

Systems Development: Needs Assessment Study Guide

Study Questions

Peruse the unit's selected readings to answer the following questions:

Data Gathering

The Prime II Project identified several different avenues of obtaining needs from multiple sources. What types of information should one reasonably expect from the following sources:

- Interviews?
- Expert panels?
- Direct observations?
- Surveys?
- Performance data?

Our information sources may be more or less useful depending on if we are developing a new system from scratch or modifying an existing system.

- Which of these methods are more suited for a new system? Why?
- Which of these methods are more suited for a system upgrade? Why?
- Which of these methods apply equally in both cases? Why?

Joint Application Design

Both the Calgary paper and Modell reference JAD, originally proposed by IBM.

- Is JAD true to its name, i.e. it is a design phase tool? Or is it strictly a requirements tool?
- What are the benefits of JAD?

- Under what conditions will those benefits be realized?
- Would these benefits be realized for our development project?

Interview Questions

Although it may be more of an art rather than a science, our readings give practical, specific guidance on formulating questions for an interview.

- What is an open ended question?
- What is a closed ended question?

The University of Calgary Data Gathering article says do **not** ask open ended questions while Modell Chapter 7 says ask **both** forms.

- Why do these two articles disagree?
- When should one ask open ended questions?
- When should one ask closed ended questions?

Interview Participants

Modell Chapter 7 talks about three different classes of interview participants: senior managers, subordinate managers, and staff.

- What type of development information should be obtained from each of these groups?
- What information should **not** be expected from each?

Smooth Interviews

The Calgary, University of Missouri, and Modell readings all mention tips for successful interviews. How do the following techniques increase the quality of an interview:

- Acceptance cues?
- Active listening?
- Neutrality?
- Restating responses?
- Sparse note taking?

Follow-Up

All interviews for record, and this includes those for assessing project needs, must include a follow-up activity of some sort.

- What is the purpose of follow-up?
- How is this different from a transcription?
- Should follow-up include open ended questions? Why or why not?

Survey Instruments

There are multiple information gathering techniques. Surveys are more appropriate for some types of information:

- What is the primary purpose of a survey?
- When should an analysis team use a survey?
- What are the risks of using open ended questions in a survey?
- What types of questions or wordings should be used in a survey? Avoided?

Vocabulary

Each English term in the following list has a specific, technical meaning. Determine the equivalent term in both Armenian and Russian and memorize the meaning (in your favorite language, of course ;]):

- Acceptance cue
- Active listening
- Assessment
- Barrier
- Closed ended question
- Concept mapping
- Cue
- Echo
- Emotional barrier

- Follow-up
- Formal
- Informal
- Information gathering
- Interview
- Joint Application Design
- Leading question
- Need
- Neutrality
- Open ended question
- Participant
- Restatement
- Survey instrument
- Unstructured
- Want