot about the audience, which was clear. It was the delivery managers and their helpers. We have personas on each of our core job roles that we had done a couple of years ago. So I shared that with this vice president and said, "Here's the audience we're talking about. Does this seem accurate in your opinion?" So we went through that.
10. P21: Oh, the audience is about 700.
11. P21: Yeah, that's okay. I asked him what has been done before? This was rolled out back in 2018. What had been done? So he walked me through how it was rolled out, shared with me any of the existing materials that they had. Then I started to talk to him about why does he think we have this back? Really trying to delve into that root cause issue. We uncovered that training was certainly ineffective when we rolled out the program, but there was also a big technology issue, which is why we ended up with a IT person on the team. There was a lot of inconsistency in the app and how it worked. It would go down, it would shut down. It wouldn't load, it wouldn't sync. The camera wouldn't work, so it's hard to be compliant in those areas and expect that performance if the technology isn't working.
12. So we had a lot of conversation about that and what would need to be done in conjunction with training to make sure we achieved success. So that was the initial conversation to get to, is training part of the solution or not? We determined that, yes, it was part of the solution, and then we decided to move forward. So the next two calls got into more of the details. We talked about who's the approver besides this group vice president? Was there anybody else? Because we've gotten stuck before where, all of a sudden, we're done and somebody else looks at it and like, well, you forgot this. We're like, Oh my God, we're all the way at launch. We talked about reporting needs. We talked about specific business outcomes and behavior outcomes.
13. So we had four behavior outcomes that needed to happen. We knew what the business needs were clearly. Then we got deeper into the audience. Again, their personality strengths, their motivations, their preferred learning modalities, how comfortable they are

with technology, the types of devices they use. Again, just making sure we were on the same page in regard to the personas.

14. Then after that, I came back to him with a proposal on my thoughts on what the deliverables would be in the timeline.
15. CA: What was the duration of that work? Just calendar time, roughly?
16. P21: That was two weeks.
17. P21: Because we had three phone calls. Yeah, three phone calls and then the presentation. So four phone calls, including the presentation of the proposal.
18. CA: Okay. What were the outcomes?
19. P21: We created the content. Is that what you mean?
20. P21: Yeah. So they agreed, we created the content, and we are now at 98.6%.
21. P21: It only took 60 days ... Well, it took us ... Total, because we did something because there were, remember, four behavior changes, so we did things in some pieces. Some of them were just job aides that were needed, so it took us about six weeks to do all of the material and the content that we needed. Then to move the change, it was only about 60 days. Because it's not like trying to turn a revenue ship where you're really trying. Some things are just, especially in operations, they are a lot more black and white, like compliance. So [inaudible 00:23:44] are going to turn the ship faster. People just need to understand what they're supposed to do, know how to do it, and have the tools to do it. Then that ship can generally turn pretty fast.
22. CA: Were there challenges that you faced in doing the work on this project?
23. P21: Absolutely. Some of the challenges were that the SME's have day jobs, and so trying to get them to look at the materials to make sure it was accurate before we could move on with sometimes challenging. There was one of the approvers that wanted to do things a little bit differently after he saw the proposal. They really like video here at [inaudible 00:24:52] and video is great. Video was part of the solution for one of the behaviors. I can't remember exactly which one, but it was not the solution for all of it. We had one where, if technology fails, the manager needs to build a manual report. This all connects in with our salesforce.com platform. So they're supposed to go into salesforce.com and they're supposed to build it manually because it didn't sync up, the phone didn't sync.
24. Well, a video, in our opinion, wasn't going to help that. They watch a video and then they're not going to retain it. What would be better was a job need because they don't do it frequently, and they could pull that out when they had to do it and say, "Okay, here's my screenshots step by step. Here's what I do." I would love to have had something electronically built into Salesforce, but we haven't been able to make something like that work. So he wanted a video, so we had to really push the fact that we're the L and D experts and this is why we've chosen this particular medium for this part of the solution. So we had some of that extra conversation that had to happen and educate a little bit.
25. CA: Why does this stand out for you as your most successful?
26. P21: Well, we've had a couple of very similar to this, but everything worked as planned for the most part. You know what I mean? The process works and it proves to our team that when you take the time and don't just be reactive. [inaudible 00:26:44] calls and says "Hey, I need this," and we just start jumping in and putting it in our pipeline and we don't prioritize. Because we did that too. This was a huge priority. So it does work and we can control our own destiny and projects like this prove that, that we can control our destiny and educate the organization as we go along. The next time that we have to work with

this group vice president, it's going to be even easier because he's going to understand the process. So, that's what I really liked about it, and of course we saw the impact. We were able to measure and actually see that what we did had an impact on the organization, so our work was valuable. A huge difference from the other situation that I described.

27. CA: Do you think there were particular factors in place that allowed this to be so successful that maybe weren't in place with the other examples?
28. P21: Yeah, I think, number one, this group vice president that I speak of that came to me, he and I have worked together for 27 years.
29. P21: Before I was in L and D, I was in the field and so I was regional sales manager and assistant general manager and all that. We grew up in the organization together, he and I. He used to be a sales manager as well. So we have a really strong relationship. Not only at work, but we have a personal relationship so we have a deep mutual respect for each other. I think that, that played a lot into it. We clearly realized that we did not have the connection with Human Resources that we should, and so we changed that. We immediately put things into place to say, "Okay, we're facing off at the same customers, HR and L and D. So we need to have a tighter relationship." They're in the talent development business, we're on the talent development business as well. So let's figure out what our lanes are and let's work together.
30. So we have put things in place to change that. but I think that was one of the biggest factors, and I think the other factor was we stuck to the process. I did not apply this process to the HR project. I saw it as, okay, we have harassment training, you need new harassment training. We have a content provider, let's go to the library and pull some out. I just didn't see it any more difficult than that, and so I did not apply the process to it.

Case P22M Interview

1. P22: Sure. Okay. My most successful example is with second grade, so slightly younger students. And what I was trying to have them do was to play certain rhythms on rhythm sticks. Now they hadn't even seen the notes before, hadn't played rhythm sticks really, maybe when they were in kindergarten. So I actually gave them a pretest so I could see what exactly they knew, what they thought of the different symbols and how to hold the instruments and how to play it.
2. What I actually did is I did this in small groups. I did it during my planning period. I would take in just maybe two, three students at a time and I would show them a large piece of paper that had a certain rhythm on it. And there was maybe three or four for those. And I gave them rhythm six and I just told them, I said, "Hey, I know you haven't seen these before. I know you haven't played these this instrument before, but I just want to see what you think these symbols mean."
3. And I actually... Because this was a part of a districtwide... Forget what they called it, but we needed to track data over the override standard. So I videotaped each student with permission and not of their faces, and they had to try to play the rhythms that were on the cards. And it helped me understand where they were in terms of how they're actually playing the rhythm six, it also helped me see what they thought the notes would sound like and if they were able to keep the steady beat that we had been learning about for the past two years. It helps me see whether they thought notes were going to be rushed or whether they were going to be even.

4. So, this really helped me out what I needed to focus on so that if I saw that all the students knew how to hold a rhythm six, that's not something I needed to handle during the lesson. I could just get over that part. So I think that was probably one of the most successful needs assessments I've done.
5. CA: It's interesting to me that you were collecting data in a couple of different ways, including the pretest and the video.
6. P22: Yeah. I mean, it was a little different than I normally would have done just because of the districtwide data collection. We had to follow five different classes over the course of maybe two or three months. But you sort of started standards on what I needed teaching them how to play rhythms on rhythm six in second grade. Yes, I would be doing it, it was just a little different because I don't always do the pretest for it. So I felt like since that's one of the standards that I chose to do, I needed to have physical data that I could show.
7. CA: What was the duration of this work?
8. P22: Honestly, probably about two months because I did this pretest when they had never even seen the notes. So I had to actually teach them how to count and read the rhythms first before they could do it on rhythm six, so [inaudible 00:14:24] instantly. I couldn't just... Especially younger children, I was like, "I have to break everything down into smaller steps."
9. P22: I mean, as I mentioned a little bit before, it helps me see what exactly I needed to focus on, like I didn't need to focus on how they [inaudible 00:14:57] rhythm sticks because they knew that already. So, we just spent a lot of time practicing different rhythms, first clapping and speaking them and then eventually playing on the rhythm sticks that I did find that once I did the posttest with those students, that there was definitely an improvement in the behavior or performance.
10. CA: Did you face any difficulties or challenges in trying to gather this data or implement your findings?
11. P22: I think just in terms of gathering the data, it took a little while for me to figure out the best way to record the videos. I actually, now that I'm the diva, I only had my students I had to collect data for and have to do it for the whole class. So I just had videotaped the story. But yeah, it took me a little time to figure out how to do the pretest.
12. Now, in terms of setting up the rhythm cards in a way that I wasn't holding them or... I think I want sitting all four of them over the cards in different chairs and I just tell them, "Hey, child playing card one, child playing card two." So it took me a little bit of guess in chunks during the pretest to figure out what was the best way to actually give them the pretest.
13. CA: What was the class size? What would have been the whole audience of students that were getting this instruction?
14. P22: Each class could have been anywhere from about 18 to 22. And similar with the other example I had given you, I have four classes of second grade.
15. P22: But with the way that the district wanted us to do this, it was only one class that we were collecting data for. It was actually only three students within that class. I knew which students it was beforehand. They was randomly generated by the district.
16. P22: But then, even though I didn't do the pretest with the other few classes, I was able to see from the videos from this class what the other classes were most likely going to have

issues with or they were going to be okay with. So I was able to use that information in my other classes too.

17. CA: Why choose this as your most successful example?
18. P22: I chose this one as my most successful example because I feel that I was really able to tailor my instruction based on where they were at. This showed an instance of, "Hey, you know what? I'm really figuring where they're at right now. I know where I want to get them to be." And having the pretest, it really helped me eventually then determine how am I going to get them from point A to point B.
19. CA NOTE: Some participants really struggle with the term "least successful." In this case I substituted, "relatively less successful" to help the participant choose a case.

Case P23M Interview

1. Speaker 2:
2. The more successful example is; we have what we call our digital freight marketplace called [NAME] Connect. It's a platform in which our customers can go in and enter the loads that they have to be shipped, and then in an ideal state, then the carriers can come in and say, "Hey, I want to buy that load." So it really kind of minimize is the touch points from a sales rep and a carrier rep perspective. We really were trying to drive our carriers to get into connect so that they could book their own loads, they could have greater visibility to what's available, from a carrier standpoint, gives them more tools for tracking and tracing and things of that nature, from our reps perspective, it's supposed to make it easier for those easy loads to get covered, so they don't have to be on the phone with those carriers, while they can spend their time either building their carrier portfolio, reaching out to other carriers that we could be leveraging and solving the difficult problems, working in a more strategic manner to provide greater value, rather than just covering easy loads.
3. I started with the VP of operations who was the business sponsor for that, and as some of our IT folks, and we really did start from... Having learned a couple of lessons; what is the behavior we want to change? Because we can give this tool to reps, but here's what I'm hearing. This is supposed to allow carriers to come in and buy their own loads, there's a carrier rep, this is replacing them, that's how they're going to see it. And so that had already been a sentiment from the field that I had heard about this tool, so I said, "Well, we really got to convey to the reps; this should minimize the amount of time you're spending covering easy loads, but here's what we want you to do with the time that you've gained back now; add value to carriers with difficult loads, find more carriers that we can source with, those kinds of things."
4. So I said, "We have to really be very clear and repeat that message often, otherwise it's easy for carriers to fill in that blank and say; Oh, well, they're just automating my job. I'm going to be out of here in 10 days or whatever." I think upfront making sure that the problem we're solving and the behavior that we're trying to change is there. The other thing that we did up front is really identify what changes do we want to see? And so VP of operations says, "I want to see a 5% increase in digital booking." I said, "Okay, that's the goal that we'll set." So the behavior we're trying to enable is to get those reps to that place where they are capable of doing that. So we built the training kind of several different mini modules that kind of spoke to; the what's in it for them? Why this is going to help them? What's the benefit for them? Also, what's the benefit for the carriers?

5. Because they're going to have to be getting their carriers on this platform and kind of serve as the kind of customer support as well to a certain extent, so we had to integrate some of that stuff in the training as well, sort of equipped them with what are some of the frequently asked questions. The other thing that I did that I think made that really successful; was partnering with one of the product managers who really handles more of the adoption. He had decided he wanted to run a contest around this and said that we could build a leaderboard to look at the branch level, who's ahead, who's leading the way in terms of digital booking at the regional level and then overall, and so once he got that set up, it was easy to kind of mine the data and plug and play the numbers on a weekly basis. So we'd report out that weekly to show progress.
6. And then at the end of three months, because we ran that for a quarter, there'd be a drawing for three or four prizes, like a flat screen TV, an Apple watch, those kinds of things, so we incentivized that way. We also put a little bit of kind of prestige around the top person per branch and created what's called a Connect Captain, so with the understanding that; you as a Connect Captain, you're demonstrating a high level of proficiency at this, so it's safe to assume that you are doing something right, how can you be of help to those others in your branch and getting them moving along and booking more loads digitally? So we said, "We're going to lean on you guys for some best practices that you'll share." And so we started with a couple of carrier reps who before we even started the contest and the whole initiative, had been booking up to 14% of their loads digitally through [NAME] Connect. And we got some testimony from them and videotaped that and got some quotes to really show the field; here's how they use it.
7. And one girl said, "It's really great for me because I am on PTO and I'm still making money. My carriers are going on and booking their loads while I'm away from the office." And so I think that having those kinds of testimonies... And then another guy in Charlotte here we recorded, talked about the percentage of commission that he had increased from one month to the next, by increasing his digital booking. So I think those really practical kind of pieces of; "Hey, you want to make more money? Here's why you want to do it." You're still making money while you're on vacation, kind of resonated better with field than; Oh, we want to increase our overall gross margin by X, Y, Z, so I think that that was beneficial. Having that incentive around the behavior we were trying to change, that then also aligned with the ultimate business result that we wanted, which was the 5% overall increase in digital booking.
8. Speaker 2:
9. Yeah. I just crunched the numbers a couple of weeks ago. I think we're like 6.2% in the whole business unit digitally. Now, we had some folks that were almost at 20% of their loads booked digitally, right around 16 and 18%, but I think as an average, it was like 6.6, so we hit above that. Compared to that previous experience, I think we did a better job of trying to connect with the field with some of those testimonies, incentivizing the behavior that we wanted to change and had a very clear target, and a path how to get there.
10. CA: What was the team like that was working on this effort?
11. P23: I was really counterpart to the VP of sales at that point. He was the business sponsor. We had two IT folks who were working on this, one of them more in a consultative kind of... She was kind of over all of the digital marketplace services, we had someone who is a little more specific to the carrier interface, and then we had a product analyst who really worked on the contest, that incentive piece. And then our VP of strategic initiatives also

was sort of a consultative a bit, because he has oversight into all of our technical and technology initiatives, but he wasn't really the driver of it. He was encouraging the user but he didn't have the same stake in it as the VP of operations, who had a particular target he wanted to increase and he wanted to see a certain revenue as a result of that.

12. CA: Can you give me just a rough estimate of how long from sort of the initial request or the initial kickoff of the project until you arrived at your plan, your solution? You mentioned you rolled it out and you ran for a quarter and then you were doing some of the incentive based stuff then, but from the beginning of the project to the point where you arrived at a solution. Do you know how long it was?
13. P23: I think it was about three months, let me pull up our plan document. It was September we start having this conversation, so October, November, and then December, and then we launched it in January. I would say three months.
14. P23: To kind of do that back end work of; what is the gap we're trying to close? What is the behavior expectation? What's a reasonable goal? What are we seeing in the field now? How can we really leverage what is working well with those who are doing it? I would say three months now. Disclaimer; I didn't spend three months just working on that project and other things, but that's kind of the length of time it took to kind of get through that.
15. CA: When you were gathering that upfront data, how did you go about gathering it?
16. P23: A lot of what we did was look at the performance scorecards of the carrier reps first, to see what the current trends were in terms of digital booking, and then we took the top tier of those and talked to them. So we got a lot of qualitative data from; what are you doing well? What's working? What's not working? Both to refine the product a little bit in some of our releases, but also to incorporate that in the training. The other [crosstalk 00:00:24:38].
17. CA: Did you do those as interviews?
18. P23: Yeah.
19. P23: We did interview, select a few of those top folks. I just remembered this; we sent out a survey to all of our carrier reps. Let me pull that up. I just remembered that. I just want to look at the nature of the questions...
20. P23: ... we asked. Where did I put that survey? I can't find it. Really what I think the survey was trying to surface is; how comfortable are you with using the tools right now? The digital marketplace. Oh, here it is, [NAME]. Titled so, obviously [NAME] Connect for carrier procurement reps, right in front of my face. So we're trying to identify what specific training you need to better market [NAME] Connect to the carriers with whom you work. In addition, I want to be familiar with the functionality with an [NAME] Connect in order to demonstrate and or explain to carriers. How [NAME] Connect benefits the following groups. I understand and I'm very comfortable with it, or I'm not very comfortable with it, and how the help carrier's registered, do they understand? Do they not understand? Do they understand the difference between [NAME] Connect and this app that we have, it's called Drive [NAME]. And then we kind of went down to some specific features, finding and searching for loads, working loads through buy it now, bidding on loads, uploading paperwork.
21. A lot of this was; do you understand how it works so that you could explain this and get your carriers operating on this platform? What that helped me to build too, now that I'm looking at it again, is some FAQ about what some of the customer questions might be,

because again, we don't have customer service reps. And so since these reps are incentivized, because even if it's a carrier who starts booking his loads online, if it's in my carrier portfolio, I'm going to get a commission percentage of that load that's booked and totally hands off to me, so that's kind of how we sold it to the carrier reps is that you... Like the girl in the interview said, "This can be working for you while you're on vacation."

22. And so we also use that as a way of saying, "Okay, you are getting paid the commission on these loads, you have to be the one to offer some customer service to these folks because we don't have a function that supports that if they have questions, and two, kind of the [inaudible 00:28:11] that sold them on is; the carrier has the relationship with you, carrier rep, not somebody they're going to call it a 1-800 service center, so let them call you, nurture that relationship because you're probably going to get more business out of it ultimately anyway." That was kind of the message that we used to encourage them to take on that, really what is an additional role.
23. CA: Another kind of detail question. Well, first of all, any other data sources or methods that you used? I don't want to cut that off. You did the initial interviews-meetings with the stakeholders, you did the survey. You collected those testimonials.
24. Speaker 2:
25. Yeah. That was pretty much. I think that was it.
26. CA: Were there challenges that you faced in this effort?
27. P23: Yes. It really took me a while to surface with the business sponsor, "Hey, we don't have customer service, and that's going to be a gap for our carriers. Who do they call if I they have questions. How are we going to impress upon our carrier reps that this is their duty as well." That was one hurdle. He finally got it after a while, and when we got some of that data back from that server, he's like, "Oh yeah, we're..." Ideally, our CIO would like to believe that the application is so intuitive, that it doesn't need a help menu, but I think the customer and carrier base with which we work, that's never going to be the case, so that was a challenge at first. I think the other challenge that we encountered... Well, two; the application; [NAME] Connect, there's no equivalent training environment, so there was no offline environment.
28. They had a dev environment and a UAT environment, both of which were not complete, both of which changed depending on... If they're doing something in the dev environment, that's not really the place you want people to be playing around and training. So we had to overcome that with simulations, and we did finally talk IT into kind of giving us access to a dev environment in which our reps could play around. And the reason that was really important is the second obstacle; our reps do not have visibility to their carrier portals. So if I'm a carrier rep, and the carrier with whom I'm working causes us, 'Hey, I'm on this [NAME] Connect window and I don't know where X, Y, Z is, or I can't figure out how to redeem the reward credit that I earned. I don't even see it. Where is it?" That rep had no way of going in to that carrier's window and saying exactly what the problem was? That was the other reason that we really pushed to get some sort of sandbox and environment for them to play in so that they could build some comfort.
29. Because while we were asking them to provide that support, we were not enabling them to do so by not giving them some visibility to their carriers and customers accounts. There was the potential to erode their credibility with their customers, so that was a challenge. And still we don't have that visibility. It's far down the roadmap, but I think

that there were some issues with the product itself that I really had to kind of bring to the business sponsor's attention repeatedly early on and say, "Look, do we have this? Can they do this? If they can't, here's what might be an issue?" So those were some of the obstacles, but we did find a way to sort of compensate for them. I do think the application is intuitive enough once people get in it and see it, and they have a couple of carriers book loads. I think they're fine. It's just building that comfort with it because it is something that's very different, and if we're asking them to be experts in the eyes of their carriers, it's hard to build that expertise when you don't have the tool to do so.

30. CA: Why did this project stand out as your most successful?
31. P23: We have a few partners just like this, but a lot of them... We set a target, but the follow through until we meet that target or not is not always great. With this one, I felt like we assessed what the need was, we tried to solve for some of the problems that we knew were going to be issues, we launched the training, we incentivized the behavior, we tracked that to see kind of what the difference was. It's one that I could see moving all the way to the end. The thing that I would attribute that to as well... I'm not sure if this is helpful; there was somebody else helping to manage that data on the business side, that product analyst who was keeping up with the leaderboard. So while I'm working on some other projects, I'm not also simultaneously having to look at both training data and completion rates there, as well as the business performance that we're trying to impact. He was doing that data collection, made it easier for all of us to be able to see; where are we? What's going on? How can we move the needle?
32. And it enabled the VP of operations... I mean, we've been in a really tough market. This is a tough quarter to do this, because it was fine in January and February, and then things really ran off... Well, they got really good for a little bit in March because people are shipping stuff all over the place, but then, as businesses were closing, there was nothing to ship. So it kind of fell off a cliff there a little while, but even though we had some even in certain downturn weeks, in terms of digital booking, that trend line was parallel to everything else that was going on non digitally too. So we kind of account for that, but despite that, had a positive end result to that. I'm sorry, [Name], where was I going? Why did I choose it? Because we could see that to the end point and we can kind of see it all the through. In fact...
33. P23: I reached out to that analyst because I was just thinking about it, because that contest just came to a close a couple of weeks ago. They announced the winners, and I really want to document kind of how we went about that, and who was involved, because to me, I found great value in having that person watching the business numbers, said that I didn't have to kind of dig for that data. So it was really, really, really beneficial, and I think it was a good success story about how we can go after something and then kind of close the gap, but use some marketing around it, use some of these incentives, like the contests and things of that nature to really drive that behavior. I wouldn't call it game of fire, but sort of drive a competitive nature about the change.
34. Do you think that there were factors in place that sort of allowed this to be successful? That maybe were absent in your earlier example?
35. P23: I think that analyst was certainly one. I think I had the support of the VP of operations that we didn't have to move at breakneck speed and we could collect a little more data up front to see exactly what the knowledge gap and the skill gap were for our reps. With the survey and then looking at the best practices from the people who were

successful, I had a little bit more time to do that than I was given with the previous project that was not as successful, and a little more time, like I said, to do that.

36. P23: Knowing we wanted to roll it out and it be successful, we didn't want to have to kind of push it out, pull it back, push it out.
37. CA NOTE: Successful case was easy to identify for this participant – it had real business metrics with numbers to show success! Participant was very enthusiastic about this "proof."
38. CA NOTE: One marked contrast between cases here is that the most successful case involved multiple solutions to address all needs. Least successful had a single solution that was not really supported by data.

Case P24M Interview

1. P24M: So the latest one is something that started with employee services center, also known as the ESC. They have a number of different groups/works/departments. They have a number of different teams, one is an onboarding team and another is a leads team and another is a processing team and they have work streams under each of those. So they have home team training for these people. But they have these individuals who are onboarded, the new ESC team members, they get their home team training but then they are also responsible, like a month to six weeks in, they're responsible for supporting other teams. So if I'm on a process work stream, like the transitional processing team does People Soft work groups and editing and things like that, I'm also responsible, about six weeks in for answer calls on leads items and onboarding and just a variety of other topics that I won't have any familiarity with.
2. Up to that point that I got involved, their basic and only training was job shadowing so they'd go sit with somebody for half a day on the leads team and just listen in on the calls and try to be a sponge and take in what was being said. Of course, a lot of times, the leads person is not even getting leads calls so it's like what are you doing? Anyway, that was a problem for them. What was happening at the performance level is that the new person would be put into that cross functional role and they'd semi be freaking out, right? They would go, "Oh my God I have no idea what to do." So they would get up, they would put the person on hold and they would go ask another team member, somebody close to them, "Do you know how to handle this kind of call?" They would go try to find a manager. And they didn't really have any resources that were in one location. There are a number of issues that were contributing to all kind of dysfunction there. And it wasn't even the biggest issue, but it was a significant enough one for them to want to have work done on it.
3. P24M: The designed state was really to reduce the number of transfers and the amount of hold time resulting from the new person in that cross functional role doing those kind of things. They wanted to have, end result, desired result was to create a body of knowledge that supported them, educated them in the moment while they're answering calls not only on their home team but also in the cross boarding role. So it boils down to that.
4. P24M: The sponsor is a woman named [inaudible 00:24:11] who is a GDP of the whole benefits and EOC and a couple of other things. I'm not quite sure what it's called. [Name] is the VP who I more directly worked with but I had a director that was his delegate. And we assembled a team. So what we did, [Name], was to identify ... All the directors became the conduits for me to get to SMEs for each of the teams. And we identified what

the terminal objectives would be basically by sitting down with a focus group. Part of the reason I did interviews on the first project I mentioned, the tech ops ones, is because everybody was so distributed, they're everywhere across the states in the different markets. Even the people in the Carolinas, I could go to a nearby office but I couldn't get what I needed in terms of the depth. The ESC, they're right in the building, I could just go there.

5. So we identified a focus group, we asked some basic questions like what is it that you need to do as a new person in the cross functional role to be successful? And once we mapped some of those things out, we basically went and asked questions about what got in the way, what were some of the obstacles for them to perform successfully in their role. And then we basically looked at the things that weren't necessary, what environment would help them, what skills would help them, what motivational things would help them, things like that. I feel like I lost the thread in my answer now, could you remind me where I was going?
6. P24M: Yeah so once we did that, I was able to identify with our objectives group and then I created a little prototype for them to react to. And basically what we decided to do was to create a flow of learning where they would have some kind of introduction to the particular team they're going to learn about. So let me say that I am a member of the leads team and I want to learn something about onboarding. I may have something kind of overview of the onboarding team, the more extremes in that. I'm going to have some kind of activity practice, e[Name]sure to typical case or situations that the onboarding teams or work streams would be doing so that I'm going to be placed in situations or giving challenges that happen daily among that team. And I'm going to have to try to make some decisions about that and use my resources that we created. So we created an online library through the Hub. You know about the Hub. And worked with them to identify structural content that we basically correlate into QRGs that would be placed in the Hub.
7. So the scenario activities that we're creating are basically leading them to showing them how to use their resources, not only the training but also in the service center of their job. So it was doing stuff like that. A cornerstone for this, [Name], was having debrief activities that they would use and apply with their supervisor. So after I finished my onboarding I would go back to my leads manager or supervisor and we would debrief certain aspects of the practice, for example, or of a job shadow that I did or of the assessment that I took, things like that.
8. CA: Were you working with others to gather data and to build out the solution?
9. P24M: Correct, I was. I would work with each team. I worked with five different teams over a period of, after the prototype and the learner tryout, remember those? I started in, I think it was October, end of October. So I would work with one team, we would build out our scenarios and other content, identify the other content. I would review it with them and finish it up and then start the next team. So I would say we had four to six weeks per team. So there were at least four, no there's been five. Five plus one. So there's been five teams I worked with in the ESC and the grids consisted of directors, a couple of managers, reeds and some of the individual contributors. I would have anywhere from four to eight people on these work teams. And we'd get in a room a couple times a week and we'd do the work, basically, together. We'd do the rough work together, I'd take it away, create the learning solution that we agreed to in advance through the prototype that we stamped out that way and then rinse and repeat.

10. CA: What was the rough duration of that calendar wise?
11. P24M: Okay so the duration and calendar kind of are different. Calendar, it took a long time because people couldn't make up their minds basically. So in terms of duration, getting from the design into the prototype and then doing the LTO, you want to include that?
12. CA: Yeah. And start with your first intro to the project and then how long does it take us to get to the LTO?
13. P24M: Oh well, that's different. So I think we had started the project in March of last year. I didn't get approval to move forward on the design until May. In May, probably about third week in May, I started the design and I built out the prototype that I just outlined to you, overview, activity practice, activities with one to one debriefs and assessments. So we built out those components in June. I think in July we had the learner tryout and made design recommendations for improvements/changes at the beginning of August. And then there was a waiting period, [Name], because they weren't sure about some of the recommendations. I can't remember what exactly. Oh I know, our initial design solution offered something. They wanted more in terms of automated notifications. In short, they wanted to use the talent center, the LMS to make things more automated for the supervisors so they could be automatically contacted and know when somebody's ready to move onto the next item. Made sense but we weren't sure how to do that. So we had to do some leg work in terms of figuring out how to make that happen. So that took most of September and a little bit of October.
14. So by the time we finished with that, made the recommendations, they approved it, it was the end of October for me to start the actual production. And that's basically how it worked.
15. P24M: Yeah, and then it was fast. I mean, I did one whole team during most of the holiday. Which was kind of amazing. But the ESC is like that because they [inaudible 00:35:25].
16. P24M: Well, you may ask. What happened was COVID basically. We were ready to implement. When did we start going away in COVID? I think March 19? I worked from home, that was a Friday. I was trying to get it done, I wanted to go to spring training out in Arizona the week before, which I did, and I wanted to get it done before. So I wanted to get it done by the end of February. That was the initial timeline but the ESC felt like it was too quick, we needed more time. I couldn't disagree with them. I had a bunch of things that were not tied together into the bows I wanted them to be. So we pushed it out to the end of March then COVID happened and then everything's been kind of ... Well, it hasn't been really on hold because we've been able to move to get those bows tied. But we can't do the implementation part of it and there's two phases to that. One is an implementation training for the supervisors that I want to take them through a facilitation class and applying that to the one on one debriefs. And now we're going to have to do it through virtual, which is an interesting twist, how to make that happen virtually in the classroom, not the actual debriefs.
17. And then the other thing would be a virtual orientation to the talent center and the custom page that we developed that they would access before getting to the talent center and their curricula and things like that. So we will be walking them through the sequence, the flow of their classes per curricula.

18. CA: What factors were in place that made this relatively more successful than your earlier example?
19. P24M: Well, I mean, part of it was stakeholders. I knew who my stakeholders were. They were closer to me. They weren't dispersed, they had their own kingdoms but they're working more collaboratively than I perceived the tech ops to be working. I mean I think because of the region and there's just differences in how they're thinking and approaching training traditions, things like that. So this, the ESC group, much more collaborative, not as many disparities in terms of constraints like beliefs and images of how to apply things and do business. In terms of my supervisor support, much more consistent support of the project. I had [Name] again as the person to do this. He knew me, kind of grown up together in the organization and was able to, in critical moments, come to my aid to make sure there was movement and have conversation. And also in case our VP [inaudible 00:39:51] basically do the influencing thing. Those are very clear differences between the two projects in my mind. It's a lot better. A lot better well oiled machine as opposed to a machine that wasn't quite put all together.
20. Let's see what else. I think my methodology is different. My analysis methodology is much simpler and not as elaborate. I think it worked better for me to use focus groups, better use of time to use the focus groups as opposed to the interviewing, although I got a great deal of depth. And I had a very strong case for the tech ops on training design. I still believe that it's just that the focus groups help because I got good information, a variety of information, I also had the benefit of people going out and talking outside of the meetings and saying, "This is interesting," and building excitement that way, to some degree, where everything was discontinuous communication, which was a communication with the tech ops. I had to work really, really hard on the communication side of it. It was like banging your head against the wall.
21. CA NOTE: Here’s another example of work stopped by a merger. Overcoming a rapidly changing environment may be most difficult challenge. We talk about open systems interacting with the environment. But does big structural change count as installing a completely new system?

Case P25M Interview

1. P25: Yeah, sure. I mean, I think what makes something successful is that you have some outcomes and some action that come from it. So that's probably my criteria for success. Because the other one that I'll talk about later, we did not exactly do that. So yeah, I was working with actually the customer marketing team, which we often collaborate on for training efforts involving our customers, external facing training. So we were trying to figure out areas of need for our customers and how we might base a training program for them that we could actually even call a certification so we could use actually our own platform to create some type of training that they could access and go through and then get what they needed to get up and running and be successful with our software. So we wanted to have some hard data in a basis around moving forward, even though we probably had in our minds what we could have done.
2. So we created a pretty large survey about areas of need, and this is what I'm a little sketchy on, but it had a number of different questions and actually some open-ended areas where we could actually go through and see the types of things they were asking for and categorize them in certain areas. So we have some of the more basic features of our platform and then some things that are more advanced. And so we were able to categorize their feedback. We can dig into it and talk about it in more detail, but ultimately we got some good feedback on how customers perceive our software and terminology that's sometimes challenging for them that we used. Maybe they're not as familiar with. And we ultimately decided to create a basic program that we called Getting Started. That was a series of 10 on demand sessions that they could go through and get a basis of what they needed to run a basic webinar, basic type of event. And then they could do it themselves and adopt the software and be successful. So that's kind of where we landed, but yeah, if you have any specific questions we can dig into those now.
3. CA: Was there a particular sponsor or was there a particular client, your client internally group that was asking for this? How did you get involved?
4. P25: Yeah, I think often times what happens, at least in my experience, someone above me thought it was a good idea. So I can't really say a whole lot more about that other than that's where it came from. I think we definitely validated it, that we had enough interest in momentum and it would be a good thing to do with our needs assessment, but that's how it got started.
5. CA: So when you say someone above you, just in general. So you work in a talent development area or learning area, right? So was this leadership from that part of the house or was it someone from a business line or even higher up than that?
6. P25: Yeah. Right, right. I think it would probably be my boss and then one of my clients, so our reporting structure is pretty shallow, but I report to, and it's a little bit actually different than a talent development function. We're really more of a business services function. I do a little bit of talent development internally, but probably our biggest focus is customer training. So I actually sit in the business and do both, I do both external training and then internal L and D talent. So yeah. So I think, yeah, it came from my boss probably directly. And just as an idea, something that probably came from a board meeting or from some idea that he had and granted, it was a good idea, but it was almost like, "Well, we don't have this", it would be good if we had it. And that was kind of cutting out where it came from.

7. CA: When this was kicked off, what were the ultimate outcomes that you were hoping to achieve?
8. P25: Yeah, the ultimate outcomes were to provide an always available way probably without direct involvement of us. We had several goals, but number one to provide a path that customers could go through and get up to speed quickly using our software. And you're probably familiar with technology companies, they have certifications and ours never quite reached this level and we didn't really put the backing behind it once we got it done. But it's kind of a badge of honor, right? Almost like when we get our certified performance technologist or CPLP or whatever, we put a badge on our LinkedIn and it speaks well to not just ourselves, but to the company that's sponsoring this certification.
9. And so I think there's some IT certifications, certainly there's some from Microsoft you could dig into and find. And I think that was the thought that it could be sort of a badge of honor and a marketing mechanism for us to promote use of our software and get it more broadly known. That said, we didn't really invest in formal badging. I think we do get folks that earn it a T-cert and customer marketing handles that. I'm not privy to that, but that was another goal that we sort of use it to market really, and to be a part of our brand. So yeah, those are the two goals and somewhat unusual, I guess maybe when you think about internal talent development and maybe a little different than what you've heard before, but those were our goals.
10. CA: Who was working with you? Did you work on a team or where you solo and what were the roles involved as far as going out to get this data?
11. P25: Yeah, yeah. As far as creating the needs assessment. Yeah. We definitely had a team. I worked with someone in customer marketing, primarily. She was probably more in the whole project team, maybe served as an idea person and a content developer. I sort of drove the project. I was, I guess, the project manager. Yeah. And we had a couple of people from my team, had one of my team members on there as well who has a lot of experience interacting with customers. We also have someone from sales enablement on the team as an advisor. So that was the team. And ultimately I think when we did get the results and we had a path to go forward, we all kind of pitched in and worked on some of the content, but at least initially to get to that point and look at the needs assessment, and that's what the team was like.
12. CA: In addition to that, was there a client team, or was there a group of stakeholders who were doing oversight and approvals or anything like that?
13. P25: Probably not formally. I would make folks aware of our progress, probably my boss in particular, but there was no formal approval process or no committee that had to approve next steps, or that was really that terribly interested in our progress. I think a couple of things, I think they knew that it would get done ultimately, and then demands of our business just took them away to other things.
14. CA: Can you give me a general sense of the time frame that you did this work?
15. P25: Yes. Well, as far as the solution goes, I think we kicked off the team in the fall of, let's see, the fall of 2016. Yeah. It was about the fall of 2016. We launched the survey in November and then I think we left it open to collect data for a couple months. And then we compile the data and the feedback in early '17. And we probably, I think from that point and the direction we got from the survey and the feedback and the data, it probably took us another three or four months. I think we launched the first certification program,

the one that I mentioned, probably three or four months later. So maybe in may or June of '17.

16. CA: So as far as gathering the data that you kicked off and then to develop the survey, you were ended about a month and then you let the survey run for two months?
17. CA: And then you compiled that and started to pull out actionable items and that was three or four months.
18. P25: Right.
19. P25: Yeah, essentially. Right. I think you had it correct. From the time survey closed to figure out the direction, and based on the feedback we got, to create the solution, probably three to four months.
20. CA: Do you have a sense of what your customer base was at the time?
21. P25: Yeah. The marketing team, they were involved in sending it out. But at that time it at least had to go to 500 customers, I imagine. At least. I can't remember exactly how we identified this subset of customers. I don't think we sent it to every customer. Our number of customers would have been around 1,000 at that time, but we got 175 responses.
22. CA: Other than the survey, did you do any other data gathering as part of this effort?
23. P25: No, we didn't. I think anecdotally we had thoughts in our heads about the best way to move forward and we as a team, combined that with the survey results, but yeah, we didn't do anything else.
24. CA: Did you face challenges as you tried to gather the data and do this work that you can recall?
25. P25: Yeah. I'm looking at the survey now. Interesting, the challenge, I'm looking at the survey and I'm thinking, wow, it's a good survey. It was only five questions. One question had five parts. I think that was maybe the challenge, but the challenge was just going through the data. We had one question in particular that just had a lot of open-ended data. So going through all that data and figuring out how we were going to classify it or categorize it and bucket it, that it made sense. That was probably the biggest challenge.
26. CA: Why did you pick this as your most successful example?
27. P25: Yeah, I don't know if you've heard this from other folks, but sometimes you do needs analysis and needs assessment in various ways, and then you get some really nice data, but nothing comes of it. You don't do anything with it. Other demands come in and take away the bandwidth or you just get distracted or becomes less of a priority. So yeah, I think for me and what I've experienced in my time in my current employer, that was probably the biggest reason that we were able to have a team behind it and momentum, and we're able to do something with results and based on what we found that was a good solution and a good outcome.
28. CA: Do you think that there are particular factors in play that enabled you to be successful in this instance?
29. P25: Well, I think definitely having a team helped a lot, and having some team members that were definitely very interested in working on the project and they had made it a priority. Each of them, the person from marketing that I mentioned, customer marketing, she was very invested. I think our customer marketing team, we work pretty well with them and they do their own thing with their training. And it's more of a marketing thing. It's not quite as detailed or as process based as what we do, but they do bring sometimes a nice polish to what they do. And so that was definitely helped us be successful, getting their input and getting their involvement to help us really polish it and make it look good

along with the rigor and the process that we were bringing to it. Of course, the people on my team that were involved, they were certainly interested in it. And as well as a sales enablement person, that was sort of a consultant.

APPENDIX F

LEAST SUCCESSFUL NEEDS ASSESSMENT INCIDENT INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Case P1L Interview

1. P1: Okay. Yeah. The least successful was for a client who is a content provider also in the baking industry. It was really... I'll start by saying that it was the needs assessment that I felt was the unsuccessful part. I felt like we overcame that in the actual project itself ended up being successful. Probably kind of despite the needs assessment phase. The clients had 11.5 hours of web based training that they wanted to convert to micro learning and fits a millennial audience. Fit the current audience. They were described as page turners and long courses that were very content heavy and they were looking for something that was more engaging. The primary reason for that was that they wanted to retain existing clients and gain new clients.
2. So they were looking for something that their sales people could sell. Something exciting and new to put out there. And so the needs assessment phase started with some analysis work. The learning culture analysis part was very effective. It was very good and I had access to a lot of great resources that gave me a lot of information that informed the design. The other types of analysis I would normally do during a needs assessment phase were less successful. Audience analysis, I wasn't able to gather too much information on end users because they are clients of my client. Task analysis, we didn't really do. We had the content already and the current web based training and just used that as source material and didn't go through and start over and do another thorough task analysis and performance objectives from there. And then we also did some delivery systems analysis which helped us a lot because we were designing the learning solution to be mobile and video based and so that was a pretty important piece as well.
3. P1: The purpose of the assessment was to basically figure out what would sell. The client wanted something that their sales people as I mentioned could go out there and sell. And they told us that they wanted micro learning, and they use that term. The buzzword and that they want it to be engaging. And so it was really my goal during the needs analysis phase to figure out what that meant to them and try to decipher in specific terms when it came down to a design, what would make that deliverable successful.
4. CA: Just to confirm again, this was a corporate context?
5. P1: Yes.
6. CA: Describe the client or client team who requested this needs assessment.
7. P1: A very similar to the previous project, we had a project sponsor at the highest level who ultimate sign off on the project. The sponsor of the project. I had a project liaison that I worked with on a daily basis. She was also the subject matter experts on this project, which is different than the previous one. There was no one else that we went to for answers or information about the content. It was all her. Well, it was her and then we had actually one other project team member who was responsible for training and also subject matter expertise. So it was within our core project team, but there were really two people that that were responsible for that, providing that expertise.
8. P1: The audience on this one is very, very broad. It is anyone who provides sales and customer service to customers in a bank, in banking situations, banking environments for

anyone of my client's clients. So it's a wide variety. It's corporate banks, it's community banks, anywhere from gigantic to very small scale banks. And then within all of those, in any role or anybody who basically interacts with clients.

9. P1: That's right. Yeah, there's kind of two levels there. What the end audience needs and then the overall business goals of my client.
10. P1: I was the lead instructional designer. So responsible for doing all the analysis and design work and leading production efforts and being heavily involved in managing all those other resources.
11. CA: Were the steps roughly the same as you described in the last project?
12. P1: They were. Yeah. I'm trying to think if there were any differences. Implementation was different because we didn't have an instructor led training component and so we didn't have the rollout and the facilitation work. We had an implementation phase, but it was more around implementing the courses in our client's LMS and then supporting implementation into their client's LMSs, where they handed the deliverables off to their client systems.
13. P1: On my side, we had the same roles as before. We had a graphic designer was a little more heavily involved than the first time. We had him help with some template design, some overall look and feel, and just a general approach. The micro learning ended up being animated videos into the animation component added a pretty large graphic element. And so he was definitely more heavily involved in the last project.
14. CA: What data sources or measures did you use to collect data?
15. P1: The one real source I had was access to the salespeople, which was great. The most valuable way I spent my time during that needs assessment was conversations with the sales people and their manager, actually. I talked to them all about the current state of the training and what the perception of it was out there, what they thought that the needs were. They hear a lot of feedback from the clients about what's working and what's not working and what they want. What expectations they have of my client. And so they were able to share a lot of that information and talk about the current buzz out in the field and what their clients really expected to see.
16. As I interviewed some clients of my clients, I had access to a couple of people at individual banks that are clients, but they were mostly LMS administrators and so could speak to some technical aspects and could speak to some things around what their users activity was like for current sales and customer service courseware for example. But couldn't provide me a lot of information about any comparison really of the current courseware to what my client was looking for.
17. P1: The results were that we produced a 28 micro learning animated videos. They have been rolled out to my client's clients. They've been implemented in the client LMS and all of the other LMSs that they provide courseware to. And we're starting to get some anecdotal feedback about how that is going. We've heard from the sales people about the positive reaction to the courseware out of their sites. They have told us some stories about some feedback that they've heard and how... Everyone seeming to respond very favorably to what they're seeing. And my project liaison has also had same things from anecdotal feedback that's very positive from some of the clients that she works with directly, which again are often LMS administrators or someone responsible for that type of learning curriculum at their client banks.
18. CA: What challenges did you face during this project?

19. P1: Well, I think that the largest challenge was that a couple of times new information arose that significantly changed the design or the course of the project work. And I think this was directly related to not being able to do as thorough of an analysis as I would've liked to do. For instance, the client had... I mentioned 11.5 Hours of web based training and their request was to convert that into engaging micro learning that... But they wanted to keep all of the same performance objectives. So two things happened. The first thing was that because we didn't do a detailed task analysis of the content and just to conversion, there wasn't any basis for looking at what we might be able to reduce or what might be duplicated.
20. And so we didn't have a clear picture or outline of what all those tasks were that may have led us to making different design decisions around content, of course outlines and things like that. The second thing is that yeah, new information arose that should have come up during the analysis phase. Like they didn't want to reduce that overall number of performance objectives again, that we didn't necessarily have documented in the first place. But then we found out later that they had an expectation that they wanted to reduce the overall learner time to a maximum of two to two and a half hours. Which was unknown to us until after the analysis phase.
21. We had already drafted a design that had... We had reduced it anyway, but just based on our analysis and design work to something like, I don't know, maybe four and a half hours I think. And then their response is, "Oh, this won't work, we need something that's around two hours." And so that was the first time that we had heard that. And I think some of the things would have definitely helped if they've come to light a little bit earlier in the project. And I think a more thorough analysis may have revealed those things.
22. CA: Why did you choose this as your least successful example?
23. P1: I think for the reason I just described, so I wasn't able to do a thorough needs assessment and in doing all the types of analysis. More information about their audience members may have helped. It was general enough and I think it probably wouldn't have significantly influenced the design. Task analysis could have, I think really revealed a lot of information that we didn't have. That whole issue about the scope or sorry the learner time, the size and amount of learner time. I think if they had seen a full task analysis and really seeing a good picture of what was included in the training and how that mapped out on paper and a flow chart type of format, I think it would have been a light bulb for the client. I think that they would have realized, "Wow, this is way too much content to try to work into a micro learning strategy and we need to do something different, we need to reduce in some way." Then we would have a good picture of where to cut because we would've been able to see it right in front of us.
24. P1: The only other thing I can think of has to do with formative evaluation and I think that's probably a little bit outside of the scope of the needs assessment. But the second one, we also did not have a good opportunity to test out with the first formative evaluation our design. And so we were unable to really tell if the information that we gathered during the analysis was correctly and appropriately applied to our design without that chance to do a first formative evaluation. So more on the design and evaluation phase. But again, it's influenced by the information that was gathered during the analysis phase. That's the needs assessment phase. That's why we made decisions that we did based on that information.

25. CA NOTE: Both cases very similar, difference in least successful case seems to be a matter of thoroughness. Participant was not allowed time and resources from client to gather needed data. Had to move ahead with solutions anyway with incomplete understanding.

Case P2L Interview

1. P2: I will tell you about a project that I started that has not yet finished because of problems with needs assessment or lack thereof, maybe. So, compliance organization within a financial institution, always a red flag. I've said many times before, I would not take any more compliance projects. So, compliance always thinks they're King of the organization and that they can dictate to the stuff to the lines of business unilaterally. So I was approached with a compliance project to train frontline managers on a controls methodology.
2. Am I ... Yeah, it was presented with some source material along the lines of what our controls, etc. So, naturally, started asking a normal set of questions about what does the audience need to do differently than they're currently doing. Who is the audience, what groups are we working with ...
3. CA: And what were your goals in asking those questions?
4. P2: So my goals in asking those questions was to ... So, I always consider one of my primary stakeholders the learner, as well as my client, in the organization as a whole. So I always approach these conversations with the goal of improving the performance of the learner, the target audience, and therefore contributing to the improved performance of the organization and whatever the agenda of the intermediate client is; trying to keep them satisfied but not allowing their agenda to be the be all, end all.
5. So, was able to at least convince them to allow us to have some conversations with people closer to the front line about the process that they're currently following, and also attempt to define, because it was not yet defined, the desired future stage. We convinced them that just telling people what controls are does not mean that they will suddenly magically invent their own process and then start following. And ...
6. P2: So, start having some initial conversations and through that discover that they haven't yet engaged a lot of business in any conversations about the fact that they want to change how they were doing things, or attempted to get any [inaudible 00:08:01] about whether that was something that could be done. And when those conversations started to happen, the business, rightly, got all agitated
7. P2: Because they're like, "No one's consulted us. We are very busy. This will add to our workload. You can't just do this without asking us", etc. At which point the compliance client gets frustrated and says, "you're not doing what we asked you to do. We're going to press pause and go away and write some stuff up ourselves and we'll get back to you."
8. CA: Who was the target audience?
9. P2: It was pretty broadly across a division ... probably I think a division of the organization. But that's still a little bit unclear. And it was supposed to be first line managers.
10. CA: And do you have a sense of the scale of that audience?
11. P2: Hundreds, less than thousands. Hundreds, probably is ... would be accurate.
12. CA: So you were the lead consulting role in the project?
13. P2: I was the learning consultant. Oh, it was mostly me and like my internal client.

14. CA: And your internal client was from the compliance area?
15. P2: No. My internal client is from L and D, and she owns the L and D for various lines of business.
16. CA: How did you collect data?
17. P2: Interview, like interview questions, just you know ...
18. P2: Oh, so first just with the compliance client about what she was looking for. We didn't get too very far. So there was that sort of initial set of calls of clarifying that and trying to set expectations about how the project would go. And then there was a conversation with sort of a larger stakeholder group but like kind of next level down compliance folks about what we were trying to do. And I identified a couple of people on that call that seemed to understand what we were getting at, which was performance change. And so those were the people that I targeted for the next set of interviews. And that was ... I started to try to do the kind of task analysis, gap analysis, work.
19. P2: What are they currently doing? What are you trying to do?
20. CA: Were there other challenges that you faced while you were trying to gather data or as you started to lead into this, beyond that big one?
21. P2: Yeah, the two main challenges, that conflict between a lot of business and compliance about who gets to set their priorities, and then the typical conversation of you can't just tell people what controls are and expect them to change their performance. Sort of education and advocacy maybe.
22. CA: Why did you choose this as your least successful example?
23. P2: Well, mostly because it's the most fresh in my mind. I know I've had other similar situations. But it has all the pieces of the process.
24. CA: How long did you spend on it?
25. P2: Probably a month or so.
26. CA NOTE: Most successful needs assessment ended in no success at all! A merger closely following the completion of work resulted in findings being discarded. No durability of results in a rapidly changing environment.
27. CA NOTE: It seems I'm getting more data from most successful cases, but that could be because I'm asking for that data first and the participants "run out of steam" as the interview runs on. Changing methodology moving forward to alternate asking for most vs. least successful case first.

Case P3L Interview

1. P3: So I think there's kind of two-ish that I have in mind. I think one of them, I consider to be least successful just because it wasn't what I would consider an actual needs assessment. It was one of those things where we checked a box saying that we did something, but it was maybe not given the right amount of time, resources, data input, or asking the right questions. But I feel like that's kind of a common example of things that happen in the field.
2. The other I felt was not successful because there was a good amount of rigor put into it and a lot of participation, but I don't think that the results and recommendations were either valued by the client, like valued or sort of taken seriously or acted upon. Right?
3. So in that first example that I gave, that's not just one in particular project. That was just I was in a front-end analysis team, where our goal, our whole function, part of it was supposed to be on doing just that.

4. For that piece, I was working within a government organization and a schoolhouse within a federal agency, and the director of that schoolhouse was very, "Give the clients what they want. Just the answer is yes. The answer is never no. What the clients want, that is what they get."
5. So even though we were the organization that was responsible for doing those front-end analyses needs assessment sort of upfront to make sure ... Well, I mean, technically we were supposed to be making sure that the trading request was valid and needed. We didn't do that. We definitely checked a box. So it just didn't happen. We weren't actually doing needs assessment. Right? It was a lot of smoke and mirrors.
6. The other example that I gave, this was actually a needs assessment that I did in [inaudible 00:03:59]'s class, the needs assessment class that I took with her. It was a great project. I was working, doing a needs assessment for the preschool, [Name], that my son was attending and really looking at needs, how that organization can best and/or better serve any students who may have developmental delays.
7. So I think the leaders of that school were very accommodating and let me come in and gain entree. They were allowing me to do that. I think that they felt like, "Hey, it's a parent of one of our kids. For sure. Happy to have you come in and kind of do this work, and, hey, if we get some good nuggets out of it, well, then great." But they didn't have a lot of skin in the game. Right?
8. They had skin in the game in terms of helping me out because I was a parent and letting me do my research there or do this project. But it's not like they had this burning desire to really know how well or how not they were serving any students with developmental delays.
9. P3: So they were interested in a lot of the results that came directly from the parents. But in terms of the actual prioritizing the needs and then the actual recommendations that were yielded from that needs assessment, they received them, but it was just kind of like, "Yep, and thank you." But, because they didn't have that skin in the game to actually make some changes, I'm pretty sure the nurturing was for me.
10. CA: I see. Well, just for process' sake, since you mentioned it first, can we focus on your first example?
11. P3: Sure.
12. CA: What were the goals or the purposes of that assessment?
13. P3: They were the same across the board. So this was a stock sort of thing, that we were supposed to be, on paper, making sure that any requests that came in for training were actual, valid training requirements. So would training actually fit the [inaudible 00:05:54], right? So would training answer the question or answer the need, and then, also, is there something else existing that we already had within our menu of service offerings within the schoolhouse that already exist that would meet their needs?
14. P3: Is it something that already exists that we could tweak, or do they really, in fact, need something new and special just for them? So that was really what was supposed to happen there.
15. CA: You mentioned before this was a government organization. Any other information, in general, that you can provide for context in which you performed the needs assessment?
16. P3: Sure. For additional context, so this was a federal agency. There were a lot of directorates within that agency. So the schoolhouse was one directorate or are part of one

directorate. Our goal was to serve our internal agency customers or clients, and those folks represent the mission or operational organizations within the agency.

17. Of course, it's sort of like the mentality is mission first, obviously, with the government, right? So, of course, those organizations hold a lot of weight, and where we were as a schoolhouse organization was a supporting role in our goal overall, right? Our strategy and our mission is to support their mission, right, do what we can to make them the best workers that they can be. Does that help?
18. P3: All right. So, [Name], this work on this team that I was doing was about ... When was 2012? So like six years ago.
19. P3: Some of that stuff is fuzzy. Okay, but so one of the major needs assessments I was doing, I was actually doing this for 11 different work roles ...
20. P3: .. that crossed two directorates and five organizations. Some of the specifics, I can't get into about that.
21. P3: But this was really in a cyber defense and information assurance space. So all of these organizations had some things in common, in that their mission set was around cyber defense and information assurance. But there were 11 different work roles. Then this was around 11 different work roles, and they had four different levels of performance. So we used ODNI's standards.
22. So those work levels are entry developmental, which is the first one, then full performance, and then there's senior. Then there's expert. Those don't necessarily correspond to GS levels or grade levels within the government, but they do correspond to performance levels.
23. P3: I did mention ODNI. If you're not familiar with that, that's the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and they're the ones that set those standards. So the goal there was to see ... We actually had to do a job task analysis as a part of that needs assessment in addition, too. But the goal there was to see what training was needed and then also, eventually, what sort of performance credentials were needed for them.
24. P3: So those clients ranged all of those organizations, in terms of who the managers and things were for each of those different organizations that I was supporting in those work roles. But the real client that requested all of this was the director of our entire agency.
25. P3: So this was a mandated thing, right, one of those authority decisions that were made.
26. P3: So then the level of the buy-ins of the actual organizational clients that this was affecting, who housed those work roles, had varying degrees of being engaged, of buying in and wanting to participate.
27. CA: So it sounds like the target or the audience were the people filling these 11 different work roles across the four different levels, and you were working across all of that.
28. P3: Yeah, so them, but also then their managers and supervisors.
29. CA: Describe your role in the project.
30. P3: Sure. So my role in the project, I was the lead over the entire project. So I had to scope it out, have the project planned from start to finish. The needs assessment portion of it was a small part of a multi-year, multi-million-dollar project that led into other things. So I was basically the project manager, sort of lead strategist, but then also did a bunch of the work within the needs assessment, because it was just a massive project.
31. P3: So everyone had to get their hands dirty.
32. P3: So I was a part of what we called an integrated process team. So I had other stakeholders on my end, and those included other counterparts, so other program

directors who were managing similar projects for other work roles. Right? So we wanted to make sure that the things that we were doing across the board for these particular projects were in sync.

33. Then I had my own office, my own chain of command. Right? So my own supervisor, and then the lead of the integrated process team, then on my actual work team that were doing the needs assessment with me, where I had, I think at that time, three contractors who were helping to perform that work.
34. P3: Sure. So, initially, one of the tasks was reviewing the extant data. So we got this request from the director of the agency. What written down documentation was there? You don't get to just tell the director you want a meeting. Right? Or a follow up one, he was saying. So you have to leverage what's already out there. So reviewing all of that, then scoping out how we were going to do the data collection and the project.
35. We ended up, of course, having focus groups with, first, those supervisors and managers, those customers and clients to get a sense of context in which the work was being performed, what they felt like were felt needs, and we let that get us to a point where we had an initial draft of some areas of concern.
36. But we started with what was the most mission critical functions, how did they break down, and then also those initial list of job tasks and skills. So we did the tasks, the KSAs, the knowledge skills abilities, and we asked them to give us a sense of which ones of those were most mission critical and then, of those things that were most mission critical, where they felt like there were any gaps or needs ...
37. P3: ... before we ended up going into the focus groups and the job task analysis survey and needs assessment survey with the actual workers.
38. CA: So you did the manager supervisors in a first pass. You used that to form the basis of, then, additional focus groups.
39. P3: That's right.
40. CA: Then you also mentioned the survey. Any other data sources or instruments that you used to collect data?
41. P3: Let me see. No, a ton, a ton, a ton of focus groups, over and over and over, to really refine this list of items that we needed to have on the needs assessment survey. Then the surveys went out to every single person filling that work role. So that was pretty much it, in terms of collecting the data. Yeah.
42. CA: In general, what were the results or the outcomes of the project?
43. P3: Sure. So the results were we identified ... Because it was a part of my scope in this project and there were 11 more goals, we really wanted to focus on what was core across, because we had limited resources and couldn't have 11 different versions of strategies and solutions. So we focused on what was core and common across first so that we can put those resources towards addressing those needs first.
44. So, essentially, we came up with a list of those four critical knowledge tasks that we have to focus on to build solutions for. So, for each of the work roles, we gave them a breakdown of all of that, individually, what was core and common across the board for them, what emerged as critical, and then what emerged as not being as critical that we were going to focus on. So every specific work role got that information.
45. P3: But then from the recommendations perspective, we presented, "Okay, these are good things that we've found that were core across the board, and these are the things that we should focus on."

46. P3: But so here's the deal, though. A part of that result was, even though some of those things we said didn't need to be focused on, like I said, this was a yes organization. So even though we made some recommendations, the ultimate recommendation and answer was then overridden, and it was still, "You will do."
47. CA: What challenges did you face in this particular project?
48. P3: Yeah. So the first challenge was not having a good understanding of the genesis for the reason to do it in the first place. Okay?
49. P3: That was the first thing. Like I mentioned, you don't get to just walk into the director's suite and ask questions.
50. P3: You don't get to do that. Then two was creating the buy-in. So for all the people actually doing this work and their managers and supervisors, they are busting their butts already to meet mission needs. Right? They're not wanting to participate, because they know this is going to eventually lead to either changes in the way that they're currently doing their work, addition of things that they need to do on top of what they're doing, or additional hoops, in their mind, hoops that they were going to have to jump through.
51. P3: So obtaining that buy-in along the way was a hard piece. It took us longer than we wanted to, because it took us longer to get the numbers that we needed to get to, just for some minimums and making sure we had a good representation of the workforce completing via the needs assessment survey or participating in focus groups, and then the recommendation phase, because the data demonstrated some recommendations, but then some of those were overridden.
52. Trying to actually build and design things that made sense given the resources that we had, right, that were actually feasible for the culture, based on the resources, based on the political climate within each of these organizations, and based on those systems, that was challenging all around.
53. CA: Why did you choose this as your least successful?
54. P3: Yeah, I think I mostly chose that time period as the first example. When I had to dig deeper, I just picked this one because I remember the most details about it.
55. P3: I'm not sure if it's the best representation of the actual worst.
56. P3: But yeah, I just think that the fact that that organization, that the director's view of the schoolhouse was that we say yes and we just do what we're being asked to do, instead of letting some of the data speak for itself.
57. P3: I think that that's a really good representation of things that I've seen across the board as I've been in this line of work, and that presents unique challenges for practitioners. So that's why I chose it.

Case P4L Interview

1. P4: Yeah. You know, I'm pretty confident that when I do a needs assessment that I've got to come up with pretty accurate or precise information and recommendations for whoever my client is. So, you know, I'm in at the assessment to simply producing, you know, recommendations. I usually get those pretty dead on and with the assumption that, you know, we're going to learn things and we're going to have to adapt whatever we learn to maybe different, different recommendations that have come out of the iterative process that we use. So, you know, from that standpoint, I don't think I have in any way in the last five or ten or fifteen years or at any time that I can remember.

2. Maybe when I was just starting out, I had a failure to deliver pretty precise recommendations from these formal assessments. But when the project itself has failed, you know, it usually fails because you know, a manager looks at the cost for example, and say [inaudible 00:31:28] and say no , we don't just don't want to do that, we don’t want to make the investment or, or [inaudible 00:31:38]e or they come up with other excuses, you know, pretty much to kill the process.
3. So I, you know, copy assessments that fail. As much of it that is people who have to commission and then carry out the actual intervention, you know, they, they will have various reasons or justifications for either not doing it or not doing everything that was recommended. So their project, and I advertise their practice, can you know, can be what I would call a failure.
4. P4: Well, once again I don't think the assessments are...can even be failures in themselves. They're just statements of okay look, here's a logical progression, you know, progression that I followed. Here's the step by step on it. We can only conclude, you know, recommendation A, recommendation B, C and D and you know, they're there. I don't see where there is a failure in the actual assessment part, you know, it maybe that we're, well, okay, I'm speaking from my standpoint because before I'll get involved in a project at all and agree to do for example, and a front end analysis - that Joe Harless style front end analysis.
5. I'm pretty selective about the, you know, about the clients and you know, if they're not, if they don't agree with the alignment or you get to flakey and you know from the outset they don't want to give us a time frame for example, or, or help to describe what accomplishment there actually is an accomplishment terms, you know, we start to have second thoughts about this and we might do an alignment and recommend that, you know, because of these other factors like they are... they just aren't ready for it and we'll recommend they go and do something else that isn't going to be any formalized approach to their performance improvement, you know.
6. CA: So you're exiting the process at that point when you find that you don't have a basis yet?
7. P4: I'll exit it early because you know that's...it's just not worth it. I mean, you know, if you buy in to doing a project where you're a lot at the alignment stage when you first went in, it just doesn't work and doesn't allow you to go further with you know, formal analysis like the formal front end analysis. You know, it's nothing but you being paid money as a consultant to come in there and you know, preach some form of religion. No...I have no op-, you know, no opposition to anybody's particular religion but I tend to look at, you know, how we engineer this thing we have to engineer if I'm not getting all the cooperation for all the data, not able to describe it and the accomplishment terms that I need to and then I don't go any further.
8. CA: What are some other...so you mentioned not being able to get timeframe, not being able to get desired results in the accomplishment language. What are other sort of early red flags for you that this may not be a well aligned project?
9. P4: Red flags are...I just don't have access to all the possible sources of importance information.
10. CA: So 'don't talk to our frontline managers we'll give you the data', that sort of thing?

11. P4: Yeah, yeah, exactly. Or you know, the head guy who runs the facility, even though corporate wants this done and they're financing it, he doesn't want to have anything to do with it. You know, that's happened more than once.
12. P4: So those are all red flags that say just politely excuse yourself, you know, because no good is going to come of it and I used to try that you know, thinking 'yeah I can save the world' here but you know, I'm down and deep so many times over the head on that one. I don't do it anymore and I could save a lot of pain for other people trying to do it, especially when they're new in the business, you know? If they just, you know, follow their own process, it's not going to work at the outset, then don't proceed.
13. Is there anything else that you would add that I haven't asked you about?
14. P4: Yeah new practitioners you know, depending upon what, what aspect of performance technology they're going into, I think, you know, as you learn this craft, you really just can't- for example, a lot of people learn instructional design and you really got to expand your way of framing issues so that you're more looking at it from a management practices standpoint. You know, you really have to become kind of a management consultant, although you're going to limit your intervention maybe to just the, you know, instructional piece, so I see a lot of failures in that. The second thing is, I think people don't take the long view of their projects and there is, you know, there is evidence in our own literature in the society ISPI that basically, you know, they've done studies of successful projects and me and my colleague [Name] , well we've gone back to study, you know, celebrated success stories within human performance technology that were literally published and there were ten of them published about 20 years ago.
15. We went back about ten years after that to see where things...what things were and we found that the durability of HPQ projects doesn't really extend much beyond about three years and if you go down to ten years, you know, the people that are currently there have little to no clue as to what was going on, you know, ten years before.
16. So you know, those projects, I don't know if they qualify as six months or not, I suppose they would under at least one circumstance. And that is the circumstance where you know, the need for whatever the goal was or the accomplishment or the something the problem had been solved, so you don't need any more work on it or it went away for some reason. You know, the environment changed it's that day when, you know, there are no longer internal combustion engines driving cars, we won't need gasoline anymore. So you know, that problem of refining gasoline or refining crude oil will just go away and that's legitimate. But with human performance technology projects, I find that they die an early death usually related to I don't know, to changes in management.
17. That's why I like this project we've been on, it's become, you know, one of the, the legs of this business that I'm in deal solely with this very arcane, you know, very specific niche topic or accomplishment keeping forklift truck operators from getting hurt or killed.
18. So anyway, for new people they need to take the long view on stuff and they need to take...they need to go into their projects with a more, I'm going to call it comprehensive view of how things work, which brings up the last thing I would recommend for somebody new. It's...you can't carry out your craft, whether it's instructional design, whether it is putting together, for example, tests, performance tests or any other kinds of testing, you know, whether it's engineering, all the various, you know, subsets of performance technology as an intervention.

19. You should not even start any of that or even conceive of doing anything unless you have and can nail the analysis that is needed. So if you can't, if you can't do these kind of assessments you might say, I call them analysis cause that's what they are at various levels, then you're kind of shooting yourself in the foot cause you'll never generate the confidence that comes from, you know, knowing that gee, you know, unless you were there, this would not have worked and...you would have never solved the problem that you were presenting with from the beginning so it stays solved for thirty years, right?
20. P4: And you'll go from project to project and you know, have little, you know, when you get taken off a project, you'll have little confidence that it wasn't your fault because you screwed up. So, you know, if you're going to be a consultant, especially out there by yourself or you're on your own and even within large corporations, you know, I've worked for those. You have to be able to, at some point in time, look at your own work and say, 'okay, I don't care what anybody else says, my work is good and I know why, and I know why it's good and too bad it didn't work out here but you know it's no reflection on, on me-

Case P5L Interview

1. P5: Yeah. So, one of my least successful examples around doing a needs assessment was with a team that really didn't have an idea in mind on what they needed. The team was rapidly growing. It is a workforce that is located in multiple states across multiple time zones and they didn't know what they wanted. So, they just reached out directly to training. As we ... I have a template, a form that I give them for our needs assessment, and I'm happy to share that with you, but they only filled out about half of it, and then so typically, what I'll do is I'll send them this form and then, they'll review it, and then we go over it in a meeting. It just eliminates a lot of the banter, back and forth of like, "Okay, now I'm just sitting here as a secretary."
2. So, when they submitted this needs assessment back, it was only about half filled out, and they're like, "Well, we'll just figure it out as we go, figure it out as we go," which I get in the [inaudible 00:02:09] of cybersecurity, but we also have to have a clear way in which we're going to measure results, generally, prior to developing training.
3. CA: Who was the client or the group you were working with?
4. P5: It was a technical group. So, it was part of our security operation tower.
5. P5: And the training requested was around our platform, our proprietary platform, GrayMatter and hiring new analysts and getting new analysts spun up on using a platform.
6. P5: Yeah, so we're hiring anywhere from 25 to 30 new analysts every six months. So, 50 to 60 new analysts every year.
7. CA: Were you the prime contact or was there a team from your side that engaged with this client group?
8. P5: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative). There was a senior instructional designer that I put on this, as well as myself, and then we worked with ... there's three directors of security operations that we worked with, and the VP of security operations that we worked with, as well, on that side.
9. P5: Yeah, so sent them a meeting. During the meeting, we kind of outlined what the learning objectives were. The biggest gap, and we do have an internal business analytics team. The biggest gap we had was defining what the goal needed to be for success. So,

how are they currently how the analysts are leveraging the platform? Are they going through clicks? Where is this data housed? And they couldn't tell me that. So, in order for us to build our successful needs assessment, we needed to have clear, good, motivating objectives, but also a measurable, specific outcome that we could then tie back to the loaners and what we realized was that some of the ... we had our software development team was tracking some of that data, but it wasn't effective. When we drilled into what the data was, it was like, "It's a link." "Well, then how do you know that they really clicked into the link?" "Well, we see I clicked into it." "Well, how do you know they didn't pivot out of the link somewhere else?" "Oh, we don't know that." I'm like, "Okay, well then that becomes irrelevant to me at this point."

10. P5: So, that was a big challenge for us.
11. CA: Did the engagement kind of stop after that meeting or were there follow on steps?
12. P5: No, so the engagement did not stop, and we actually wound up going to our product marketing team, who leverages a newer technology called Pendo, which is an analytic software that's embedded into technology platforms. So, we're using that to track clicks and that's about as good as we're going to get right now.
13. CA: What was the duration of this effort?
14. P5: About six weeks.
15. CA: What other challenges did you face that you haven't surfaced already?
16. P5: Defining ... I think the biggest challenge was defining a specific goal. How do they define the training successful?
17. P5: I think across my whole organization, that's really been a struggle with ... I ask the question of like, "What does good look like? Who's doing good?" And I get very mixed results.
18. CA: Why, in particular, did this stand out to you? Why pick this example?
19. P5: I think it stood out to me because this project had a potential of having a very big impact and a very quick win and with that being said, I think because during the process of data collection, we didn't have the forefront to identify what good looks like. That caused the project to kind of stall a little bit.

Case P6L Interview

1. P6: I'll give you a one-on-one example. I was hired to go in and help. As an executive coach, when you're hired to come in and help somebody, and they don't seem to think that they need any help, it's really hard. And in this case, this was somebody that was one of the senior members of the team. This was obviously a different environment.
2. P6: And I also, again, went through a series of assessments. And the report came out with a lot of very high issues. You know the Hogan report, the HDS report was pre-read. So there was lots of red flags for me in terms of not believing in things. And of course he'd been challenged and argued, even though he was the one that took every... There was nobody but himself who took it. As if it was something was wrong. And of course, there was nothing wrong, he was perfect in every way.
3. The institutions had contacted me for a six month period of time, to not only to do a series of assessments, but then also to work with them and coach them based on the performance development plan that we were supposed to come up with.
4. He decided that he didn't need it. And he summarily said, "Thank you very much, you've been great. I've learned a lot, thank you." Well that didn't go really well. And then the

new supervisor of him called me up and asked, "Has the person been doing the work he says he was going to be doing?" I said, "Well, as of such-and-such date he stopped going, working with me." And they said, because I can only give dates and time that I meet with people, I don't give them content, or whatever. And I didn't bill them for anything more than just what I had.

5. Within six months, the person was fired. So didn't really work out really well. But the thing is, that the institution in this case, or this organization, tried to give people an opportunity. But when they come believing that they are right, and this is not about their performance, it's not a very positive experience.
6. CA: So in that case it was an opportunity for the individual afforded by the organization, but that individual did not perceive it that way.
7. P6: Right, they were paying for it. And they were highly recommended. And I know that the supervisor had also had been in a professional development coach, not by me, but by others, which was fine. But the thing is, this person refused to take advantage of anything that was being offered. Absolutely flat out disregarded everything that was said. And just believed that they were better than everything else. But of course, within six months they were fired.
8. But again, when you have somebody that does not want to hear, it doesn't matter what you say. And even when their own data is played back to them, and they don't want to accept it? You can't, you know? And so that was a disappointment. And that was one instance, and then there was another one I was hired for, kind of different, another place. I was hired, and the person, actually I'll frame it in a way, should have known better.
9. And the reason I say that, that person was an HR director. And when I say that the vice president [inaudible 00:27:06] as an HR director, you tend to know about having these conversations. The person didn't follow through, took the information, and in terms of the coaching, I tried to work through her knowledge of these processes. I mean, that's what her whole group teaches.
10. But when you're so... I'm getting buzz in the back here, I'm trying to... All right, hold on, I'm just trying to get that, all right, my apologies for that, I was getting an interruption on the phone there.
11. So here's another situation where I did a series. When you're called in and the person they say, "Well, have somebody come in and talk with you, get an assessment, find out what's going on," and things like that. I'm not a therapist. I'm an executive coach. And the idea of helping what that person needed to move forward. And we did the 360 on this one. And what was interesting about this one is: gave it to a lot of people, argued about why we were giving it, even though they themselves give out 360 throughout the institution for the people within the organization. But what was fascinating was that person didn't fill out theirs. So therefore, I was not able to compile everything. I actually was able to get around that. But it was just interesting, the person knew the system well enough to know how to game the system.
12. And of course that person... I didn't understand why I wasn't getting a call. So I was sending emails and then I get a comment back, "I'm no longer there." So again, that's what happens when people don't take advice. And no matter what you present and they don't listen. And that's one of the things I think, "Are you prepared to be let go if you don't do this kind of stuff?"

13. So anyways, I bring those up because the experience in the other one, as a team, and by the way, the other two that I was sharing with you: the other male and the female, they are part of a bigger team too, and that was causing some of the problems, so kind of more isolated. And here I used the CCL 360 on one of them and Hogan on the other one. So I use different tools depending upon the organization, to be able to help with that assessment. And then I use that as kind of a talking point or an opening conversation. And then we try to get to the, "How does this match to the organizational goals? Where do you see your role?" Things like that. Is that making sense to you?
14. CA: I wonder if you have a sense if there were any common factors between the two cases that you just shared. Did you get any sense that the individuals with whom you were working, already, to some extent, planned to leave those organizations? And so they did not see value in the process?
15. P6: No. They didn't plan, in fact they didn't plan. One of them thought they were going to get promoted. The first one thought they were going to get promoted and they were causing all kinds of disruptions. And the other one couldn't understand the culture, and had been there... Each of them had been there about two years and were not assimilating into the culture. And so this was kind of an opportunity for them to get back to who they are, where they want to go, and what-not.
16. What I found was similar is that they didn't want to listen. And they didn't want to accept that there was anything wrong with them. When people want to learn more about themselves, or want to make something work, they have a tendency to put that energy into it. But if I see a lot of resistance, it's just a matter of time.
17. In fact, I will share a third little story that follows kind of on the other one, within the same... So another person called and kind of laid down those things, "I've got this person, don't know if we should coach," you know, blah blah blah. I said, I'm to the point now where I say, "Do you think that this is going to work?" And, if the intermediary working with me says, "I don't think that this is going to work, and I don't think the other person thinks it's going to work." I said, "So don't waste your money."
18. And that's also one of the other things is, if they already have a pre-conceived notion, either somebody's going to not accept any kind of investment or are looking forward, don't waste time and money for people, unless there is a willingness to try and learn. And I think that's kind of one of the common themes is there's a lot of change that's going on in people. But if you are whole... And this was a good contract for me, but I just said, "Listen, if you think you're going to wind up in the end, letting it go, don't go through the charade. Don't go through this. It doesn't do anybody any good."
19. And that's really hard to have to say that, because they already had the pre... They just wanted to make sure the documentation was done and then they would move on with another strategy. I talked with them for an hour, didn't charge them for the hour, I just said, "Consider these things." But when people have a pre-conceived notion of things and don't have any... if it's not a win-win, then you need to talk about it. But I bring that kind of up as a... There's a commonality that I came up with is a willingness to try, and a want to.
20. And when you're forced into something, and you don't believe you're wrong, you'll self-sabotage or you just won't pay attention to these things.
21. P6: And that happens at the individual level, and a team level, and also an institutional level. And so all of these, and we know this from the Institute for... from a lot of research,

things happening at the individual level, happen and the departmental or divisional level, which also happen at the organizational level.

22. P6: It's the same kind of strategy, you've got a little bit more moving parts when it's the organization. And the one thing I do try to keep also, as a grounding, is the values. What's the values here? What's important to them? Be it their prescribed value as an institution? Or is it department? Or is it individual? So everything is usually that very much values-based. And that brings them back into what's important now.
23. CA: Is there anything that I did not ask, or we have not touched on regarding needs assessment that you think I should consider?
24. P6: Yeah. People don't understand the amount of energy and time its takes to do these assessments. And a lot of it is really getting real with yourself. And they may say, "Oh we just need a needs assessment." But they've already got an idea of what the outcome is. To do anything and be really reflective, it takes courage and it takes really a lot of introspection on the institution's part. I do a lot of SWOT analysis: strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats. They're really good on strengths. They don't see the threats, which is that external forces. And they're ready to criticize others for the weaknesses and not take an ownership on that.
25. So we teach all these tools, but it takes a lot of courage to actually determine what are the needs, and to get clear on also that this is not just a short-term process, or short-term three to six months kind of a thing. But what's the short-term and then what's the long-term goal?
26. But my favorite question that I ask is, "What holds you back?"
27. P6: Because a lot of people will have excuses for everything. But a lot of times it's either things that they say, "Oh, well, we can't do this because... Or we can't hire these people because..." Everybody has an excuse, but if you... It's one thing to say, "We can do all this. But what's holding us back from being even better than we can be?"
28. So I just conclude with that. And so I share that with you, for being a doctoral candidate, you've done probably a lot of self-reflection.
29. P6: And the fact that sometimes even when things get tough and you're doing your data collection and what holds you back can be things like time and resources, but also it's that ability. Can I do it? And that's always the challenge for people. So thanks for taking time to listen to my little stories here.

Case P7L Interview

1. P7: I got my PhD in instructional science from Brigham Young University back in 1980. Been working in the field, started off in the Chicago area, worked with a large accounting firm in their training area, vocational education division, [Name], and then worked with several companies that were involved in providing products to various kinds of computer-based training, video products to Fortune 500 companies, and worked for them. Then I had my own consulting firm for a while, just did some consulting with some ... oh, large clients, one of the AT&T breakup companies, [Name], [Name]. And then I moved from Chicago to the Seattle area and worked in Boeing in their training efforts, primarily on the commercial side, then I retired from Boeing about five years ago.
2. From Boeing, I went to teach at the [Name] program in China at Shandong Normal University and taught there for a few years. They paid a small stipend, but mostly it

was ... from my point of view, it was a pro bono professional service experience, and I taught there developing and teaching English courses.

3. The past year and a half, I've been working with the [Name], once again on a pro bono basis, with their service mission office, and just a very [inaudible 00:04:36] we'll get into this more with one of the things that I consider a successful needs assessment project.
4. This office, basically, currently, it has volunteers in a variety of areas, everything from food banks to inexpensive clothing stores to inner-city missions to cannery operations to family history operations to [inaudible 00:05:26]. Currently there are about, oh, as of a few years ago, I think there was somewhere in the neighborhood of 28,000 people in the US and Canada as well as internationally that were involved in doing that. My role is primarily working with coordinators throughout the US and Canada. There's 116 people that help to coordinate those efforts, and I'm involved in putting together and helping with training for that group.
5. So, in brief, that's my background. Let me now talk about two different projects where needs assessment was involved. And I've done just a whole variety of projects [inaudible 00:06:36] over many years, but in the last five years, picking two, the first one that I would pick that was ... problematic and probably less successful than I would've liked was with the China Teachers Program at Shandong Normal University. One of the courses that I was involved in developing and then teaching was an English literature class. The normal kind of things is that I would have done or thought about doing in terms of identifying the audience, their needs, the overall resources, some of the constraints, and so forth, trying to do all of that, I had several places where I ran up against real brick walls with that in terms of ...
6. Let just mention some of the places where it was very hard getting the information. To begin with, when I was given the assignment in terms of the title, English Literature Classics, one of the first things that I tried to do was interview the Chinese teacher supervisor in terms of trying to find out exactly the dimensions of the course, what did it mean by English Literature Classics? Was that from a certain time period? Was that English authors as in both American and English authors? Was that people that had translated things? And basically, her response was [inaudible 00:09:19] saying, "Well, whatever you want to cover in the course."
7. One of the next things that I tried to do was find out about more of the parameters of the course, how many students, what was their background, how experienced were they, and so forth. I also tried to find out information about the ... well, not only the student population, but also how many students would be taking the class, what the expectations were in terms of material, testing, and so forth. And all of that, and even in very simple things that I would think of being simple, such as, "Can you give me a roster of the students?" and so forth. And then the next step was trying to contact some of the students that were going to be taking the class and wasn't very successful, very able to do that.
8. One of the next things that I tried to do was find out more about the facilities, the classrooms that I would be teaching in and how they were set up, what kind of audio and video projection facilities that they had, how many students were in a classroom, how the classroom was configured, and so on. And there I was largely successful in terms of being able to visit some of the classrooms where I would be teaching, but didn't really have very good information.

9. For example, what I discovered later on was that there were a variety of operating systems that were used on computers in the classroom, everything from different versions of Windows, and in one case, an earlier version of Windows XP. So, all of that resulted in a kind of shooting in the dark in terms of developing things, and all of that resulted in a lot of the problems that you would expect as in having to reworked certain items, having to basically do a lot of things on the fly and so forth.
10. One of the other real challenges with that is that I was given the assignment for this course about 10 days before the initial course was supposed to be ... or the initial session I supposed to be in [inaudible 00:13:33], so not only was I constrained in terms of some of the time for development, but also constrained in terms of having to actually develop things on the fly and revise.
11. So, in that case, an awful lot of it ... Well, as I look back on that experience, part of that had to do with language, communication problems, part of that had to do with differences in culture, so some of the things that ... At different times I've taught university courses or other courses and so forth, and some of the things that you would normally expect in this particular culture, the United States and Canada, weren't the operational things that they would expect, and different perspectives and so forth.
12. Part of it was also the fact that even though I was trying to communicate some very basic ideas in terms of [HDT 00:15:22] and performance and needs assessment, for the most part, the people that I was working with didn't really understand or grasp those concepts, so as a result, even though they had really good will and they really were trying hard to work with us, they ... like I say, they didn't really grasp those ideas.
13. Just by the way, I saw some of the same thing with the other projects that I worked on, so one of the things that's really important in terms of a lack of success or, by contrast, one of the important things with success is, some of the people that you're working with, having in their terms and their understanding some of the things that you're doing. And I say in their terms because it's really important not to just speak jargon and assume that they know what that means.
14. CA: Can you describe who you were working with? Who were your primary contacts? Were you part of a team of any type or did you just have contacts with the university in China?
15. P7: In this particular case with this particular project, I was working alone. The Chinese contacts that I had, there were two primary Chinese contacts besides the university. First of all, Shandong Normal University is a teaching university. Shandong is in Jinan. Jinan is about the size of Chicago, so it's somewhere in the 7 million, 8 million people range and so forth. Prior to going to China, I'd never heard of Jinan. Most people probably haven't, but yeah, it's about the size of Chicago.
16. Shandong Normal University has about ... oh, I would probably call about 30, 32,000 students. The group that I was building the class for were primary freshman and sophomore English major students. When I say English major, English, of course, is a foreign language, so it'd be the same as a Spanish or French or a Russian major in most universities here. These students had typically ... oh, anywhere from 7 to 10 years of English training before they entered this particular class, primarily taught ... oh, junior high, high school, and before.
17. The people that I was working with ... the person from the English department that was my primary contact, her English name was [Name]. She was a member of the English

faculty and had taught for several years, and she was the primary contact in terms of working with the English department at Shandong Normal University. The other person that I had as a primary contact was ... once again, her English name was [Name], and she was a primary liaison for all the foreign teachers there at Shandong Normal University.

18. CA: You mentioned earlier you had a very short time to prepare after you were given the assignment for this particular class. When you tried to reach out to students to learn more about your audience, what was your method for that contact to them?
19. P7: Okay. My method of contact for them is basically ... One of the differences between the university's system there in China and most universities that we're familiar with in US and Canada is that if you're majoring in, say, psychology or chemistry or whatever you're majoring in, typically you might have a set of required courses, and depending on the courses, you'd be able to choose in terms of when you took those courses and so forth. There might be a sequence that you had to take them in, but you might say, "Gosh, for this particular class in chemistry that I have to take, that's a required course, is three different offerings they've got, and one is 8:00 in the morning and I'm a morning person, so I'll take that one," and the other offering is in the afternoon. Okay?
20. P7: One of the differences in China is that it's much more like the US trade school model where you register and you're going as a class to different courses, so basically you have, say, 50 people in a particular class and the entire class and their schedule is ... all at once you go as a class to take the course.
21. In a particular class, you have a person who is designated as essentially the leader of the class. So, in my reaching out, I was trying to reach out to some of the individual members of the class. That's part of the reason why I was trying to get a copy of the roster. I was also trying to reach out to find out who the leaders were of the class so that I could reach out to them, and in both cases I was unsuccessful with that.
22. P7: And by the way, in terms of trying to reach out, I was trying to get the email addresses for ... later on I find out that there was an application that people use quite a bit called WeChat that I was trying to use, but at that point and time, I couldn't tell you.

Case P8L Interview

1. P8: Yeah, but it wasn't as broad a scale as this. And again it's [inaudible 00:22:10] because I didn't necessarily have final say on the content. I was helping somebody. But I got to tell you, between you and me, I think Likert scales. The one to five things, certain situations is the stupidest thing I've ever seen. And everybody expects it because if you ask the simple question, what's the difference between strongly agree, agree and slightly agree, depending on the topic of course, how do you differentiate that? What further complicates it is there are certain cultures, particularly in Asia where they will never pick the high or the low because they don't want to offend the person that's allowing them to do the study. So I don't have a particular study in mind. I mean I did some work for [Name] and they were pretty good actually, but in some cases they wanted that five point scale. And I said, unless you can differentiate what the difference is between each of these so that it's substantive, it's not going to tell you anything?
2. And 10-point scales are even worse. And that's what doctors use for pain, which is pretty interesting. I don't see how you could really have more than four, five differentiations, but they really love to split it up and it's so subjective. So the problem is everybody, particularly market researchers are into this idea of Likert scale. And once your eyes open

up to this, anytime you take a survey moving forward, you're going to see the problems with. I guarantee tonight if you to take a survey from somebody and they give you a scale of one to 10 or one to five, what is the difference between a nine and a 10, and an eight and nine?

3. P8: It was a... What was it? I'm sorry, the full levels of evaluation. I forget the name of the [inaudible 00:24:38]
4. CA: The Kirkpatrick levels?
5. P8: The Kirkpatrick levels. Yeah. We were doing and the level one smile sheet and the owner of the course really wanted the multiple scale and I tried to talk him off that ledge. And then mobile tools to detect in level three is observation and that's fine. So it's really level one stuff that people just go too far on. And this had to do with training courses, the specific training courses.
6. CA: And was your role primarily when you're doing that work as the evaluator, or were you involved in designing or selecting or deploying those courses?
7. P8: I was responsible for training and development in the Northeast United States based out of Horsham, Pennsylvania. So I had about 25 trainers on the team. We had about 530 stores, but all the materials were coming out of Bentonville, Arkansas, which is the home office for Walmart. So basically because of my expertise, they involved me in the project and I was giving them feedback, a lot of which they did take, but some of which they decided not to. So, they were paying the bills. I was only with them for three years. And then the last year, they actually wanted me on as a consultant. So, then I was helping them with a national scorecard for training and development.
8. CA: Any other challenges that you would note that you faced in that type of work?
9. P8: Yeah. Writing assessments is a very interesting and difficult to write a good assessment, very difficult task. I did a prepper together presentation to make this point to the folks at [Name] saying that sometimes the way they designed the question, they're giving away the answer. There's a common mistake, there's a whole list of mistakes, but the common one is where you have four possible answers and one is so long. It becomes clear that, that comes from the original source that you want them to recite back. There's grammatical errors for filling for instance, where if the grammar doesn't work for what you want them to fill in, you're giving the answer away. And there are a whole bunch of these things that are good test takers that's pretty astute. Sometimes a later question gives you a response in the test that will allow you to answer an earlier question that you might've gotten wrong. So anyway, those are the kinds of issues where people don't appreciate the discipline and a rigor that's required to develop a really good assessment and they're not willing to put in the time.
10. CA: Anything that we haven't talked about, challenges or strategies that could be useful to that group from your experience?
11. P8: My general experience is that assessment, if it's not as part of the original analysis of a program... When the assessment is used largely as a follow up to see if a result was achieved. Not enough time and effort is put into it and it's often an afterthought where in fact if you go back to how these seven habits, it should start with the end and say how he phrased it.
12. People do the assessment if they have the time. They don't put the effort into it. It isn't treated with the same rigor that the rest of the project is often dealt with. Again, that in and is after program assessment. If you're doing assessment for upfront to be able to get

to the source of the problem, that vary significantly and by the practitioner. And what I found is that when I do assessments, I want four key questions answered. Do people know what to do? Do they know how to do it? Do they have the resources to get it done? And are we incentivizing them appropriately?

13. If you answer those four questions that will give you a high level view of where the opportunity is. Now the first two, do they know what to do and how to do it? That's training. So I've been in this situation as a trainer where we got them to do that. Okay, we're not [inaudible 00:30:49] properly. We didn't have the resources to implement. So we had egg on our face because we build a training program because I was too naive to know the difference. And so what we treat training and they thought we did a lot to job training. No we didn't. Here's the problem. You're not getting them enough time to actually execute. We need the resource issue. So from a practitioner's point of view, when people always, I've always thought that when people start thinking in terms of broader picture beyond training, but look at resources as well, what resources do you make available and how do you incentivize people, then you get a bigger picture of performance. This goes back to, what's his name, the foundation of this, a whole deal. I forget his name...CA: Gilbert?P8: My mind is got... Gilbert. Exactly. It's a variation of Gilbert.

Case P9L Interview

1. P9: I don't have any real specifics with lots of details, but in my coaching conversations, a lot of times there's a manager who just wants the program. Give my employee the communications skills training, or they need team training, or they need... It's usually very much where the manager's already decided what they want, but it may not really be solving the problem from a needs perspective. They think they know the outcome before really assessing what's the things that are the underlying issue.
2. Those coaching conversations are never as successful. You kind of feel like you're wasting your time in a way, because they've already jumped to that. There's no point of going through the needs assessment because they've already made their decision. I think I'm a pretty good, personally, a pretty good... I ask a lot of questions and really get to try to understand what is the underlying needs. Sometimes you've got managers or employees who, they're not all that insightful. They don't have that self awareness. You know?
3. P9: I don't know what it's called. Like, ability. There's some people that are just not self-aware and you're just not successful.
4. P9: We had a manager and he was one of the smartest people I've ever met. Like, from an IQ. But from an EQ perspective, he was a disaster. For some reason, his manager had a blind spot for this person. I think because this person really helped him in a lot of the things that he needed. He had a blind spot about this inability to manage others. So someone came forth for a complaint and we did run an investigation, and it did show that there were some issues, but the senior leader did not want to take... I guess, if you could say, the investigation was kind of the needs assessment. But the senior leader did not take appropriate action. Now he did take some action. He took action against the person from a salary and probationary period, but he didn't actually remove the person from their role. And because he did not remove the person from the role, his own personal credibility actually suffered. So, that was one that I would say was a less successful example.

5. Do you recall what's the duration? How long does that process take?
6. P9: It was at least 90 days.
7. P9: But there was an acknowledgement of the problem before the actual investigation-
8. P9: ... and then there was an acknowledgement of the problem even after the investigation. So, it was hard to say beginning and ending, kind of a thing. In terms of that particular thing where someone came forward with a complaint and whatever, I would say, like, 90 days.
9. CA: That's what I'm interested in, in this particular example that you've given, is a need sort of arises, some analysis is done, some recommendations are made, but then those recommendations aren't followed. Then is there a secondary cycle where you, for instance in this case, you mentioned there was some damage to the leader's credibility because of this blind spot. How long does that take to surface? Is that pretty immediate? The same problem is still there. Does it come back again? Does that make sense?
10. P9: Yeah. I think in this case it did multiple on multiple occasions, but the leader just had a blind spot for it. And what was interesting was the individual, he was up for a particular job that the senior leader was promoting, that he be a candidate for. And I, having been part of this conversation for a long time behind the scenes, made my position known that I did not think that this person was the right candidate for this job. That feedback got back to the senior leader and he was really pissed off at me. I just stood my ground and said this is my observation and I felt an obligation to share it. I know that this isn't what you believe, but this is based on all the facts and evidence. I felt really strongly that it had to be raised.
11. So I don't think it ever resolved itself, but the person's no longer with [Name]. I went out to dinner with a colleague, a former colleague, and she brought it up. She's like, that really just hurt the senior leader's credibility. I didn't even bring it up. I probably wouldn't have even remembered it. So there were others. There was not just the significance of the person who complained and the senior leader and this individual, this manager. There was like ripple effects throughout the organization that created lower productivity beyond just the circumstance.
12. CA: Is there anything else that made this pop into your mind that stood out as a less successful example?
13. P9: I can't remember. I had trouble thinking about a group situation.
14. P9: I think what's unique about the first example versus the second example is that when I thought about various successful examples, it always came up that there was a group vision or a group goal. And when I think about the things that were less successful, for whatever reason, it feels more at an individual level. Now this individual situation impacted the group or, using the example of where someone just has a solution on they've already figured it out, they don't really want your coaching. They're just checking the box. They're coming to you to check the box.
15. P9: They don't really want you to do a needs assessment. They just want you to check the box. Those experiences aren't as successful. I don't know. It's just an interesting observation. I don't know why this particular one came to mind.

Case P10L Interview

1. P10: Absolutely. Yeah. This in fact just is wrapping up as we speak, but the least successful example I can think of is my team conducted a capacity needs assessment for,

this is a very long winded title, but for the Rwanda Justice Reconciliation Law and Order Sector. It's a formal sector run by a secretariat comprising 16 government institutions and a large swath of civil society, private sector, and other nongovernmental organizations. It's called JRLOS, the Justice Reconciliation Law and Order Sector.

2. P10: It's a formal body that actually was enacted by a law. Yeah, we recently finished the in-depth field interviews with various members and are now wrapping up the analysis around the raw data and things like that.
3. CA: Can you describe to me, what were the goals of this effort?
4. P10: So, the sector is going into its next five-year strategic planning plan, developing its next five-year strategic plan. They noted that they really wanted to change things up because the last time they put their sector strategy together, it wasn't as innovative as they thought it could be and it wasn't as responsive to the individual institution's needs. So, I'd say just succinctly that they wanted a more responsive, meaningful strategy going forward. So, this capacity needs assessment is to give them a good understanding of where the gaps and capacity are, where weaknesses are as well as strengths.
5. CA: What's the duration of the work that you've done there?
6. P10: We estimated three months really from real on the ground start to finish, three months. There was a lot of preparatory work before in terms of getting desk research and the right approvals in place to meet with various entities. Then, there will still be because this is the government of Rwanda, so it's quite bureaucratic. There will be different levels of approval before any assessment is considered final. So, I don't know how long that would take, but I'd say three months for our kind of effort, start to finish.
7. CA: How did you become involved in the project?
8. P10: So, I can give you the long-winded story or the short-winded story, but I am the project director for a judicial strengthening project funded by USAID, the agency for international development that supports increasing citizen's access to their legal rights and to formalizing the justice sector. So, we're working on community level and justice, which is called Abunzi, and then formal justice efforts to the court system. So, that's one of my roles in my company is overseeing this project, but we literally bid on an RFP that USAID issued.
9. Then the actual JRLO sector secretariat is one of our stakeholders. They're one of our key counterparts. So, they reached out to talk about their priority needs, and it fit within our scope of work. It fit within our core objectives. I realize that's quite long-winded.
10. P10: I'm the project director, so I oversee the whole team operating in Rwanda and then we had international consultants coming back and forth.
11. CA: Can you describe the team to me?
12. P10: Sure. We had three dedicated consultants doing the needs assessment. One international lawyer with extensive experience working with judicial, with justice sector entities. So, he brings international best practices and experiences from different countries that have these large scale justice sector, like organized entities.
13. Then two Rwandan consultants, one with an organizational development background and one with a legal background. So, there were three of them at the helm. What I mean by that is they drafted the tools for review. They drafted the interview questions by different sub-entity, whether it was government, non-government donor, private sector, civil society. We had these different subgroups. So, each one had a different interview tool and they tailored those.

14. Then, they actually led the on the ground interviews and the desk research work. They're the current ones now doing the aggregated analysis, and core recommendations, and stuff like that.
15. CA: Can you walk me through the activities that the steps in the work over those three months?
16. P10: Oh, sure. In fact, I have our scope of work. So, I can look at that. Just one second. Unfortunately, the counterpart having their needs assessed really knew what they wanted. So, I see that as a big plus because sometimes it's much more vague. So, the first thing we did was established the core stakeholder group. We identified who would be needing to be involved and communicated with them what our general timeframe was for holding interviews, for submitting the methodology, for submitting the first draft of the report.
17. Then, the next thing we did was oriented the needs assessors so that they knew each other and they knew what the expectations were. We spent a bit of time talking about, I don't know if this is relevant, but we're going to unearth a lot of things of needs, and that we don't really have the resources to solve those. We're not going to be able to give them everything that they want. So, that's something we just really need to calibrate how we're talking with them about our follow-up and our actions. Does that make sense?
18. P10: Because that's just a big risk. Anytime you help someone identify a need, they're like, "Okay. Well, now help us solve it." That's definitely the case, working with a very proud set of stakeholders where they don't want to necessarily have any capacity issues because that makes them feel vulnerable. So, once we developed the full assessment tool, I conducted the assessment and that took place through one-on-one interviews, through group sessions, focus groups.
19. They did some surveys. I don't think they used SMS but kind of yes/no answers to certain questions, and they did a lot of organizational mapping where they looked at how information is currently flowing, kind of the as is state, what is currently going on. They are now going through the process of looking at where efficiencies can be realized, where information can be streamlined, where some members, some of these institutions have greater needs, and they're not being responded to the same way as other institutions.
20. I'm trying to think what else. So yeah, we provided a work plan to the stakeholders pretty much high level and the methodology for it, and approach for how the work was going to unfold with data collection. We emphasize the fact that this will be confidential. That all the information will be sanitized, so it won't be attributed to any one institution. Then, now they're finalizing the full report for submission. That requires some cleansing because if it's going to go to the government, it's got to be mindful of some very diplomatic elements.
21. P10: So then they'll validate it hopefully, and then it will become final.
22. CA: What is the group or groups whose needs are being assessed?
23. P10: Yeah. So, this entity is called is this sector that comprises the 16 government institutions and a myriad of civil society and other groups. The core audience is the JRLO secretariat. That's a group of about 10 Government of Rwanda justice sector representatives, including the Minister of Justice, the Department of Justice equivalent, who is spearheading the secretariat.
24. So, he's basically the one that would lead the JRLO secretariat and providing approval of the report, or challenging any of the thoughts put forward. So that's a small group, but it's the needs assessment was of the whole sector of all those different partners.

25. CA: Okay. So, you're in the midst now submitting that. If it's validated, what are likely to be the results? Is that difficult to say at this point?
26. P10: No. I think I know what's been revealed and this kind of gets into why it was the least successful is there are varying levels of capacity and varying levels of financial resources and political will. So, the whole secretariat is trying to further the mandate of increasing access like citizen's access to their legal rights, and human rights, and a number of different things as laws and reforms get passed by the government, communicating those out to citizenry and things like that. It's a very broad mandate.
27. What are the potential outcomes? Is that the JRLO secretariat is going to have a better handle on their institutional members' needs and be able to tailor support to them so that they can close any performance gaps, and be a stronger sector with more credibility and more efficacy.
28. CA: I understand from your description that the challenge around available capacity, and resources, and will, as part of the analysis or the data collection. Did you gather data around a priority or that would inform prioritization of need?
29. P10: Absolutely, yeah. So that was part of the questions where, list out all the different gaps that you've identified within your respective institutions. Once the stakeholders would share that, then the interviewers would have them rank them in terms of most important in terms of having an impact on the effectiveness of the institution, ranked in most costly, or requiring the highest level of resources. Then, whether it was plausible to see change in the shortest amount of time.
30. So, they were looking at these kind of three different things was impact, costs, both in terms of people's time and actual physical money, and then turnaround time if something was selected.
31. CA: What other challenges did you face in this effort?
32. P10: I guess this is where in terms of how you describe this. It's just being cognizant of the fact that it is a foreign government entity. There isn't necessarily the same comfort in speaking openly and freely that we often take advantage of here in the States. So, that probably was the number one constraint was a level of reservedness and potentially lack of openness by stakeholders to share.
33. There's also a pride, and so revealing that you have these gaps creates a vulnerability that not everyone is comfortable sharing, or feels empowered, or thinks it's appropriate to share.
34. CA: So, even admitting to the existence of a need is what you're saying?
35. P10: Exactly, yeah. I can give you a quick anecdote. I developed a government institutional capacity assessment tool, and we positioned, we work with a bunch of ministries in Somalia and brought the minister and a bunch of the ... I think it was minister of local government, but a bunch of his head of directorates into a meeting and said, "We're here to support you. All of this is really to help you strengthen your effectiveness and better meet your mandate as this ministry. So we're going to pass out this tool. It's not an audit, but it's just an assessment tool that allows us to really drill down on where we can help you as a project because we've been funded by the U S government to provide you with support and we're on your team, blah, blah." So, he just took a copy of this tool and wrote five, five, five across the top and handed it back.
36. P10: That was it. It's one out of five, five being obviously outstanding exceeding expectations, blah-blah-blah. We never faced that in Rwanda, but I think it is emblematic

of not wanting to reveal your dirty laundry or your vulnerabilities externally, or maybe even internally because it shows that there's a weakness there.

37. CA: Any other challenges that stand out from this effort?
38. P10: Well, two of the entities are our government military bodies, so we weren't able to meet with them. There are so many entities comprised in this sector, it took us a lot of time to get meetings on the roster. People were very apprehensive to meet even though we went through the formal channels. So yeah, we didn't necessarily have willing participants in some cases

Case P11L Interview

1. P11: Yup, onto the bad stuff. Yes. Mostly those have happened with large companies. I am based in the Detroit Metro area, so much of my work has been automotive. Many of those automotive companies are very difficult, and in similar projects, especially when we're with a project manager, they would load up too many SMEs or the SMEs would not be willing to listen or be complicit with you being an instructional design professional, and I was project managing slash instructional designing at this point but primarily hiring other vendors to do the instructional design. But the large company SMEs were very difficult to deal with, in addition to my bosses.
2. P11: In addition to my bosses, the SMEs were very difficult to work with.
3. CA: Are you implying by that that your bosses were challenging to work with as well?
4. P11: That's correct. Just the workload expectation was, at times ... This is with [Name]. I was project managing over 15 programs simultaneously, plus being asked to design and develop separate stuff on my own, plus being asked to do legal management, vendor management, vendor acquisition, finances and all that. It was crazy overload.
5. P11: Yeah, there are two from that particular period of time. The primary one was with an SME who is older and preparing to retire and was a talker.
6. P11: You couldn't shut the person up. And we're online with a vendor. We're trying to do our design sessions and reviews online. And even in person, which we did, this person would not stop talking, and they don't understand that me as a project manager, I have to get this done. More importantly, the vendor house has to actually produce it.
7. P11: So very difficult personality who would not shut up. And it wasn't barking or yelling, it was just babbling.
8. P11: You know? You get good ones, you get bad ones. That was a really bad one.
9. CA: And was that the only SME associated with that effort?
10. P11: Yes, that was the primary SME with that effort. There were some peripherals but they backed out cause they didn't even want to deal with her either.
11. CA: And what was the vendor team like that you were working with?
12. P11: The vendor team for me was fine. The only problem is that my boss didn't like their output.
13. CA: Didn't like their output, does that mean final deliverables or does that mean interim design documents, that sort of thing?
14. P11: No, final deliverables. Thought it was too remedial, not what he paid for. Wanted something ... We were using like six different vendors at the same time, and some were top tier delivering kick ass stuff. Everybody was going for GMs buck.
15. P11: And some were doing, "Okay, well we'll pull an ISD on this and a project manager on this and we'll get it done with articulate or captivate, et cetera. Well this boss I had

expected way more than he paid for and he didn't understand that you get what you pay for.

16. P11: And he, he drove that down into ... He made it so difficult for all of us. Not just me, but the contractors and the SMEs.
17. CA: So you were managing that vendor. How many resources did the vendor have that were working with you?
18. P11: That particular vendor we had going on two different projects at the same time, and they would usually allocate a primary ISD. We as the client, GM, would have one primary SME, and then I had to deal with being in the middle as project management, legal and finance. And the boss would come in and just take a look at it and say, "I like it," or, "I don't like it," without much explanation, and just looking at costs and really ground them down. And I think a lot of these vendors lost a lot of money trying to get in the door of GM.
19. P11: Being as honest with you as I can.
20. CA: How did it play out?
21. P11: They were released because we had paid for it and it was done. It's just, out of the multiple vendors we were working with, some were better received by the boss than the others, but also some were much more technically, instructionally on spot than the others. Some vendors will just do the bare minimum, and some vendors really, really put up a good product.
22. CA: Any other challenges that you recall from that particular effort?
23. P11: Well, again, it made my work situation difficult with my boss.
24. P11: And as much as I try to explain to him what it costs to get this done, he didn't care. And I said there are different ... We were testing vendors at that point.
25. P11: And see who would do it. And the ones who came in with excellent product, they're the most expensive.
26. P11: I felt taken to task by that, but at the same time, as I said, he also had me designing and developing at the same time as managing 15 projects.
27. P11: Yeah, very much so as well as creating a knowledge base in SharePoint. His expectations were unreasonable and I felt like it was abusive work situation, but not just to me. It was an abusive work situation to the vendors because there are several companies that I will refuse to work with.
28. P11: I won't even respond to an inquiry or a phone call because I know they have a bad reputation. I was on the client side of a bad company in the way they treated vendors and that made me feel bad.
29. CA: Do you recall in this particular instance with the SME who talked on and on, do you recall who the target for that instruction was? What the audience group was?
30. P11: Who the audience was being ... The audience receiving the training?
31. P11: [Name] manufacturing. I believe her product was ... It wasn't [inaudible 00:35:43], it was ... Sorry, it's been awhile and I did so many for them.
32. P11: Yeah, it was basically in-plant industrial engineering methodology.
33. CA: Great. Okay, good. Thank you for that detail. So I think you've given me a good description here and we've worked through my question on these two sort of more successful, least successful axis. Part of my research is hopefully to look at, or through looking at the experience of needs assessment across multiple practitioners in multiple contexts, to learn some lessons that will help us as we develop new practitioners entering

the field. And so given that focus of my research, is there anything that you would share with new practitioners as far as strategies for success or warnings of pitfalls that we haven't touched on in these two examples you've given me.

34. P11: Okay. Well, one, is a skill. Though most people don't like it and most people can't read it, I think a good practitioner, an ISD, a technical writer needs to know how to flow chart. Even if it's just for your own clarity. You need to know Vizio, the basics. PowerPoint, Word, don't do it. You need to really know how to flow chart processes.
35. P11: I've lost my cool a couple of times with SMEs. And I regret that. It's hard when you have a difficult SME, but you have to keep your cool, and you constantly have to go back to your boss or whoever's managing the budget. Sometimes I was, sometimes I wasn't, but if I wasn't, I had to go back and like explain, and to a degree, you have to defend your vendors, okay? They're there to serve you, they're not your slave, and I've seen some companies treat them like slaves and that's bad networking, bad continuing business relationship and it winds up being a bad product and negative vibes all around.

Case P12L Interview

1. P12: Yeah, I think for this one, I'm going to talk about a recent project I was on. I'm not necessarily one that I've led but was on a core team with and I will describe it, but then if you need me to clarify or go down a different path, I will.
2. P12: And so as a project where we had half of our clients using an online system to fund their employees 401(k) plan and the other half were using a paper process and so we wanted to migrate everyone to an online process.
3. And so when doing so we actually ... working with Fidelity. They gave us a second system, so we now have two different online systems and we focused on migrating people from paper to the other online system and that was the project. So it was a migration project. And where I feel like we missed the both is that, you don't know what you don't know, so if you're not looking or taking a systemic view, the need that was identified was, we need to move people from point A to point B.
4. But what we didn't really fully understand was what our clients need where. And so what we uncovered along the way that it wasn't just about migrating, it was about we missed the educational opportunities. So we're trying to get them from a paper process to an online process without realizing that there were people who were actually doing any process whatsoever, we were making false assumptions. So there was a missed opportunity on educating about making contributions or the timeliness of contributions, we missed training opportunities. We realized that there was a need to understand who has access to these online systems and we didn't know, we missed an opportunity that, having two different systems would be confusing for our clients and we didn't address the fact that we had no way of telling.
5. So if someone called us in and they said, what am I supposed to use process A or process B? We didn't, proactively create a field there in our systems to say which client is using what system. And so we didn't have any controls in place to better support, not so much the migration, but what was going to happen day forward.
6. CA: Can you describe your role on the team and the team that you were working with in this effort?
7. P12: So in this. Yeah, I wish I had a more active role in this particular project. I was responsible for educating the administrators who were moving to this online system. I

was responsible educating them everything from, how to use the new system to holistically enroll people, how to make contributions deadlines and all that. Then I was working with the systems team and the call center and the project manager who was really trying to do outreach to get people to sign up for the new system and do the communication.

8. So people had a deadline of the end of last year. And what would happen is, if they didn't do that, checks would be returned and funding wouldn't go through, which meant people were getting funded for their 401(k) and also they were violating policy rules and IRS regulations. My job is to do, training the administrators on the new process.
9. P12: So in a way, the implementation team, I was their client, right? Meaning they're the implementation team and they're bringing me in the loop so I could do the training. And then my clients were these, 3000 administrators who are going over to the new process.
10. P12: So, in a way, when I'm talking about the needs analysis and the missed opportunities, it was my experience over the implementation team. They missed the both on doing the needs of set analysis. They were working with blinders saying this project is about a migration. I was saying no, this process, if we're training, this process has end to end process. Migration was just one small piece I was already looking at the day forward. And I think that what we missed the most is that when you're implementing something, you have to bake in the day forward.
11. So whatever initiative you have, you fully have to understand what is going to look like day forward, not just the day you implemented but a month, a year, five years after. Then of course, what I think contributed to this failure, as I would call it, is that they only looked at it from an operational perspective, we're migrating a tool. And they did it think about what the client's needs were in general. So they're thinking, oh, we're moving someone from paper to online. I'm like, no, the client need is to fully understand how you administer contributions for a 401(k) plan, which means everything, education and guidelines and this and that. And they're like, no, no, no, it's about getting them to sign up for the online tool. I'm like, no, that's not their need, that's your want, but that's not their need. Right? The online tool, that's just the vehicle. What they really need is X, Y, and Z.
12. CA: To be clear, when you're talking about the clients in this effort, the clients that when you're looking at client need, you're talking about those that group of administrators?
13. P12: Correct.
14. CA: Can you tell me in general what the duration of the project was or at least your work in that project?
15. P12: Well, this duration, it's funny because it started about this time last year, the deadline for the migration was December 31st, 2018 and I got put on my knees, I got put on my calendar a meeting for next week to start talking about the day forward process. And we're already going to be in April so it's a bit late to talk about day forward when this has been live now for three months. But it's been like a year long process.
16. P12: Well, there was a project manager and again I think the steps we're about identifying the people that were on the paper process, trying to get their contact information, which we didn't have, are readily available. Getting them to fill out a card, send that back in by which then we would do proactive outreach and get them logged and signed up a bunch of this online system. Once they are on the online system for them, they were pretty much done because it was basically going from mailing a check to doing, like a debit from their

bank account and instead of handwriting names and dollar amounts, they would enter that information online.

17. CA: Was there a gap in activity or what has been the follow on, leading up to this meeting that's scheduled.
18. P12: Well, I don't know, I'm surprised that this meeting is like happening so late in the game, but I guess the follow on is, like I said, there was still confusion now because we need ... well I don't know what, I don't know. I don't know if we're fully integrated, so I don't know if all 3000 people who needed to migrate had actually migrated or for waiting for more people. But I think what's happening now is, the day forward is you could have, administrator John today and tomorrow becomes Jane and Jane doesn't know what to do. So there needs to be some type of onboarding and ongoing education and how to use these systems. But again, I say it's not about how to use the system, it's about understanding the end to end process with enrollments and making contributions.
19. CA: So there's a need for sustaining the changes as people change. But that creates a greater gap than in .... that's bringing people in from no process to the current process and they still don't have the background?
20. P12: Correct.
21. The last thing I would ask is looking at the experience, what do you think were the greatest challenges?
22. P12: Well, I'll be honest, when you start off and you don't take a systemic view of what you're doing and you're more of an order taker and someone says migrate these systems and you don't have conversations with other people that could be impacted or you don't ask the question.
23. So, I was the trainer and originally I wasn't even on the core team, I was the afterthought. That we'll know training and implementation, as you're building the process I need to know from the beginning I'm not the afterthought. And so you had a small core team of people who made a decision in a vacuum and by the time they brought it to the larger team where we all boys stood at this myths and did analysis. Someone was provided the authority to say too late, this is what we're doing and everything else is scope creep. And that person didn't have the boldness. Well, this is judgmental, I don't know if she did or not, but it never went back to the stakeholders to say, we have a bigger issue on hand and we need to figure out how we can address this. The person wrote down these as risks because often in project management meetings people say, well, what are our risks? But the risks were never addressed and so I just think that the project was not as successful as it could have been.
24. And so, I think it goes back to doing what's right versus doing either what you're told or being afraid of, not making everyone happy or all longer deadline. Sometimes there's resource issues that could play into that. But yeah, I don't know if I can say more about what really played into it other than. It was a big miss.

Case P13L Interview

1. P13: So in our organization, we have this concept called the community of practices. I don't know if you're familiar with that? You are. Okay.
2. P13: Okay, great. So I have been working with the communities to practice to help them develop their communities and to bring different thinking into the organization. So one of the ideas that the VP of that area had come to talk to me about was turning into a learning

organization. How do we foster an environment of having a learning organization? So I realized that one of the greatest ways would be to employ a case-study-teaching mentality into the community to practice.

3. So each community to practice that exists in our organization has a manager of that community. So I would say we have, informally, about eight different communities of practice in our organization. And so my job was to create a workshop to help them understand what case-study-learning environment was and then to teach them how to build a case, a usable case, and what it meant to facilitate a case-study discussion. So it was all very clear when I met with the leader. But that's not the way it turned out.
4. I think I missed a step in encouraging her to have a level set with the community-practice managers. She had mentioned that she had in one-on-ones, and it probably would have helped to have a collective conversation around it. And so I delivered the workshop, and they really got stuck on the strategic element of it. And I realized in the workshop, one of the things that I didn't take into consideration, didn't do a great needs assessment, was their ability for strategic thinking.
5. And so the material was not landing as it should have been because they were struggling to understand the strategic value of it, and understanding how it sits in the organization. And so I have to say that the intention was great, but it fizzled out. Like I gave the workshop and it fell flat at that point.
6. P13: So my approach to learning and development is really an account-services model so I have regular one-on-ones with the VPs of the areas that we serve. And so in a regular meeting, we were discussing about what's on their agenda, what are they thinking about? So it was a conversation that the VP and I have had, and we evolved that conversation. And that's where she discussed about, "Oh. It would be great if we could do case teaching in our environment and it would just be a really novel way to look at problems."
7. So I would say it was probably from having the original discussion with her to actually having a workshop, it took about six months to get everything lined up. And it took a bit of time to get buy-in from our CIO of the area, and I think that's what the hindrance was. And hindsight, it's 20/20. So I think the conversations should have happened between myself, the VP, and the CIO first. And then a level set with the managers before we actually went into the training.
8. So from that point on, there was two workshops, one in Winnipeg, one in London, in person. And both of the workshops, they got stuck on the strategic element to a point where I was thinking, "Wow, did I miss the boat here?" So in that particular work, we partnered with the transformational change office partly because changing a complete mindset is a bit of change in itself, but there was a practitioner in that space that was really familiar with case-study teaching. And so I wanted to leverage that concept altogether.
9. And when it came to the struggles, the practitioner that I was working with, she's very meta, very smart, very meta, and probably a little bit too abstract in her thinking for this particular group. And I think that's probably where the strategic element fell apart.
10. In the second group, we tweaked a little bit more and we, for lack of a better phrase, we brought it down a level. And it settled a little bit better, but people still had a time wrapping their head around the concept.

11. P13: I love case studies. I come from Ivey Business School. I'm e[Name]sed to the Harvard method, the very academic version. So what I've realized in working in industry is you can't ask people to read a 40-page case.
12. P13: Industry cases are so much more different, and it has to be very immersive and interactive. So what we were trying to do was to take the notion of the academic case-study method, and leverage it for industry so it's more practical. No more than two pages kind of a concept or one PowerPoint presentation. And so it just didn't land, and I feel like it was a huge miss.
13. P13: Well, we had built in elements to help them sustain the learning. So our technology area has a communications team. So we had partnered with the communication team and asked them to attend the workshops so that they could support leaders because leaders, they have the data but they might not have the time to write. So we have a comms team that that's what they do so we put them through the workshop as well to help sustain that.
14. And then the transformational change specialist that we had on our team, she was willing to coach all the leaders through building their own couple of cases so that we could help it get off the ground. And they just had a really hard time getting their heads around for case studies, you don't always need to have the answer. Sometimes it's just process.
15. P13: So they struggled with that.
16. CA: Any other challenges that you particularly faced in that effort that you haven't surfaced already?
17. P13: Yeah, I think probably the notion was a little bit too high-level, and I probably should have spent a little bit more time in the design to bring it down to a level that was digestible for this group.
18. I think there's also another element of team dynamics in that group as well. They're very competitive, and I feel like the timing was wrong. I felt like the sponsorship, while it was there, it probably wasn't set up properly. And the success measure wasn't as clearly called out as it was in the first one.
19. CA: Why this as your least or less successful?
20. P13: One, it fell flat. But I think I was the most disappointed that this particular one didn't fly. And I consider myself to be a professional in the sense of being agile in the moment and being able to flex so that we can make things work, and this particular one just didn't have any of those elements in it.
21. There's been times when I've done some needs assessments and it starts out as one thing and it grows in scope, and you learn to flex or you learn to manage expectations. And this particular one, there was none of that.
22. I have another example where it was a really successful engagement. We trained over 3600 technical people in a six-week period across Canada and Europe, but the needs assessment was terrible.
23. P13: It was a project that was handed to me from somebody else and when we met with the project team, they didn't know what their success measures were. They didn't know what the delivery was, plus there was no budget. And they gave me, I want to say about four weeks to design a solution to deliver by a certain deadline which left me with six weeks to do the delivery, of 3600 people.
24. P13: I was literally, what do you say, 24/7 on this to make it work because of the Europe factor, the different time zones. And in the end, the approach that we took saved the company, I want to say, a couple million dollars. But I have to say I don't know if it was

the best quality of training but at the same time, we did minimally tick the boxes given the limitations that we had.

25. But the needs assessment, that bar just kept moving all the time. And I think I could have done probably a better job at holding my boundaries instead of being as flexible as I was. But I also feel like in the end, it was great but the needs assessment was not that great.
26. P13: There's another one where sometimes the needs assessment is very successful, but doesn't lead to training. So I can remember talking to a leader about a particular individual that was needing presentation skills training, and wanted me to find her a workshop that she could attend. And in peeling back the layers, what really was happening with this person, she could present to her peers. She froze when she had to present to senior-level leaders.
27. So to me, that was more of a confidence issue. So we got her an executive coach, and that was the answer to that situation. So, in doing a proper needs assessment, sometimes it's getting back to the root of the issue.
28. CA NOTE: A note on methodology: this interview was conducted through Zoom with video. I think the video helped set the participant somewhat at ease. There's no way to force it, but this platform is my preference going forward.
29. CA NOTE: Participant provided several additional anecdotes beyond their two core cases at the end of the interview. I feel I have to exclude this data for present study, but could a more anecdotal discussion, more cases but smaller scope of questions, be a valid approach for future research?

Case P14L Interview

1. P14: Sure. I think actually I would call it a mini needs assessment and then it came out of the larger one. So one of the recommendations that we made was to build the trainer program, the point of training the partner countries is to actually make them self sufficient and turn over the work, not just the operations but actually the training of the operations to be in country. And the one recommendation we had was to build the trainer program for that they could take out and give to the partner countries.
2. So a couple of years went by after the initial needs assessment and it was decided that it was time to go ahead and start doing that. And another request for proposal went out and so a lot of politics in the government, I'm sure you're aware of that, so the proposal went out and for whatever lot of reasons, but we, the group who did the initial needs assessment did not get the ongoing work for the trainer program and built in that was also a mini needs assessment in order to determine how they could build something that would be relevant for partner countries throughout the glow with every one of the partner countries being at a different level of operations and a different level of training and education among themselves.
3. So the reason I say that it was a bit of a failure was that we were so working with all of these groups, we were in and we were asked to come in and be, what would I call it, part of the wisdom for the company that actually got the contract to do the trainer and follow through. What I know is that, that was a miserable failure on their part. They spent a year plus in developing a product that got to a point where they were ready to start doing a dry run and then a pilot and I personally of the team was invited to come and sit in on the dry run precursor to the pilot and it was a disaster. It was really bad, from an instructional design standpoint, it was just really really bad.

4. So actually what happened was the projects stopped, stalled at that point in time and I was at the time, I was working with him, always a very trusted individual for them, knowledgeable about what I was doing and myself and one other colleague who actually was employed at the national lab really raised some serious questions about the product they were trying to deliver. And so it stopped, it just stopped. And what happened was they came back and myself as a representative of the team here in Albuquerque as well as their one individual in the lab, we were given the task to actually start from scratch in redesigning, redeveloping.
5. So the failure part in that was that they really didn't take notice of what was identified in the needs assessment relative to the trainer, and you could say that was a failure maybe of the first one except I would just say that it was a set of circumstances and politics that got in the way or anything else from the previous needs assessment was running just fine.
6. We actually did turn the trainer around, we did do a mini needs assessment and come back and revisit everything that had been put in place in the first product, did significant changes more in the design and development and focus on the target audience, and I was also part of the group that took that out as a pilot and did that in Malaysia and it is on solid ground now and going forward and making great headway. So there is a success at the end of that but I would say that the mini needs assessment that happened from another company not connected to the first one and not paying much attention to it just fell apart.
7. P14: That's an interesting thing. We were constantly being pulled in to try and to give suggestions and ideas and we really... And this is a really sad thing, but because we were not hired to do that work legally, we couldn't give any feedback to them. And so it was interesting when they asked me to come to the pilot, I questioned it at first and said, I really don't know if you want me there, we were a competitor to this whole process. And their comment was, no, we really need your input [Name] because you have the background from the first one and we need that information. And we also... You're working on other things that are going to feed into this program. So we need that.
8. So I actually checked with my management since this was under a special contract and it was okay for me to go and sit and be part of that. It was very difficult relationship, tension in all of that. And I will say that the company that got the contract and worked on it really didn't have a lot of reasons why the product they produce didn't work but part of it was that they just didn't have the background and I'm not sure that they were actually allowed much of the information from the original training needs assessment.
9. CA: Yeah, I was going to ask that, did they have the published results from the initial needs assessment?
10. P14: I don't think so. I think they were given information in pieces and verbally, but I honestly don't know for sure, but I don't believe they had that information.
11. CA: Do you have a sense of how much of that year they consumed to doing their own needs assessment?
12. P14: They probably spent, I would say they spent, hardly about two months, three months maybe. Because what they produced, they justified and I would say based on their justifications, I would guess that they did some needs assessment. I just don't know that they were given all the information that they really needed and I'm not sure that they were actually allowed to go out and they too were not allowed to go out to partner countries, I do know that for a fact. So they were just basically going on wherever anybody was going to tell them. So...

13. P14: So I can't say that's something that I was significantly involved in as a needs assessment, but I was involved in the final product of that and what happened and I would say just not a good mix.
14. CA: Yeah, you were a close observer and it's your estimation that a bad product was produced because they were working from insufficient or inaccurate data.
15. P14: I would say that's probably the greater portion of it. I also questioned, and I really can't say that I know, but I always really questioned whether or not they had the expertise to actually do the needs assessment. I'm not sure that they had actually ever done one before, so yeah, so I think that would be my bigger question.
16. CA: Do you know the rough size of the group involved in that effort?
17. P14: They were about the same size we were. There were probably about four or five individuals of them.
18. CA: And was the client the same or have there been a client change from the first days of the system?
19. P14: No, client was the same.
20. P14: Yeah, the client was the same, the sponsor was the same.
21. P14: I will add one other thing [Name] though, when you asked if the client was the same, the client was the same as far as the national laboratory. What did change, and this probably had a significant impact on it, was that they actually hired a training manager into the national laboratory who I would say was not as qualified or as strong with experience on a training needs assessment so he was the one who was actually in charge of this project and directing it. So I would say that his lack of experience in doing a needs assessment had a significant impact on the other group that got the contract.
22. P14: And he's no longer there. So that's a sad thing too.
23. CA: Anything we haven't talked about that you feel is important for a novice audience?
24. P14: I would... Yes. As you were talking just now what became really obvious to us in the conduct of the needs assessment was the strength we needed in analysis and the strength we needed in evaluation on the team. So I was... Any needs assessment group needs to have somebody who really is the lead analyst and the lead evaluator. Document review was absolutely essential for us, especially when you're going into a field, this is all about training and development and how to significantly strengthen a training program and the training management of that program. And so having a knowledge, not just about training design and development which we have, but knowing what it was and we're training in the language of that, so there was a huge learning curve for us.
25. I would also say that it was the hardest thing in the world to get the customer to realize that it couldn't be done next week, that we had to have time to really not just get the information but digest it and really think about the impact for the organization and recommendations that were viable. So if people think they can go in and do it in a week, I would say, then you're shortcutting something and it's not going to be very effective.
26. CA: Were there factors that helped you make that case or that helped you be successful in getting that needed time from your client?
27. P14: Yes. The sponsor, the new vantage or the new program manager that came in who had a background in training and development herself, was very familiar with the process of a needs assessment and what it took in order to have that happen. She got a significant amount of pushback from her organization saying, we don't have the time for this, and she said, you don't have the time not to do this. So without her knowledge of the process

and the time that it would take and she came to us and said, I'm giving you as much time as I'm being allowed to give you and I know it's still not enough, but I need this and I need it now. So giving us 10 weeks basically to do the work was about as much as she can give us. So...

Case P15L Interview

1. P15: So currently I am in HR, human resources and organization and development partner for a company the size of about less than 500 employees, although we were just recently acquired by a much larger company that about 3,000 employees.
2. P15: This is the building material industry. It's the manufacturing of stucco, tile, cement. So any materials that's using the construction of buildings and residential homes.
3. P15: I've only been in this role for about six months, but prior to this role I was a training and learning development specialist for a law firm, and that's where I did most of the needs assessments. You want me to share with you one there?
4. P15: Okay. So the one that did not go so well was for a group of attorneys who needed some computer and technology skills. The needs that desired to build the training program, and the need that was identified, was identified by a group of IT information specialists who are help desk professionals and also video conference professionals. They came to us, the trainers, and shared that our attorneys really needed help on how to start their own video conference meeting, how to set one up, how to make their sessions interactive. And they basically told us a list of things that our attorneys could do better.
5. So with that information in mind, I then asked for the IT folks to reck it all out for me and then I went to the secretary, that supported a group of attorneys, and asked them: based on this list, would you agree that your attorneys need to learn and improve their knowledge skills. And the secretaries all said, "Yes, they do." Therefore, my attorneys were performable, blah, blah, blah.
6. But then I created a survey where I asked the attorneys to rate themselves on their knowledge and comfort level of using the program. So it wasn't just knowledge, it was application as well. So then after that results came back, I created some ideas. I shared some ideas with the sponsor of the program, which with a managing partner of the office. She agreed that we needed to do the training, but she just felt that our attorneys would not attend the training. And I asked her, "What about quick reference guides or videos?" And she said, "Well, that might be helpful."
7. Then I asked them for permission to work directly with a couple of attorneys at different levels. I was able to get three to participate with me and they were the ones who were going to communicate to their peers: the importance and value of the training program. It all went so well until the fact that nobody wanted to show up for training and nobody wanted to read the materials.
8. P15: I did some live events. I also created some material to distribute to the attorneys, they also made videos and we had a whole team of trainers building the stuff. So I think where the needs assessment had failed was that I should have asked, one of the questions should have been whether the best method was to train the attorneys. It shouldn't have come from the sponsors. It has to come from the attorneys themselves. I'm pretty sure that I asked the question, but it was a very general question and I asked the sponsors, not the actual participation [inaudible 00:06:43].

9. And so one of the things that you have to remember is that the sponsors are physically gung ho and very energetic and happy about spending in development. Whereas the attorneys, the ones who actually have to attend a session, they're not going to be that thrilled about it. I should have also given them some kind of reward for their billable hours, which they value the most. And I knew that from working in the law firm departments for several years, that I had to give them at least one free hour of billable hours for attending a training. And I didn't give them anything in return except for what I thought was just the true value of wanting to learn in order to reduce the hours you would have to spend trying to figure out how to use something, thereby giving you up that time to bill your clients as opposed to losing that time.
10. CA: Did the sponsor approach you or did they come along later?
11. P15: Yes, the IT guys were the ones who do the help desk work. They take the calls from the attorneys and they were just tired of answering the same questions and helping attorneys with the same issues. But they sure were the ones that came to say our attorneys need training. I then went out and got the sponsors. I presented my data with the energy partner and other higher level attorneys to say, "Here are the number of calls that we receive. Look at how much time they need for support training. And in essence, look at how many hours they're actually losing when they call in for help."
12. CA: Once you got involved, did you work with a project team or was it primarily you doing all the work?
13. P15: It was a team of trainers who we equally worked on the material. I did more of the communications and planning with the attorneys, especially because I wasn't physically present and I was the one who got the sponsors. The other trainers developed the material and once it was [inaudible 00:09:34], then we went out to her separate offices and regions to provide the training.
14. CA: Can you tell me, roughly, what the timeline or the timeframe for this work was?
15. P15: From the beginning of the needs assessment, not from the time that I received the frame but from the time that I started the project, I would say about seven months.
16. CA: And that includes the rollout of the materials you produce?
17. P15: Yes. It includes the beginning of the rollout. But it was a never ending process. It's one of those things where we would keep training, training, and we would've been training existing attorneys as well as new attorneys.
18. CA: I want to clarify: all of the source content as far as what you included in the training, that came from the IT group?
19. P15: Oh, that came from our IT trainers, but they're not the same group that recorded the complaint, because those are help desk staff. The ones who did the actual developments, they were trainers, software specialists.
20. CA: What was the ultimate outcome of that? Does it, to your knowledge, still exist as a program?
21. P15: I don't know about it being a program. I've been away from that place for about six months now. I hear that the materials are used to train new attorneys but not the existing ones. Once they start billing, and they're not in new-hire-training-mode, then they stop wanting to learn.
22. CA: What other challenges did you face as you conducted this project?
23. P15: Just the time involved. We spent hours and hours, in addition to our normal jobs. But there was a lot of overtime with hours and often weekend work and also being

available for our attorneys as well. If they weren't available to sponsors, if they weren't available until evening time, then I would have to wait around for them, work around their schedule, like you are doing now. You work around your client's schedule.

24. P15: Just the manpower, the resources, not having enough people to help out, not having the money to buy certain technologies to make it more [inaudible 00:13:30]. This training could be more keen or be [inaudible 00:13:37].
25. CA: Why did you choose this one as your less or least successful project?
26. P15: Because in all of my practice, I've been able to get the program running, where the participants were enthusiastic about it and they've participated. So the participation levels... I measured success through participation. And number two: the people were happy and they were able to utilize and apply what they've learned in class to their work. It's easier to share that excitement with your friends and colleagues. Because the attorneys didn't come to training, or really didn't use the written material, and they really didn't talk about this being a positive event for them. If anything, they said, "Oh, this is just more work! I have to work more hours! I have to stay late and I'm already working 60, 70 hours a week."
27. CA: So they perceive this not as part of their work or enhancing their work but as additional, unrelated work?
28. P15: Yes. An add-on.
29. CA: And is that cultural or do you think it was particular to the subject matter?
30. P15: No, it's just cultural. Getting attorneys to go in for a legal compliance thing, which is a part of their job, to know the law, of course they'll do it because they see a value in that. But they see that the more they know, the more they can bill, the more clients they can get. But when it comes to technology or anything administrative, such as filling out the medical form, HR has a really hard time with them as well. So anything that keeps them away from billing and meeting their hours, they're going to squirm about that.

Case P16L Interview

1. P16: Basically the, the instance that I'm thinking of that was he less successful of the two, if you will, was really an effort where an executive client came to my group looking for help with knowledge and skill [inaudible 00:00:01:09]. It kind of always tends to start in our organization with a training request if you will. And so basically they said that the representatives that are taking the calls, the MSRs are call center employees rather than an insurance professional or on the insurance side of the business and that they're lacking the insurance knowledge such as underwriting risk, all the deep insurance knowledge to better give advice and treat each person like an individual rather than a transaction. And so what we asked to do is to perform analysis to kind of determine what the problems were and what the gaps are. And they agreed, which is great, rather than us just building a training. And so I was assigned to the project and so I did a lot of, I don't know if you want the process that I went through or anything, or just keep going.
2. P16: Okay. So basically I started by going and meeting with the client myself to kind of ask questions about what they were thinking rather than getting the second hand knowledge. I wanted to ask what are you wanting to change and what does that look like to you? And kind of got her, I guess, view of what that looks like. And unfortunately I think one of the issues was trying to get her to give me how we could measure success of that. So that was kind of one of the issues because it was more about the conversations

they were having rather than numbers or anything that we could really measure. And so there were certain things that we ended up figuring out, like customer service satisfaction scores and error rates and different things that we determined that we could maybe measure.

3. But a lot of it was really just kind of that critical thinking. It's really what they wanted us to teach. And so after meeting with her, and I kind of shared my initial plan with her of reaching out to people from underwriting and asking what they wish the MSRs knew, more reaching out to the help line to see why people are calling in and what questions they have, and if there's any trends. Interviewing star employees, the best of the best, to see what makes them successful and what they did and their journey. And then also of course going out and listening, what we call white boarding, and listening into calls and actually seeing what's actually going on out on the floor. And then I also pulled designations and insurance courses and basics to see what is taught out in the industry compared to what we teach here and how.
4. Started to pull all of those together and just kind of get an idea of are there actual knowledge gaps in, knowledge gaps really, but informational gaps in the training that would create knowledge gaps out on the floor and what we're missing and what people feel they're missing. And just kind of use the six box model of performance to go through each to see systems, environment, motivations, all those different things. And just tried to determine what was really going on out on the floor. And I tell you this, it was a successful effort as far as the process, at least I feel. I think we went in the right direction of what we wanted to do, but I say least successful because when brought back the results of the analysis to the clients and went over everything, they really were just very dead set on it's only training and training needs to be updated. And so unfortunately the rest of the recommendations were not taken into consideration.
5. P16: As far as, okay, so obviously the training and the other recommendation was about the training environment. The system that we use to train in is outdated and doesn't match what's out in production. And so there's a lot of gaps that out of training due to that. And so the system's outdated. They won't update it, they won't invest in updating the training system, but the actual system they work in is great and updated, but not the one that they practice. And so I said that that's definitely a gap that needs to be taken care of. And then I also think that there needed to be some more communication around, I mean some of it is actually training issues as well, but more of the sustainment piece. Kind of that 70% or maybe even 90% if you're out on the floor, to kind of come up with some programs that are reiterating some of those knowledge pieces on a weekly basis and kind of a rotating business knowledge, insurance knowledge, sales knowledge, industry knowledge, and kind of have a rotating piece. And then also that the leadership wasn't coaching properly so that we needed some leadership interventions and setting clear expectations.
6. CA: So you were, so the recommendation there was the rotating, would be additional sort of learning content.
7. P16: Right.
8. CA: But then coaching is a separate, that doesn't necessarily come through the coaches, coaching is an additional. issue or a recommendation that you made.
9. P16: Correct.
10. CA: Who was the client for this? What was their role and was it really a single person or was there a client team involved?

11. P16: Oh, that's all political really. There was technically a team involved, but I'd say that the client was the assistant vice president. And so it was the AVP that was the true client and the [inaudible 00:07:42], the decision maker, if you will. And so it really didn't matter what the rest of the team [inaudible 00:07:48]. It kind of [inaudible 00:07:50] down to that one opinion.
12. CA: Okay, great. And the audience, again, you said that these were MSRs in call centers.
13. CA: And were there multiple call centers involved? Was this one sort of cohesive location?
14. P16: Well, I did survey some of our regional offices, but mostly because, you know, we have 10,000 here in San Antonio, in the main, the mothership, if you will. It was mainly from here.
15. CA: Were you working with the project team on your side or were you the sole practitioner?
16. P16: I was the sole practitioner.
17. CA: And so was it the expectation that you would perform this assessment and then any of the outcomes you would also provide? In other words, did you move forward and design the training updates?
18. P16: No. Then it would go on to the design team. And so I didn't actually make the designs with the changes. I helped kind of with the learning requirements and a division, and then they built it out [inaudible 00:09:11] me.
19. CA: Did you play any ongoing role with that team? In other words did they have you review the materials that they were producing or any of that or did after your sort of requirements hand off, they worked independently?
20. P16: No, I mean they worked independently while completing the actual action item. But when we would do updates and debrief, I would be involved and I would attend.
21. CA: So how long was it was this engagement from when you were first brought in to you delivering those technical requirements to the team?
22. P16: I would say, let me think. Probably about three months from the initial contact to the recommendation presentation.
23. CA: So you talked to the client themselves, you listened to help line data, you went out to underwriters, you interviewed star employee, you did the [inaudible 00:10:38], you pulled, I think you did some content review from the industry even externally. Any other sort of data sources or measures or instruments that you used? Did you do any surveys, anything like that?
24. P16: I did do one survey for the regional office, the regional offices, just to gather data from Colorado, Phoenix, Florida.
25. CA: So as far as outcomes of your work, the training portion moved forward, there were other things that were not put in place. Was that training put in place and then eventually rolled out?
26. P16: Yes it was. And so it's actually come full circle now and I've been put back on the initiative again, to essentially look back into the former other recommendations.
27. P16: Which is great. Unfortunately it should have happened in the beginning.
28. CA: And what was the time period? How long did it take to come full circle?
29. P16: Really only about eight months. So it really wasn't even that long ago. But I don't even think they're giving what was put in place enough time to see if it'll make any sort of

change. But because I firmly believe that it won't change everything, then I'm totally on board with looking om, looking back on the other recommendations as well.

30. CA: In that three months, were there any other challenges that you faced in trying to just conduct the assessment?
31. P16: Yeah, I would say at first I had a lot of pushback from people wanting to share information, because I think, and I got really good at explaining what I was trying to do to people and then of course went back to the executive client and asked her to kind of cascade that down from her to her teams. If she wants me to gather that information, I'm going to need their cooperation and their input in a timely manner, otherwise I'm not going to be able to get back to her. And I was really honest about that. And so she took that to heart and I went to one of her staff meetings, explained the effort, and basically, it started getting a little bit better, but there was pushback initially from people wanting to share information or, white boarding, there was no problem listening in.
32. I did get a fairly decent sample and I guess return on my survey because it was one of the later efforts that I did and everybody kind of knew what I was doing at that point. And then as far as from the star employees, I think some of the issues were that people weren't aligned with what made a star employee. So the information I was pulling back from them was very different as to what made them a star. And so I think trying to align those expectations of, well, what is a star, and is that aligned across the department or is it just an individual because we're never going to be able to meet that need, right? So that was kind of some of the issues that I had.

Case P17L Interview

1. P17: Yeah. So I'm going to go with a manager development project that we did, and we've actually taken two swings at this and largely failed at both. And so this was a thing where we needed to create some global standards across our sales management organization. So this is specifically sales management. The sales leader knew that the sales manager was one of the key pieces to the ongoing success of our company. And he wanted to find ways to start tapping into that. And so the head of sales enablement decided that there was a couple of key areas that we really needed to focus on. Account management, sales competencies, forecast, and pipeline management, and sales messaging. And the feeling was is that if we focused on these things, that our sales managers would get on the same page and it would drive performance.
2. We didn't really have a lot of conversations with sales managers or with the sales leaders when they were coming up with this. This was done before I got there. It was really looking at best practices and looking at some industry stuff that they came up with these. And so as they delivered the first delivery of this thing, it completely blew up. There were so many arguments and [Name] has a very, very collaborative culture. And we reward people for being brash and opinionated. And so this one, that's the huge difference between the manager development and the sales onboarding. At sales onboarding we had hundreds of people that were a part of the project. And so when people push back, we have our sales engineers, we went and we're talking to a group of sales engineer managers. And they're like, "Well, who did you have on your project working on this?" We're like, "Well, we had [Name] and we had [Name]." And then like, "Oh okay, well then it's good because [Name] and [Name], they pay attention. And if they were a part of

the project and their feedback was in it, then you guys got pretty close to the right answer."

3. But in this, because we didn't have those conversations, we had the fights in the classroom and the outcome of all of this, as we look back, and I'm not giving as much detail on this one, but feel free to ask as many questions afterwards. But we ultimately with about two years of real effort, landed sales messaging, not really through the sales manager, but more through comms, direct activity, and required training directly to the sales team. The sales competencies never landed. Account management actually got pretty close through this process. There was some reinforcement that happened in the regions. Each region does it a little bit differently, but they're all doing it, which was an important part. We did find that there was a lot of compliance activity there. So people add account plans. They were just really, really poorly done.
4. And then the forecast and pipeline management was all over the page. Some people did it, some people didn't, some people did it one way, some people did it another way. So out of these four objectives, one kind of landed through this program. And one kind of landed outside of the program and the rest of it was a bit of a wash.
5. CA: What about again, a client team, or your team that worked on this with the client?
6. P17: Yeah. So once again, we had, it wasn't a learning strategist at this point. I think we had an instructional designer. We had a program manager. We had maybe a developer and we had a learning consultant. Sales enablement leader took a huge focus on this one. And actually when that first class blew up, took over the class and basically delivered it. Whatever content was delivered, he delivered it himself. So a lot of this content was just ripped right out of his head as he went along.
7. CA: And what about duration?
8. P17: Yeah. So it took them about eight months to fail miserably and then it took them another five months to be able to deliver a class that didn't completely blow up.
9. CA: Did you go through a similar process that you described with the first project? Was there any planning for iteration, that sort of thing?
10. P17: Not really. I mean, it was only because of the complete failure of the first delivery that a bunch of changes that were made. There wasn't a lot of interaction with the field on it until they saw the pilot. And there was some work done with the sales leaders, but more just saying," Hey, we're doing this and this is what we're focusing on." There wasn't a lot of change management support on it. And the content didn't change very much. We delivered it for almost two years and then it went away.
11. CA: Were there any other challenges that this project faced that you haven't surfaced to this point?
12. P17: I think some of the big challenges that we felt delivering this project once it was built was there wasn't a translation between what they were doing in the field and the difference that we wanted them to make, we were just introducing them to the difference. And we were expecting them to just figure out how to make the change. We required them to be to class, otherwise we would harass them. And then we would do reports to try to drive them into the behavior that we wanted them to have. So we ended up with a lot of compliance behavior versus actual business change. So trying to actually get the training to turn into an ROI was incredibly difficult. We had huge challenges getting buy in, in the classroom. And so the classrooms tended to be a little bit difficult and the facilitators were kind of beaten up by the, the people, because they were delivering

messages that the students weren't ready to hear, because there hadn't been the front work by leadership to establish expectations. Yeah. I mean, we were able to deliver something. It just seemed like we did a lot of work and delivered a lot of stuff for kind of a 'meh' outcome. And I'm not sure we got our money back on the investment.

13. CA: Why did you choose this as your less successful example?
14. P17: Because I think to me, this reflects the opposite point of view, right? You have one point of view where you bring in industry smarts together with your executive leadership's direction together with the feet on the street, and they're doing the thing and you come together and you build something that's really specific to help the person on the street achieve the business outcomes that are expected by the executives, using the best information you have from all of those sources. Right? On the other hand, you have an executive saying something and the other executive deciding what that means. And then you throw it at a bunch of poor victims. You have content best practice, but very little adult learning best practice, almost no change management best practice, almost nothing around reinforcement and ongoing inclusion in QBRs and things like that.
15. So just, you go on and on and all of the things that are necessary to just break even on a training engagement were missing. And so that's where I see that huge difference. I also see the outcome difference where sales onboarding has driven 1,000 people through it. People come in and they feel enabled. They feel empowered, they feel driven. Our attrition is super low. And on the manager side, they're still having the same conversations that we had two or three years ago, and they're no better for it. And so now they're floundering, they're trying to come up with answers. And so we're stalling our own progress because we didn't have the same rigor and the same focus on making sure we really, really got it right. So we did let good get in the way of perfect and we're paying the price ever since.
16. P17: Oh, the other thing that's really interesting is that the difference in time to delivery for the manager development, we are delivering three days of content for sales onboarding. It's five days of content. And by the time we were done with a manager stuff, we ended up spending probably three months more than the entire onboarding for a much more simple program because we chose to not do the pre-work and not do the assessment and not build it thoughtfully. We built it quickly. So we had to build it twice.
17. CA NOTE: Used video during interview again, certainly helped.
18. CA NOTE: Taken together, participant described sort of a job lifecycle with the most and least successful. Participant describes a transition or ramp-up period in which least successful case occurred. But that was part of building up to most successful. Participant laments that after most successful there has been a fall-off again.

Case P18L Interview

1. P18: Yep, sure. A couple years ago we had a group from our business unit approach us around our flagship product, which is [Name]. Our [Name] sales were not as high as we'd like them to be. They had taken a decline over the past couple of quarters. So, this team wanted to push out some training to our sales team. The premise was training around key features and updates and key competitive sales motions, and sales plays, to help enable our sales team to sell more [Name].

2. That was the basic project goal and the audience that we were targeting was all of sales globally. All of our sales team, anyone from account managers to channel sales partners, to more technical roles, solution architects, and those type things.
3. CA: What's the general size of that, if you had everybody, just roughly?
4. Speaker 2:
5. A couple thousand people, I think. Yeah, maybe close to a couple thousand people.
6. CA: Who was the sponsor, who was the driver for that?
7. P18: The driver was the director of the REL business unit, and I don't remember her official title.
8. P18: Yep. They approached [Name] university. They approached our learning consultant who was [Name], and said that, "They needed to push this training out, and they had a series of recorded slide decks that they were going to have subject matter experts record. They wanted to put that in our learning management system so they could track who has taken it."
9. That was the initial request, and so [Name] of course, puts on his consultant hat and tries to talk to them about, "Well, what is the business need that you're trying to solve? And what are your learning objectives," and that type of thing. They had not thought about it at all. So, their response was, what do you mean? What's a learning objective? That's how it started. They came to us with this request to just put some slide decks in the learning management system.
10. P18: So, what happened, part of the reason I think that this project was so unsuccessful was, [Name] was trying to get this information from them. He was trying to tease it out from them. They were on a very tight deadline, too. They had all of this content that they needed to push out over the course of two months and they wanted to release it in phases.
11. They had already decided that this was the solution and this was the timeline. So, through all of his consulting, the best he could get out of them was, to refer them to me, and for me to talk to them about what learning objectives they needed to address. In my consulting with them, instead of them explaining the business need, what we did was looked at what they had and wrote learning objectives for what they had.
12. P18: We started rolling stuff out a few weeks later, the first phase started rolling out a few weeks later. When I met with them and matched learning objectives to their existing content, I also took the intake that [Name] had, where he captured all of the business needs. I compared the learning objectives that we had to what the learning objectives should be with the business need, and I pointed out the gaps to them.
13. They said that those gaps were nice to have, but not must have. We moved forward with what already existed. Within a few weeks released the first round of content, which was, I think about two and a half hours-worth of talking heads over slides and a follow up assessment.
14. Then, a few weeks later, the next phase came out, which was something very similar. Then, a few weeks later, the next phase came out, which was the same thing. I did convince them to at least put a practice exercise in the final round. We use a tool called Allego for practicing sales messaging. So, we had an Allego activity in there for them.
15. CA: You mentioned you had a learning consultant, you were playing the role of an ID, anybody else working on your team?
16. P18: Yes. We also had a portfolio manager, a curriculum portfolio manager who manages all of the sales content that we push out. She's involved in all of our projects at a high

level, just to help identify alignment between existing resources and new requests come in, and then also to help with establishing QA and considering the learner experience and all that.

17. CA: Give me just like a rough time frame. From when the request was originally made, how long was it until the first phase rolled out?
18. P18: I think it was probably three, maybe four weeks, well probably closer to four weeks. Probably about three weeks from the time I got involved, and [Name] had probably been with them for a week before. So, about four weeks from the original request.
19. P18: Yeah. Once the first one rolled out, it was probably a few weeks later that we rolled out the second one. The process was, I would spend about a week, I was supposed to be consulting with the content creators to ensure that their content was meeting the learning objectives and meeting the business needs. In the first phase I did my consulting work with them and they did not take any of my feedback.
20. We decided as a project team not to continue consulting, if they were not interested in the feedback, it was waste of time. After that, it was just me taking everything in, reviewing it, making sure it looked okay, making sure it worked in our learning management system and then uploading it, having people sending it back to the subject matter experts to review. Then, having a quick QA of everything. Probably a three week process to get phase two out, and then another three weeks to get phase three out.
21. CA: You've mentioned the subject matter experts, what was the client team that you were interfacing with, how large was that?
22. P18: There was a program manager who was managing all of the SMEs, and there were four different SMEs in four different topic areas. There was someone focused on competitive. There was someone focused on value of subscription. There was someone focused on features and enhancements, and then there was someone focused on marketing messaging.
23. CA: Do you know what the sources of the data that they were drawing into their slide decks? Was it all internally generated?
24. P18: It was mostly internally generated. So, I can tell you from a competitive standpoint, they were just pushing out the most recent, so they had created three competitive videos that had been requested within the last nine months. The competitive team gets requests for, "Okay, how do I compete against this particular competitor? How do we measure up?"
25. These were the most three recent videos that they had created to satisfy those needs in the last nine months. That's how the competitive team decided what content they were pushing out. That did come from the field. The field was asking for this competitive content, but it had been within the last nine months, so maybe that wasn't relevant anymore.
26. The value of subscription team was pushing their new messaging content. Then, the marketing and the features and enhancements team were just pushing their new updated product content.
27. CA:As far as you can trace it, what was the end result of this?
28. P18: Not good. We chased it. We took a hard look at it. Of all of our sales courses, I believe this one got the lowest net promoter score, got the most harsh feedback. People were complaining that some of this content they had already seen in other forms and through other learning paths before. That this was required for them to take for their role,

so they were frustrated that they had to repeat it. A lot of feedback that this is not helping. This is not going to help me meet my numbers.

29. All of this. So, we did a little analysis on the back end through just some interviews with some of the people who took it. Just looking at the climate of our sales team at the time. One of the main problems with us not hitting our numbers is the way our sellers were being compensated at the time. They weren't incentivized to sell that product as much as they were other products. So they weren't focusing on it as intensely. Then the other thing is, this is not the way they wanted to consume the content, and they we're very unhappy with having to repeat the content that they'd already seen.
30. CA: Has that been acted on?
31. P18: Yes. Now, we actually, we just released, so it took a long time. But we just released an updated learning path that is more of a holistic learning path that has very foundational content for brand new people, or people who've been here for a while, who didn't have a lot of the original context, all the way through key selling motions. It's just a very comprehensive learning path that has everything in one place and you can take it, and you don't have to take the entire learning path.
32. You can take the pieces that apply to you. We listened to the feedback on the modality and all that.
33. P18: Yep. The team we worked with to identify the needs that went into this was a very different team than the original team.
34. CA: Just you personally, why did this stand out as your least successful, or as your relatively less successful?
35. P18: I've never received such negative feedback on anything that I've released [inaudible 00:12:34]. Content that I wasn't happy with, that I didn't think was as good as I could have done. If I'm going to put, even though other people don't associate my name on it, in the business they don't know that I created it. The fact that I am attached to this project and helped put it together, it felt like a big failure.
36. CA: Any challenges that you faced on this project that you haven't surfaced already?
37. P18: I don't think so. I think the biggest challenges were, the SME team we were working with didn't really understand the value that we could provide them. They weren't open to us trying to find the right solution, even if it meant taking a little more time. They had in mind already what needed to be released. They just wanted us to comply with what they had.
38. CA NOTE: From most successful case, when assessment is closely tied to solution, work is often iterative. Needs are revealed in cycles, not all at once.
39. CA NOTE: Can practitioners control boundaries or are they constrained? Is this the difference between enabling and inhibiting factors?

Case P19L Interview

1. P19: Yeah. So at the time I was leading our training efforts for our corporate office at [Name]. So at [Name] we have about 4,000 to 4,500 people, it kind of ebbs and flows a little bit, but somewhere between that neighborhood of people that work in our office in Minneapolis. And so my job and my team's job is we're responsible for the learning and development of everybody that was in that office, supporting our stores. And that ranged in everything from leadership development to functional expertise in their role and how

they do their job every day. And kind of everything in between those two, I guess, extremes as far as the depth of knowledge that we needed about the role.

2. So I was trying to learn a little bit more about what the office needed and what our folks needed. So I heard some anecdotal things through whether it was conversations, observation, things that we hear from other leaders, but that started to create some hunches of some needs the office had. But nothing really concrete. So I decided to go and get some survey data and talk to some people and try to get a general idea of what some of the things the population wanted in terms of development org.
3. So, the way I went about this is I built a survey, partnered with a couple of people at the office who knew a little bit about writing good survey questions. I had my ideas, but I didn't have a great background in its own and make sure that that I had some good rounded questions. And so I put together a survey and then I went down to what we call the Hub, which is our common area where kind of everybody goes from building to building and set up a table for a few days and just tried to catch people as they walked by.``` I had a couple of prizes set up or candy dish and just things to try to draw people in and try to collect as much survey data as I could. It was probably between five and seven questions. It was pretty quick just because I'm catching people as they're walking by. So it wasn't a real in depth needs analysis, but I'm just trying to catch a few things.
4. Two thing that weren't successful about it. So number one, the way in which I get into data was really hard to lean on scientifically because it was very much a convenience survey. So I wasn't taking random sample. I may have not represented everybody in the office because if people didn't pass by that area that day. I'm not getting the voice some certain department or some certain area, or it was maybe an unbalanced approach. So it certainly wasn't the most scientific approach. And the data that I got from it probably because of the way wasn't extremely useful. So I looked at it and I tried to kind of make some decisions off of it, but the decisions weren't very solid. And I just didn't learn nearly as much as I wanted to. And wasn't able to actually go and build or do anything differently as a result.
5. P19: Yeah. And even the volume was probably not what it should've been. And again, with the size of the office that we had, I don't remember the exact number of surveys that collected this was a few years ago, but it certainly, wasn't a good representation of the office, put it that way.
6. CA: Was there a team working on this? You mentioned some folks helping you construct the survey. Anybody else working with you on this effort?
7. P19: No, in fact I did this is one of my own for very specific reasons. I was put into this leadership role and given a team that was already in place. So I walked into a leadership role as the new leader, and I continued to try to push the team for like, "How do we get more data? How do we understand our audience better? How do we do this?"
8. And I just kept getting resistance, like, "Well, we can't do it because." Or, "It won't work because."
9. And I'm like, "You know what, I'm just going to go down and do it myself. I'm going to build a survey and I'm going to go sit down in the Hub and I'm going to get as many..." I'm probably exactly a little bit, I didn't sound that way to them. That was really the point I was trying to make is, "Look, this can be done. I'm going to do it."
10. CA: Was that one of your goals in gathering this data is to try to overcome some resistance on that team?

11. P19: Absolutely. It was just kind of go out and show them that, "Look, it's not as hard as we're making it out to be."
12. CA: What other goals did you have in mind? What would have been the best outcome for you?
13. P19: So two things I was really trying to accomplish aside from that, because I've been pushing the thing to do this for a while. So in doing that, I was trying to get to a couple of outcomes. One of them was to, I guess, confirm or debunk some of the things that we were doing that we always tell report. Again, I had some hunches about a few things like, "Well, do we do this class because it's needed? Or do we do this class because we've always done it?" So I wanted to explore that a little bit and find out like, is this really a need or are we just doing legacy training efforts?
14. And then the other part was truly to find out, are there things that we're missing? Are there things that the office personnel would tell us that we're completely missing the button. So I'll give you a couple examples. We had done a few different Microsoft classes for a few years, Excel, PowerPoint, et cetera. And my theory was like, "Do people really need and want to come to a class on Microsoft Excel when they can Google pretty much any formula, any action, anything that you want to do? Are we kind of wasting our time with these courses?" So I wanted to explore things like that, where it's like, are we doing the right things?
15. CA: What was the duration? From when you decided to do this to when basically you felt done with this effort, how long was that?
16. Speaker 2:
17. I'll call it three, four weeks. Part of that was of course coming up with the idea of building the survey, et cetera. But then there's also some logistics because to set up a table out in our Hub and to get some of that, you have to work with the facilities team. You can't just go down there and set up and do whatever you want. So that caused some delays where it's like, "Yeah, we have a couple spots available a week for now." Or whatever. So that caused some of that duration as well. And then getting collecting that data, I want to say four weeks. Because then once I got the data put it together and try to look at it, cut it up a few different ways. I work with our analytics team to try to see if there were any trends, where certain trends within certain areas of the business or certain trends within contract workers versus actual [Name] employees. And just sort of cut it up as many ways as possible to see what I could learn.
18. CA: You mentioned you had difficulty acting on the data, but were there any other outcomes? Did you summarize this data and include any communications? Was it shared with anybody? Were there any other outcomes from this effort?
19. P19: Yeah, so I did share it with my team, share it with some of my partners across learning and development. I was able to use it a little bit to kind of confirm or deny certain things, nothing. Again, I didn't quite get the outcomes that I wanted, that it didn't point with any neon signs like, "Here's where your opportunities are. Here's what you need to stop doing." But it did kind of help at least provide a little extra something behind some of my hunches. So it wasn't completely useless, but it certainly could have been a lot better use of my time. And the other problem too, is you can only serving people so many times before they start getting a little bit of survey exhaustion.
20. P19: Yeah fatigue, there you go. So it was kind of unfortunate that way that it did that. And then having learned from it, I would've done it differently and tried to be a little

more scientific about the process. But to go back at everybody and say, "Hey, do this one instead." It set me back a little bit that way.

21. CA: Are there any other specific challenges that you faced in just in trying to gather this data that you haven't surfaced already?
22. P19: The only other the challenge, I think just getting people to complete the survey. Which again was my fault. Part of the approach is setting up a table and trying to get people to come to that table and take time out of their day. There had to have been better, more convenient, easier ways to collect that data because there's a lot of pulling teeth to get people to come over. And a lot of people that did come over, I shouldn't say a lot, but a good portion of people that did come over were friends of mine. People that saw me there and saying, "Oh yeah, I'll go talk to him." And, "Yeah, sure. I'll do this for you." That also creates a little bit of a bias too, right.
23. CA: Why did this stand out to you as your least successful or less successful example?
24. P19: Because of the effort I put in and the outcome that I got as a result, it didn't match. It was the right intent. It was the right work to be doing. It was the wrong way to approach that work.
25. CA NOTE: Participant mentions needs assessment as "hypothesis testing," but this in their least successful case. Was more successful when there was no prevailing hypothesis about needs or solutions.

Case P20L Interview

1. P20: I've got a couple that are coming to mind, I'm trying to think of if it was the needs analysis part of it, that really was the thing that made it unsuccessful. Yeah, I think what... The one that I want to talk about, general context on that. Same company, part of the problem on this one... You know what, I'm actually going to, I'll own it. The majority of the problem on this one was me. I was brand new to that company. I was new to the world of instructional design, at least traditional instructional design. I got this project and it was going to be an e-learning module. And I had helped other people with some e-learning, but this was my first one to get into Adobe Captivate and tackle it myself and build the thing.
2. So where this one failed or where I messed up is the project got handed to me and it was already... The requester already came with all the questions answered, at least for them. "Hey, there's this problem. We need training. It needs to be an e-learning. Do it." And I didn't have any needs analysis experience. I didn't know how to look at something and like, say... Or have the authority and like, "Hey, wait, hold on, let's look at this. What's going on here? What is the problem?" And so I like, "Okay, yes sir." I dove in, I started working on it. I made the e-learning, handed it back to them. They're like, "That's great." And they deployed it. But then some questions started coming up later in terms of, "Hey, that e-learning you did, did you have any measures of how successful it was?" Like, "Yes. The requester really liked it." "That's not a measure of how successful it was Sam. How do you know it was successful?"
3. "They really liked it." And I had nothing. And then as we started to look into it more, we started to find out like, "Okay, well, what was the problem?" And we started trying to track down what the problem was and was this customer's complaining? We went to the office of the president to find out, "Hey, were there some complaints on this issue?" "No, there were no complaints." So we started asking around some more. Finally, we asked all

the questions that we should have asked in the first place and found out that the issue itself was one overheard conversation from a manager and an employee. And it was just, it wasn't data, it was just anecdotal evidence that this problem existed and it was huge and it really didn't need to be this elaborate e-learning I created either. This could have been solved with some... Probably an email or maybe a couple of meetings between managers and employees and it's... So yeah, just that was my complete failure of not doing needs analysis at all. And just finding out after the fact, "Oh no. Yeah, you completely did that wrong."

4. CA: Who was the requester who was the sponsor really driving this?
5. P20: The requester on that was... It was a director Harley... You know what, it might've been VP. Director VP level at the time requested that over a specific department, a department in question probably would have been 50 to 75 employees, maybe.
6. Did you do any other data gathering before you moved into design and development?
7. P20: A little bit. The problem itself was the company had switched vendors of who was... It was auto finance. So if you had paid off your vehicle and had overpaid, and now the company owed you 13 bucks left over, our refund process was different. So it was a different company that was providing that on a debit card to the customer. And so it was basically just updating employees on, "Hey, we've got a new vendor, so don't send customers to this company. That company has no record of them anymore, it'll be this one." So there was some initial meetings gathering that of like, "Okay, I'll be in full on this new company. And when this change is happening." So yeah, there was a decent amount of meetings at the start just to get the info from making the e-learning, but not from a needs analysis in terms of defining the problem itself.
8. CA: And were you solo?
9. P20: That one, yeah. That one was just me.
10. CA: And do you have a sense for duration? From the time you got the request to let's say you implemented the solution?
11. P20: That I want to say was probably four weeks. I'm going to say it was a full month, maybe five, to gather and then start working on the e-learning itself and deploy.
12. P20: Honestly, it was not any kind of a... It wasn't long, and there was no one coming back like, "Oh, Sam, no, this is awful. You screwed up." It was more just as a company, with our smart goals, we were encouraged like, "Hey, you need to keep track of measuring what you're doing." And so that was new to me as well. And so then when those questions did come up, which they came up with every project, but that was one of my first ones and I just was completely unable to answer them. So yeah, it wasn't long. It was just within a few weeks and in terms of... Oh, sorry, go ahead.
13. P20: It did remain in place. As far as I know, it did get deployed to those 50 to 75 employees, but I heard absolutely nothing else on it, except like, "Well, thanks. It's great." Again, the requester liked it and I was just kind of left to assume it worked out okay. I did try asking some follow up questions, but since it was closed, I think they've mostly moved onto the next thing.
14. CA: Any other specific challenges that you faced in this effort?
15. P20: In that one, there were definitely some communication issues. I do remember trying to get some responses to some emails from director level people. I just, I did... I've had requesters and project managers that were great at communication. I do remember on that project, communication was not great from that end of things.

16. CA: Why did you pick this one for the less successful example?
17. P20: Because that one was... The other one I'm thinking of was more, I don't think needs analysis was quite the problem on that one. It was part of it, but maybe not. This one, that was... It was a complete lack of needs analysis on my part. That was a learning experience. It was just like, "Okay. Yeah. That's what happens when you don't do needs analysis like you're supposed to. You end up making... You work really hard on something and it's not really anything."
18. CA NOTE: Best quote here was, “a clear problem is half the battle.” There’s some tension about clarity. It helps if the problem is clear, but the solution can’t be so obvious as to be predetermined.

Case P21L Interview

1. P21: The human resources team needed, I guess let's call it an upgraded or new harassment training. This was last year when all the New York, all the crazy state stuff was happening. We're not part of the HR team here at [inaudible 00:24:52], which is, I think, is a little unique for a lot of organizations, so we're independent of the HR team. So they were in need of harassment training.
2. P21: To replace our harassment training, I should say.
3. CA: Okay. Who made the request?
4. P21: The vice president of HR.
5. CA: Were there any other stated goals at the time the request was made?
6. P21: No. Just that the fact that it needed to meet all the requirements and be compliant with all the various state laws. To be in compliance, be able to report should someone come a knocking, and be able to show who's taken what, and I guess the other piece is tracking, being able to track who's taken it and being able to redeploy. I'm sorry, I'm not an expert on the HR laws, but I know, I want to say in California or something, it was based on how many hours someone worked. So even if we had seasonal or temporary help, they would have to take it, and then it also had to be retaken after so much time had elapsed as well. So you've got to be able to tie that together and know who was hitting that threshold and et cetera.
7. CA: Who was the target audience here and about how many people fell into that?
8. P21: At that time, our employee base was about 2,500 and they had decided that they weren't going to just replace it for the states, that they would have everybody take the same course. That way, if I'm in Maryland, I would meet Maryland's requirements if I took California's because it's so stringent. So they would just take the most stringent and put that in place for everybody.
9. CA: Can you tell me about your role in the project and if you were working with a team, how was that structured?
10. P21: I was the one that was contacted, but was quickly turned over to one of the HR managers. So the vice president of HR just stated the need and then turned me over to one of the HR managers. So it initially was just she and I, and then she brought in a couple other HR managers specifically wanting California to work. So, that was pretty much the team.
11. CA: So two HR managers and you?
12. P21: Yeah.
13. CA: Walk me through just the steps that you took in this project.

14. P21: It was a disaster for a lot of reasons. Basically, my first thing was to go to ... We have a content provider that we partner with, and so I immediately went into the library and located the harassment training and created a playlist and turned it over to the HR managers to look at. In my opinion, they were the subject matter experts, not me. I hadn't read all the code and whether it met the requirements ... Excuse my dog in the background. But to me, it was up to them to vet that out, and so I turned it over to them to look at it.
15. P21: So after they did that, they came back saying it did not meet the specifically, I think it was California requirements. So I asked why and went back to the provider, the provider said it does meet it, it had been looked at it from attorneys. They kept saying it didn't. So HR went and purchased something on their own. That's how it ended.
16. P21: They rolled it out, but we hadn't gotten the reporting. The way the employees are coded in our [inaudible 00:08:12] system is a little bit messy, especially because you could have, let's say, a VP that lives in Seattle, but also has the California markets. So he travels to California quite a bit and would hit that threshold of number of hours working in the state, so would be required to take the California harassment, but it's impossible to track that kind of stuff, so you have to make an assumption. So trying to pull out all the specifics of people that had to take it, and we just haven't been able to do, which is why they ended up going with, let's give everybody the same common denominator and go with the most stringent harassment policy and that way we're covered. Because we couldn't get the reporting to be that specific.
17. CA: What challenges did you face? Any that you haven't surfaced already?
18. P21: Well, no. I think HR wanted to do their own thing from the beginning, to be honest with you. I think the other challenge was me not knowing specifically what the compliance requirements were, I think I thought it was simpler than it was going to be, you know what I mean? I thought it was like, well, we have a content provider we pay a lot of money to over here. So they should have the right content and here it is, serve it up. Okay, great. Let's move on. It wasn't something we were going to develop in house. None of that. So the fact that they went out and spent more money I thought it was ridiculous.
19. I blame myself for that whole process. I certainly learned a lot going through that, but the challenges were just the personalities, I think a lot of personalities involved and not getting the stakeholder who I consider to be the VP of HR. He was very hands off. It was like, "Whatever they want to do, whatever they want to do." Whereas he and I should have probably worked more closely together to make sure that didn't happen.
20. CA: Why in particular, did you pick this as your example?
21. P21: I don't know. It was just the first one that came to mind, probably because it just still pains me. It was semi recent. I feel like most of the other stuff that we do in house, we have pretty good control over. I don't know other than that.
22. CA NOTE: Contrast in these cases is about control over the process. Least successful case there was no control and any work that was done was overridden by an HR function who had already selected a vendor-provided solution. Most successful case was supported by a 27-year (wow) client relationship.
23. CA NOTE: Practitioner REALLY feels accountable for least successful case. Mentions “blame myself” several times. Describes experience as “painful.”

Case P22L Interview

1. P22: Okay. So as I was saying, my current role, I am an elementary music teacher, so I have grades kindergarten through fifth grade. And the least successful example I'm going to give you actually happened about two school years ago. I started using Google Classroom with my fourth and fifth graders, just to increase the implementation of technology and just get them doing some more projects.
2. So in the example, I was having my fourth grade students complete a research project on a world music instrument. We had already gone through all the different families of instruments, but now we were relating it to world instruments which still fit into the families but it's a little different. So the project was going to involve the students needing to research specific information about the instruments. I actually gave them what I wanted them to research, and then they were going to take that information and create a Google Slides presentation on the instrument.
3. P22: Well, the goal of this project... So we had already talked about the families of the instruments that are in a normal orchestra, but I wanted to expand and have them be able to relate instruments around the world to those instruments that they had already been e[Name]sed to.
4. P22: Since we had already gone through the information in class, I knew that my students were at least somewhat familiar with the different characteristics of the instrument families, so I planned their research paper. I made a whole Google document for them to fill out. They had to determine what the instrument family it fit into, like how someone would play it. So they were familiar with all that information just from us studying the other instrument families, but what I did not take into consideration was whether they were going to have the necessary entry skills of researching information and how to you use Google Slides.
5. [crosstalk 00:02:36] In my mind, I didn't even think, "Oh, Hey, do they actually know how to search information?" I may have known that when I was in fourth grade, but my students are completely different than how I was when I was in fourth grade. Also Google Slides, I didn't really think whether they had used that before because I'm finding that these kids are a lot savvier with technology than I was at their age.
6. So what wound up happening is I had planned out this whole unit, this whole project for them to do, but because I didn't think about what their needs were in terms of interest skills where they were, I couldn't get them to the point where they could actually do the project because I hadn't thought about the other part. So I had to then backtrack and break down a little bit more how to research information on the internet, how to use different features of Google Slides. Since then, I've incorporated all of that into my project because I did the same project last year. I would have done the same one this year if we were still physically in school.
7. CA: What was the timeframe from when you started planning the unit till you sort of detected that there was a gap in the entry behaviors?
8. P22: I probably started planning the project about maybe a week or two beforehand. And I didn't realize that there was an issue until I have them start working. So I went through the whole Google Doc with them of what exactly they were going to need to do. I hadn't even told them about the Google Slides part, I tend to just focus... I would say, "Hey we're going to do a Google Slides, so that's [inaudible 00:04:33] I did those two,

everything with Google Slides. I designated, why don't you class periods for them to actually find the information? And then I would designate probably two, maybe three, depending on how much information that they had.

9. So I didn't realize that it was an issue with the entry skills until I had already gone over everything and then they were on their own working. And I had students coming up to my desk constantly because they didn't know how to look for that information. They didn't know what to type in. They didn't know what to do. So that's when I realized that they didn't have the entry skills that they needed.
10. CA: When did you come to the conclusion that, "Hey, there was a misstep here and I need to adjust."
11. P22: Honestly, probably instantly. Once I started realizing that they were coming up to my desk, so they were all asking very similar questions, then I realized, "Okay, there's something that they're missing here." And then after that class period was over, then I thought through everything and realized, "Hey, they don't know how to do this." So then I had to backtrack with them.
12. P22: I would say once I realized that this was an issue, I... I mean, this was two years ago and suddenly I don't completely remember exactly what I did, but just based on what I usually do when I am teaching, if I am seeing that something as an issue, I probably most likely just have them close their Chromebooks and went over it more using my projector of what they needed to do, just to give them a model and provide a little bit more scaffolding.
13. CA: Any other challenges that you faced as you work through this?
14. P22: I think a challenge, and this is actually still a challenge for me, is that when I do research products with my students, I'm still learning how to teach them how to research information, so I feel like I have an idea in my head, "Okay. You know, guys, if you want to find out this about your instrument, this is what you could type into the Google search. And sometimes it pops up right away, but sometimes it doesn't." So that's something that I am still struggling with, is if it doesn't pop up right away, how to teach them to go into a website and just skim the information.
15. Some things come up without them needing even click on any website, so that's not always the case. And I find that if it doesn't pop up right away, that's when I have students coming over to my desk. So that is definitely something I think I would need to collaborate with their actual classroom teachers just to see if they're doing anything in their classrooms. If they're doing research projects, see how I can help them get there in my classroom.
16. CA: Can you tell me roughly what was the number of students that you tried this with initially?
17. P22: Our class sizes for fourth grade are typically between 20 and 24. Now I have four classes per week, so I realized it was an issue when the first class was in there. So then I was actually able to... The other instances that I had the other classes the rest of the week, able to incorporate more scaffolding into it because I realized right away that it was an issue.
18. P22: Yeah. That's one thing I actually love about having one lesson plan, but doing it with multiple classes is because usually my Monday days by testing and then if there's any issues then I can fix it as the week goes on.
19. CA: Why did you pick this as your least or relatively less successful example?

20. P22: I chose this one because I just remember it was a major struggle. And as I was going through my LDT program with [inaudible 00:09:40] we transfer entry skills around. And at the time, entry skills were not something that even would come across my mind, the planning lessons. Now it's lot different, I'm a lot more familiar with needing to think about all of that. But at the time I didn't realize that you have to take their entry skills into consideration when planning and making instruction.

Case P23L Interview

1. P23: Let me start with maybe then not so successful because I think some of the lessons learned there helped to inform what I've tried to do moving forward as far as the needs assessment and determining what a customer needs. The not so successful one; it's a BI tool called contract utilization, that enabled our reps to say how much... Let's say a customer goes into a contract with us and says, "Okay, I'm going to give you 12 loads a month over the course of 12 months." Prior to this tool, those reps did not really have a way to monitor that, were they on track with that? And kind of where were they either over utilized or underutilized based on that contract? This tool enabled them to have some visibility, so I worked with our VP of sales to roll this out. And so we had a series of kickoff calls to kind of introduce the tool, we had some follow up training that really walked them through, simulated what they would be doing to utilize that report and look at the data.
2. And then we had some follow up, best practices and things like that, and lessons we'd learned from the field about what works best and some use cases to share, but I think what didn't work so well is; I think at the beginning we didn't have a clear sense of what is the business metric we want to see affected and to what extent, so we didn't have clear KPIs out of the gate. And I'd asked that question a couple of times at the beginning of our work, but I would say, "Well, we don't have historical data to compare it against. We want to see some growth, but we don't have a baseline, so we're kind of getting a baseline." I should have pushed on that a little bit more to get them to say, "Well, what is the fair expectation? What is a reasonable expectations? What's a low bar they can measure." So we didn't really have that. I think that's kind of mistake number one there; is that we didn't have a clear KPI target to communicate to our reps.
3. And so then, complicating that was that the tool wasn't accurately displaying data, so we got pushed back from the field that, "Oh, well, this isn't going to work for us because of the circumstances of our contract, or our contract's different or it's not displaying the data the right way." A lot of runaround from the field, some of which I think was true, some of which wasn't necessarily, but I think the other pitfall there is I didn't push on this VP enough to kind of figure out what is the gap we're trying to solve for? We know part of that, what is the other part of that? How will this be used? I think that that lack of clear expectation about what the behavior change actually was going to be, and then what metric that would impact, really led to kind of marginal adoption, and then resistance, and so we've actually had to do a second wave of training with a little more clarity around that. So I think that that was where that went wrong, was just the lack of a clear lack of a clear target, and then a lack of understanding.
4. From a top down business perspective, we knew what we wanted it to do for the reps, we wanted them to see the freight they need to call in or the conversation they can have with their customer, but we didn't know exactly what the concerns from the field about that

were, why that kind of thing hadn't worked before. So I think there is more work we could have done on the front end there. Does that make sense?

5. CA: Was the VP of sales the sponsor?
6. P23: Yeah. She was the business level of sponsor. She was also relatively new to the organization, so I think she was getting some pressure to show some progress and to move some numbers. I think that speed was one of the factors that kind of rushed us through some of that. And then obviously it was very IT heavy projects that we had folks from the IT side who were really building it based on the business specifications.
7. CA: What was the team like that was part of this effort?
8. P23: From the training standpoint, I was really the sole person who was developing the training. I put together kind of the content slide deck for the kickoff calls and then the follow-ups simulation and then some documentation to follow. As far as the project overall, the initiative by which I mean the tool itself, we had the project sponsor, we had an IT lead who is basically a product analyst, and then we had another kind of systems coach who really works with the field to implement, and then we had an onboarding manager who worked a little bit with that just because the contracts typically are ironed out in the onboarding phase with the customer, and so she had some insight to the contracts, how that should be uploaded and how that information should display and then how to work against that.
9. CA: Who was the target for this work?
10. P23: Our sales reps.
11. CA: Do you know roughly how large that audience was?
12. P23: Probably I would say around 450, because we've got our account executives who are like our hunters, and then we've got key account managers who really maintain kind of our tier one accounts that have volume.
13. CA: You mentioned that you had some early on kickoff calls to gather some information, but you also mentioned things like lessons learned from the field and other things. How did you gather data?
14. P23: I was pulled into this kind of late in the process. Prior to the project being kicked off, the data that had been collected was around the gap between what our contracts were telling us our customers we're going to deliver, and what we were realizing from a revenue standpoint, so there was that gap. And then one of the leaders recognized that we don't really have a way of determining what that gap is prior to the loads just not showing up, and so really that discrepancy is what drove that. In terms of data collected from the field, I think that's where we had a big shortcoming. I would have liked to have gotten more data from our reps about; how do you actually keep up with your customers contracts now? How do you make sure they're delivering what they've committed to deliver? Because they're incentivized to do that, their commissions based on that, so I would assume they had some way of doing that. If they didn't, and just kind of let it all happen willy nilly, well, that's something to know too.
15. I think that would have helped us a little bit with adoption because again, they saw it as this tool that we're forcing on them to have them build, look and to take away from the work that they were doing with their customers, when in fact it should be something that helps them to have more streamlined work with them. I think that probably one of the pitfalls was a lack of that kind of data collection on the front end. It was more the higher level business results from the C-suite level that was driving that initiative.

16. CA: What challenges did you face during this effort?
17. P23: Sufficient time was one. Like I said, I was pulled in pretty late and we had about a three week window, we wanted to kind of promote the tool and then flip the switch for it to be live, so that's why we decided on the calls and to just orient first managers and then the individual contributors of the tool and what it did and kind of how to navigate it, and then we have the simulation as a follow up.
18. P23: Time. I think again, the lack of a clear metric around what we wanted to change, because I think it was hard to then determine the success of the tool and the success of the training, so I think that that was tough too. And the excuse of; we don't have historical data to compare it too, so we can't really say a percentage, but what is reasonable? What's something conservative that we can give people as a target? And then round two, we could move forward is what I would recommend in the future. Let's throw a target there if we have no data to kind of move against, but without that I don't think there was an incentive, and there was no lever for management to pull when the reps did it, like, "Well, what am I doing this for? Well, I don't know because..." And so I think that's something I would certainly do over.
19. CA: Why did you choose this as your less successful example?
20. P23: What struck me about it was really the hurried way that we kind of rolled that out, and then the fact that we had to go back and do additional training, and additional clarification, and there were some bugs in the tool, so that we had to fix those in order to restore confidence with the field, which is an ongoing battle I find with our IT group, because they'll launch stuff and it's really beta, and you don't get a second chance to kind of do that over oftentimes. I think it was an uphill battle after that, and so that one stood out to me as something... It was an effort that we had to kind of revisit a couple of times in order to really impress upon the reps, what we had hoped you would be able to accomplish using this.

Case P24L Interview

1. P24: Okay. The first one as a training as a needs assessment for [Name] in 2016. It was for tech ops and basically the objectives of the needs assessment were to look for opportunities to align what was going on in the field with classroom. And to identify any obstacles that might get in the way of new hires and harbor us to let go. The whole idea was speed to competency so how do you get them more quickly? The training program took about 12 weeks for people to get onboard, or to learn to do their jobs, the installs and service calls. So that was the overall objective, one of them anyway. There were other things related. So that was big picture. We tried to identify what was in the current environment, looked at how the training worked then and looked at the key metrics like rework, customer satisfaction, on time arrival, all of the typical ones for [Name] and [Name] as well.

1. CA: Describe the audience or the target audience of who's needs were being considered. What was their role?
2. P24: Well these were the field techs. So these were the people, they were coming into the role. They had been FT1, field tech one, just the entry level. They are responsible for doing the install, like an install of internet, phone and cable. Or TV services and things like that.

3. P24: There were seven different markets that I was working in. That's probably 35,000 people. It's a lot of people. [Name], it's almost like 85,000 I think. It's now over 100.
4. CA: Was there a particular sponsor making the requests?
5. P24: So this happened in 2016. I worked directly with [Name] who was the, I always get confused by these titles, AVP or whatever. She was very high up on the food chain and I think she was the lead person in the tech house. She reported directly to whoever was the CEO at the time. She was not direct sponsor. I was working with another person who reported directly to her. So he was the pander person.
6. CA: What was the structure of the team working on the project?
7. P24: So it was very limited in terms of the training needs assessment. I worked with a contract consultant, myself and then [Name] was also on that project. He was kind of managing it in and out. And basically what we did, I failed to tell you a little bit about our scope so let me take a second to do that. What we decided to do was do some focus groups interviewing various stakeholders. She took the leadership side of the house, so she was talking to directors and up and asking them about what they saw. She was more oriented in the strategic side, more future oriented, trying to identify what the opportunities would be three to five years down the road. And I was more focused on supervisor and down to field tech. So I was interviewing the new people, people who had experience, managers. I just did a variety of folks and we did the whole protocols to gather data. We worked it through that way and compiled the results into a final training needs assessments, which we identified our recommendations and got going into our next step.
8. P24: On my side of things, I was talking to field people in the Carolinas, the Midwest region, which is Ohio and areas like that, Kentucky, Northeast, New York, Connecticut, all that, PacWest and Texas. I talked to probably 60-65 people in that group over a six week period and the other person did leaders from the same markets
9. CA: Did you use any survey instruments or were you collecting any other types of data other than interview and focus group?
10. P24: I think it was primarily interviews. So we did a lot of primary source work. We didn't really focus on surveys.
11. CA: You mentioned six weeks you were gathering data but what was the time from when the project was kicked off to when you delivered your recommendation document?
12. P24: I can answer that question but I need to go look at my schedule.
13. P24: Okay. I can tell you that we had several stops because various things. We had [Name], possible merger that stopped things for a while. It was stop and start. I'm pretty sure that my end date was around end of October for stopping all the work and delivering the reports, the recommendations. And I do believe that most of the work was done in the August/September timeframe. So I was talking to people in August/September timeframe and then writing up my results in October and delivering end of October, beginning of November.
14. CA: Do you have a sense of what your duration would have been as far as your effort if you filtered out the stoppages? If you worked straight through?
15. P24: I do. Because I had a pretty decent plan. I think, if I were able to just line them up and knock them down, it probably would have taken, in terms of just doing the legwork, the research, [Name], it probably would've taken a solid month. Because it was both coordinating and talking to people and then compiling notes and then writing little

summaries up and comparing notes with the other person and trying to identify patterns and things like that. So I mean, I think probably four to six weeks is a fair estimate to get that big of a ... It was a fairly substantial effort.

16. P24: So basically the tangible outcome was to gain approval. I gained approval by the stakeholders that [inaudible 00:11:38] to move forward into a design phase for building out a prototype and then into our production or development phase. And so that was a tangible outcome and basically what we were going for was things like reducing the experiential learning gap between the classroom and the field work by making sure that it was ... We're trying to flip the classroom, [Name], we're trying to move it from a classroom, "All right, class, let's do Install 101 and do whatever this widget thing is." The design was to get them to go into the field first and then come back and do questions and answers and task based learning in the field and then apply that to reflection and things like that in the classroom. So that was part of the outcome and what was expressed in the design, eventually, and what we got going on.
17. The reason this was unsuccessful was because, for two reasons, one, the big one was the merger with [Name] that had occurred in May that just completely stopped everything. And then the other reason was it had stakeholders in some of the markets who were very skeptical of the approach. And so part of, I feel like, the failure in my side of things as the person managing the project was the failure to get people to buy into the design in a way that they'd have been able to say, "Okay I can do this, no problem." And it was very challenging because it's more at the director level. No, it wasn't at the director level. Those people were buying in. I take it back. It was more at the manager level that they were having a hard time with. And it was two markets in particular, the Northeast and California markets just would not budge.
18. CA: Where did that resistance manifest itself? Was that in implementation or was it as you moved into the design?
19. P24: It was as we moved into ... Implementation we never got to. It was in the design and as we were building out. We showed the prototype and demonstrated the prototype and questions started to get called out and reservations as well. And [Name], this was four years ago so I can't remember the specifics of that.
20. CA: Are there other challenges that you encountered just during the course of the work around data gathering or putting together your recommendations that you faced in this effort?
21. P24: Let's see. I mean, the major challenges had to do with stakeholder analysis and not really knowing ... [inaudible 00:15:59] a relatively new person to the organization at that time. My management support was sketchy because they were just changing so much. I had [Name] then I had somebody else and then I had [Name] again. And it was not a good recipe for success. I needed somebody who could help me and I could go to for escalation purposes, it would be a consistent message, a consistent front, unified message, to these people and who could exert some influence. I was at the wrong level to be doing this. I wasn't official project manager. There were a lot of if, and or buts here. I think I did a good job in terms of the needs assessment and we did a good job with the design and putting it out there and setting it up. I just didn't have the influence among the stakeholder group to swing it. I had a few sympathetic ears but they were so busy.
22. That was the other consider, [Name], I think. It's always what kind of attention bandwidth people have and it's difficult to get people's ears.

23. CA: Any other reasons, other than what you've already surfaced, why you chose this as your example?
24. P24: No. I mean it's an obvious choice for me, [Name]. I think that it was clearly a training needs assessment, a clear assessment. It was a big project, lots of complexity to it, there were lots of if, ands and buts, as I mentioned. There's just a lot to dig into, I think. And I enjoy coming back and picking at it, being a scab picker.

Case P25L Interview

1. P25: Yeah. So the other one is interesting. It was effort at the leadership level, senior leadership level to figure out where our gaps are in our process with dealing with our customers. So when our customers, and it wasn't, as you can probably discern from the title or the overall area, that it wasn't necessarily really a L and D type of survey, it was more of a business analysis, a needs analysis along those lines. But yeah, customers, there's a point at which they become a customer and then they get activated and they get their contract all approved and they get a customer success manager and they interface with a number of different teams in my group. And they interface with the number of different groups and they have a journey, really a customer life cycle, a customer journey through our department, and it's impacted by a number of different teams and groups, and even really above and beyond our department, but we were the logical people to drive it.
2. So we created a survey internally and shared it with our customer success team and our sales team to try to identify areas of weakness or areas of strength in all these different areas. And things like platform support and technical support training, what I do and what my team does, customer success management, helping the customer adopt the platform and be successful and get their business goals met. So, we wanted to get our internal impressions of all these different areas and get some internal feedback and rating from these audiences and in an anonymous fashion that they could feel free to give a data point. I can't remember exactly how we did the survey, but from one to five, and then also could put in open ended comments.
3. CA: Was there a particular sponsor that was driving this effort?
4. P25: Yeah. It would be probably my boss again, and then one of his team members, which is a peer of mine or client, our VP of customer success. So he's very interested in that because that type of thing impacts retention. So, one of the big measures of success that would give us insight would be retention. We want the lowest amount of churn that we can, as a software, as a service company, that's a typical measure, right? You want your churn, the percentage of customers that are leaving you to go somewhere else to be as low as it can be. And around 10 to 15% is really ideal and that's what we're shooting for. But anyway, that's what we were looking to impact.
5. CA: What was the audience for your survey and maybe not just who you got, but how many employees do you think this kind of impacted or touched?
6. P25: Yeah, so we sent this to it would have been all sales, all in marketing, all customer success. So at least 300 people maybe. For our company, that's a lot, maybe as many as 350.
7. CA: Were you working again in a team or what was your role in the project?
8. P25: Yeah, this was mainly, as far as building the survey, definitely the team would have been, if there was a team, I guess, it wasn't quite as organized and structured and it wasn't a very long effort at all, but it would have been myself, my boss, and the VP of customer success that I mentioned. And we met a couple of times and I got input on how we could build a survey, what we're looking to measure. And as we all have in our area of expertise, I've built a survey a time or two. So I took their feedback and went off and created a survey and I did get some feedback from them, but yeah, the team wasn't quite as structured or meeting as frequently, or existing for a long duration as the other project.
9. CA: How long were you engaged in this effort?

10. P25: Probably three months.
11. What other steps did you go through?
12. P25: Yeah, they reviewed it before I launched it, so I did get feedback from them before it was launched. So yeah, I think we launched the survey and I went in and saw how things were shaping up and began to look at the data on my own and the comments and then, ultimately, I think after a certain amount of time had passed and we had gotten a critical level of responses. I thought we got more than that. Looks like we got 40 responses, if I'm looking at the right survey, but any case, I got the responses that we felt like we were going to get, and we looked at the data and again, we got two types of data, we got quantitative data around a rating. And then we got open into comments and I think we found it really fascinating and interesting to get this type of feedback and getting it from internal sources where they were free to speak and not worry about making anybody angry or whatever.
13. So yeah, we looked at the data, we thought it was interesting. I think there were some internal discussions maybe that I wasn't privy to, or there may not have been. I'm honestly not sure. I had a couple of meetings with [Name] and [Name] about it and they found it fascinating. They were very pleased, but as to what actually happened from it, maybe there might've been process improvement here and there, but it was pretty small.
14. CA: What other challenges did you face during this project?
15. P25: Yeah, this one was easier. I think I reminded folks to participate, that might've been a minor challenge, but certainly nothing on the scale of the other one. It was just that the survey was better designed, I guess. There weren't the number of responses and it was pretty clear the responses, what they were for. And we had them, even though the survey was longer and had more questions, it was easier to analyze on the back end. So not many challenges really with this one.
16. CA: Why did you choose this? Why did it stand out to you as a less successful example?
17. P25: Yeah, I mean, I think probably because at least to my estimation, we didn't do much with it, with the data. And I think it was well done with a lot of good data that things could have happened or improvements could have been made. But again, I think we got pulled away with other priorities and, even though we liked the survey and the data, the amount of effort to really dig in and do some significant process improvements was limited. So that's why I would say it was not as successful as I would've liked.
18. CA: Yeah. So you mentioned shifting priorities. Anything in addition to that, why do you think this one kind of fell flat? I mean, you ended up with good data, but then it never went anywhere. What do you think contributes to that? With these changing priorities, was that a major shift and everybody just had other work that had to be done, and this was more of an optional thing or were there other things you think maybe just prevented action?
19. P25: Yeah. Well, one thing I could say, and it was a few years ago, so I'd have to probably dig into. Well, this was last year, actually. Yeah. So typically what happens in our business, we do this type of thing, a little bit of proactive, what can we do, other projects? We look at that in January, February of any given year, and we just have time to do that. And I don't know if it's always going to be the case. This year has been obviously very different for our business. We're having to really look at a new normal now because of all the COVID stuff, this global COVID crisis we're triple our business, which is good for us, I guess, but we're just extremely busy.

20. But yeah, I think in the years, past January, February was the time that we could do stuff like this and be proactive. But I suspect that in a cyclical nature of what we had seen, that the other demands and customer facing things just took priority. I think at the same time too, some of this stuff would be an effort to improve. We got comments here on, for instance, on sales operations. Well, we don't own sales operations, we could talk, I guess, at a senior manager level to their senior management and try to make improvements, but that might not be the most desirable thing. So maybe we don't want to do that. So I guess we didn't own all the areas that we surveyed. It might've been another reason that we didn't do much at all with this. So yeah. I mean, I don't know if that answers your question. Not a great answer, but that's kind of, I think my estimation of what happened.

VITA

Christopher D. Adams received a B.A. in Communication from North Carolina State University in May of 1993. After finding the field of instructional design, he later graduated with an M.Ed. in Instructional Systems Technology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in May of 2003. Chris is the founder and principal consultant of Performance Change Strategies LLC. He has been personally endorsed by Jim and Dana Robinson, authors of *Performance Consulting: A Strategic Process to Improve, Measure, and Sustain Organizational Results*, to carry forward their pioneering work building strategic capability in talent teams. Chris' professional mission is to promote performance interventions that have purpose and meaning for individuals, organizations, and the greater societies they serve, and to end "training by default." Chris is also interested in exploring the strategies employed by successful human performance practitioners in their work, particularly for decision making and for forming sustained relationships with stakeholders.