

# Collect Data to Create Great Training

Incorporate a stakeholder analysis into the planning stage of the training needs analysis. It can add critical intelligence about politics and logistics—and can transform your effort from “so what?” to “must have.” **BY ROSS TARTELL**



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Most of us have had the disappointing experience of working hard to collect data, analyze it, and then present the results to lukewarm levels of reception. In this highly competitive and cost-constrained market, great data is not enough to build the management commitment and sponsorship so critical to training success.

Wendy Heckelman of WLH Consulting points out that the success of any data collection process depends on three interrelated factors:

- **Politics:** The alignment of influence and power from key individuals and groups in support of an outcome. Stakeholders need to feel that the new training program will benefit them and they can influence the relevance and application of the effort.
- **Logistics:** How the effort is organized and implemented. Good project management ensures that key stakeholders are appropriately involved, and the data collection process flows smoothly and effectively.
- **Content:** The understanding of audience characteristics, and what knowledge, skills, and attitudes will lead to successful performance. This is the core of traditional needs analysis.

Here is the key to success: Incorporate a stakeholder analysis into the planning stage of the training needs analysis. A stakeholder analysis can add critical intelligence about politics and logistics—and can transform your effort from “so what?” to “must have!”

- Use a stakeholder analysis when you want to:
- Understand stakeholders’ level of interest and support.
  - Efficiently deploy your resources and manage logistics.

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

There are many different versions of a stakeholder analysis. This one keeps it simple. Here are the steps:

1. **Identify the key stakeholders.** These are people or groups who are affected by or can influence the success of the needs analysis and the training effort.
2. **Place them on the following matrix:**

Power/ Influence	High	Blocker	Champion
	Low	Indifferent	Advocate
		Low	High
		Interest/Support	

This will depict the level of interest and the power/influence they can have on the success of the needs analysis.

3. **Color-code each person’s/group’s level of support.** Those who are supportive are green; those who are obstacles are red.

4. **Develop an action plan using the following four strategies:**

**Champion:** Engage these stakeholders through active participation in the data collection process and include them, as appropriate, in governance of the process. The engaged support of these powerful individuals or groups is key to your success.

**Blocker:** Attempt to increase the level of support from this group through deliberate engagement and consultation. Use champions to influence and increase their support—or to mitigate their negative impact.

**Advocate:** Use this group to carry your message. Keep them informed on a regular basis so you maintain their support. But do not spend significant time or resources consulting with them unless they have significant content to contribute.

**Indifferent:** Do the minimum to keep them informed, and occasionally monitor their status to minimize potential surprises, but use your time and resources elsewhere.

Organizations face enormous challenges. The need for an engaged and well-educated workforce that is able to overcome obstacles is greater than ever. Incorporating a stakeholder analysis into your project plan will enable you to use the data you collect to create the great training so critical for success. **■**