

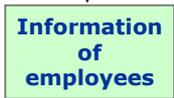
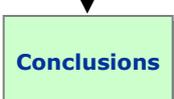
Chaired group talks

Definition of the further training needs in a chaired group talk

The group talk serves the aim of defining the training needs from the point of view of the employees. The conversation is led by an internal facilitator who is not supervisor of the group.

The following design is especially suitable for a group of unskilled and semi-skilled employees. If employees have little experience in group speaking, this must be taken into account during the preparation of the group discussion.

In this case, methods are used which encourage the participation of the reluctant group members i.e. work in small groups and questionnaires. The following scheme shows an overview of the procedure:

Phase	Workflow	Activity	Duration
			
1.	↓ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questionnaires ▪ Flip chart / moderation box ▪ Overhead projector and/or laptop/beamer ▪ Prepare information material ▪ Prepare presentation content 	1–4 h
2.	↓ 		30 min
3.	↓ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define objectives ▪ Information on further phases and handling of the results 	15 min
4.	↓ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Part 1: Work in small groups based on a leading question; documentation on the flip chart ▪ Part 2: Consolidation of individual aspects; documentation on the flip chart 	1 h
5.	↓ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supplementation, clarification and questions ▪ Information on possibility of personal interviews 	15 min

Introduction to the group talks: Explanation of the objectives

The employees are familiarised in detail with the topic and informed about the aims of the analysis of needs at the beginning of the group talk (altogether 1.5 hours). The opportunity of personal interviews with the supervisor is also mentioned at this time.

The participants are also informed about the further work with the results of the analysis of needs. They learn for example, that it is used to develop further training modules. Since the employees can air every training need in the conversation, it is important that the facilitator makes clear that, due to strategic, organisational or financial reasons, not each wish expressed for training can be fulfilled and that concrete training measures can only be agreed on in the personal interviews.

As a rule, in the group talks the question arises as to whether participation in training measures will lead to higher pay. To dispel false expectations therefore, the difference between pay-related higher qualification and pay-neutral adaptation to job requirements must be explained. Training aimed at an adaptation to job requirements adapts the knowledge and skills of the employees to technological and organisational changes and does not as a rule have any effect on wages.

Part 1 of the analysis of needs: Small group work based on an open leading question

At the beginning of this main module the facilitator of the group asks the following leading question:

“Is there training which would make your work easier for you?”

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it will be explained that training means all forms of acquisition of knowledge and know-how i.e. education at the workplace or participation in workshops and seminars.

The participants form small groups of two to four persons, discuss the leading question and present their results after about ten minutes.

The aim of this partial phase is to determine existing training needs directly from the respective field of work without interference from outside. The participants are activated in this way and initial discussions result.

Part 2 of the analysis of needs: Consolidation of individual aspects

There are frequently areas in which the enterprise senses a fundamental training need. It is important in the planning of training to know how the employees assess their training needs. For this reason the group members are asked, with the help of three questionnaires, whether they personally see a training need in the areas selected by the enterprise.

The questionnaires for the group talks should be prepared together with the immediate supervisors. These persons usually have the most knowledge concerning the special requirements of individual workplaces.

The questionnaires should be formulated so that they are easily understandable and as clear as possible for all employees.

The first questionnaire includes general technical competences (Aid 1) within a field of work; the second targets the single manufacturing phases (Aid 2) and the third contains different dimensions of social-communicative skills (Aid 3).

Each employee receives the questionnaires one after the other and crosses one of the choices at every single point. The results are discussed jointly after each sheet and the training needs are written down on the flip chart. The questionnaires are then collected for further evaluation. Since the group talk serves to address the entire needs, the filled out sheets do not have to be assigned to single persons.

Conclusions of the group talks

After the questionnaires have been collected, the group is asked, whether there is a further training need which was neither mentioned nor listed in the questionnaires. Additional needs are written down on the flip chart. The participants then list all the needs on the flip chart in their order of importance.

At the end of the talk the group is asked, whether the resulting picture "speaks" for them, if amendments or additions are necessary and whether there are any remaining open questions.

Finally, the next procedure, the agreement on training measures in the personal interviews, is explained to the participants: anyone who sees a personal training need for himself has the opportunity to put his name on a list.

Arrangement of training measures in the personal interviews

Not only the employees can apply for a personal interview with their supervisor; the supervisor also has the opportunity to ask for an interview. This is meaningful, if the supervisor sees a training need and the employee does not seize the initiative himself. It is however a valid point here that it is impossible to train somebody against his will; participation in qualification measures is therefore purely voluntary.

In the group talk all employees are included in the topic. Time consuming personal interviews are only conducted, if there is an actual need.

In the personal interview concrete training measures are agreed on. The training needs determined in the group talk serve as a background.

Assessment of the procedure

The enterprise has a complete overview of the training needs of a group after the evaluation of the questionnaires and the training needs collated on flip charts. On the basis of these data – combined with the input of the supervisors from production and the results of the personal interviews – further training modules or other forms of knowledge and know-how acquisition can be developed for employees at the respective workplaces. A training plan can be established on this basis.