WORKSHOPSKILL · FACILITATION KIT

Training Needs Survey — Facilitator Run Sheet

Folder: `training-needs-survey` · Category: feedback forms · any group · 15 min · offline + online · print props · tool pack

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CONTENTS

Objectives
Before you design, not after
Setup
The card
Variations
Put it on the wall
Agent version
Read the six items
Failure modes of the debrief
When to use this activity
The three signals a TNA must produce
How to run it
Failure modes
Facilitation notes
Props in this folder
How to run this debrief
The four debrief questions
What this is not

15	Any	print props
MINUTES	PEOPLE	SETTING

Training Needs Survey — Facilitator Guide

Most courses are built on what the trainer assumes the room needs. A training-needs survey moves the evidence up front: before you design a single slide, you ask the people who will sit there what they can do now, what they need to do, and where the gap hurts. This pack is the pre-course questionnaire that finds that gap.

Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will have:

1. Stated, in their own words, the honest starting line (can do now), the real target (need to do), and the consequence of the gap (where it costs them).
2. Set the course agenda by cluster size — not by the trainer's hunch or the loudest voice in the list.
3. Been promised, and later received, one line back before the course starts: "here is what we built because of your answers."

When to use this activity

- Before you design a course for a specific audience — while the answers can still change the plan.
- A mixed-level enrollment list where "beginner / intermediate / advanced" says nothing about what people need to do on Monday.
- Someone is paying for the training and asks how you knew it was needed — this questionnaire is the evidence.

Before you design, not after

Send it before enrollment closes, not after the agenda is fixed. The point is to change the plan, not to decorate it. If the design is already locked, you are collecting opinions you are obliged to ignore.

The three signals a TNA must produce

- **Can do now** — the honest starting line, not the job title.
- **Need to do** — the task that is actually waiting for the skill.
- **Gap that hurts** — the consequence, in their words. That consequence is your opening slide.

A survey that produces satisfaction ratings instead of these three has asked the wrong question.

Setup

Space: the survey runs before the room exists — by email or pre-course form; if there's no pre-course window, on cards at a discovery session.

Materials per person: the six prompt cards on the table (answers go on the card backs or the blanks) and a pen; in the online variant, the six items pasted into a form.

Materials for the room: nothing live — the output is a sorted stack you read before designing the first slide.

Grouping: the whole incoming cohort; every answer counts the same, cluster size beats volume.

Roles: respondents answer honestly under the promise that the agenda moves; you keep the items non-leading, keep the control card, and build from the largest cluster.

How to run it

Time	Phase	What you do
0–2	Frame	Say the honest promise: the answers set the agenda, so vague answers get a vague course.
2–12	Answer	Six items — starting line, target, cost, urgency, support format, plus one control. Keep it short; a needs survey longer than ten minutes gets abandoned.
12–15	Sort	Cluster the gap answers. The largest cluster is your session; the outliers are your optional track.

The card

Use the faces from `training-needs-survey-prop-cards.pdf`: a master card, six prompt cards — what you can do today, what you need to be able to do, where not being able to do it costs you, how soon you need it, what would actually help (demo / template / practice), and the control card asking what they enjoyed about the last training they took — a watch-out card, branded backs and blanks. The control face is not filler: it keeps the survey from reading like an interrogation and flags what the room already trusts.

Failure modes

- **Leading items.** If every question assumes they need your course, they will say they need it. Keep the control card.
- **Designing to the loudest voice.** One confident complainer is not a cohort. Go by cluster size, not volume.
- **Collecting and locking.** A needs survey whose results cannot move the agenda teaches people that honest pre-work is pointless.

Variations

- **Pre-course form:** paste the six items into an online form (the folder's FormLM block) and send it the moment enrollment opens; the sorting pass stays the same.
- **First-session version:** no pre-course window — run the cards in the opening 15 minutes and re-cut the afternoon around what comes back.
- **Client variant:** when a manager commissions training for a team, send the six items to the team and to the manager separately; the difference between the two stacks is the conversation to have first.
- **Program level:** keep the same six items across intakes; the migration of the clusters is your curriculum roadmap.

Facilitation notes

- Every item must allow the answer “I don’t need this” — if it doesn’t, you are not collecting need, you are collecting compliance.
- Cluster, count, then design: the biggest theme becomes the spine; outliers become the optional track, not the syllabus.
- Report one line back before the course: what you built because of the answers. The next cohort will hear that the survey is real.

Put it on the wall

Print `training-needs-survey-activity-poster.pdf` (A3) to put the run of show, the six items and the three signals on one wall while you sort the answers.

Props in this folder

- `training-needs-survey-prop-cards.pdf` — poker-spec print sheet (63.5 × 88.9 mm, bleed and cut guides): master card, six prompt cards including one control, a watch-out card, branded backs and blanks
- `training-needs-survey-run-sheet.pdf` — the print edition: this run sheet + the debrief, bound as one A4 document with bookmarks (`-Letter.pdf` is US Letter)
- `training-needs-survey-activity-poster.pdf` — the whole survey on one A3 wall sheet
- `training-needs-survey-guide.md` · `-debrief.md` · `-start-here.md` — the facilitator guide, the sorting guide, the one-page start here
- `training-needs-survey-license.md` — what you may do
- `SKILL.md` · `training-needs-survey.zip` — the machine-readable manifest, and the whole folder in one download

Agent version

Every file in this folder has a stable public URL — an AI agent can fetch the prompt deck, the sorting guide and this run sheet with three curl commands (see `SKILL.md`), or lift the six items into a pre-course form. Run it before the agenda is fixed; that is the whole value.

Training Needs Survey — Debrief

> A needs survey is only worth its ink if it changes what you build. Here is how to read it.
>
> Use with `training-needs-survey-guide.md`. The sort at minutes 12–15 is the compressed version; this sheet is the full one.

How to run this debrief

- Group the free-text answers by theme first, then count; the biggest theme becomes the spine of the session.
- Pair every spine item with its cost line — “need to do X” plus “costs me Y” is a lesson; X alone is a topic.

- Send one line back to the room before the course: “here is what we built because of your answers.” It is what makes the next survey honest.

Read the six items

1. **“What can you already do today?”** — the starting line. Sets what you cut, not what you teach.
2. **“What do you need to be able to do?”** — the target. Every session should land at least one answer from this box.
3. **“Where does not being able to do it cost you?”** — the consequence. This is your opening hook, in the room’s own words.
4. **“How soon do you need it?”** — the priority signal. Soon-and-painful items go in the spine; someday items go in the optional track.
5. **“What would actually help — a demo, a template, or practice?”** — the format. It tells you whether to teach, hand out, or run.
6. **Control: “What did you enjoy about the last training you took?”** — a palate-cleanser. It keeps the survey from reading like an interrogation and flags what the room already trusts.

The four debrief questions

- Which cluster is big enough to be the spine — and what comes out of the draft to make room for it?
- Which asks are “someday”? They go to the optional track; they do not get syllabus time.
- What does the demo / template / practice split say about how this room wants to learn — did you draft it that way?
- What did the control card flag as already trusted — what can you inherit instead of invent?

Failure modes of the debrief

Failure mode	Why it happens	The rescue
Designing to the loudest voice	One confident complainer reads as the cohort	Group by theme, then count; cluster size beats volume
Leading items	Every question presumes the course	Rewrite them to allow “I don’t need this”; keep the control card
Answers that cannot move anything	The survey went out after the design locked	Run it before enrollment closes, or stop calling it a needs survey
Satisfaction read as need	Familiar and easy to tabulate	Only the three signals set the spine: can do now / need to do / gap that hurts

What this is not

It is a design input, not a certified skills audit, and not a way to rank people before they start. It tells you what to build; it does not judge who is already good.