# Focusing on the Critical Few – The Gap Analysis
### Jesse Mendez, Founder of Trekker International

Congratulations --- You've been hired to build an enterprise-wide Talent Develop Organization (TDO) from the ground up. Or maybe you've been hired to revamp an existing TDO, probably the more likely scenario. But whatever the case, you have to create a starting point and move fast to develop a series of recommendations that build momentum towards your ultimate objective --- Building a high performing TDO.

It's a dream scenario for most learning professionals, think about it you finally get to put your stamp on an organization and build it the way you always thought it should be in the first place. Sounds good, right? That's the good news, the more challenging news is that you have about 90 days to prove you not only can develop a strategy for your new TDO, but you have to develop a budget and also make sure you are aligned with the strategy of the company, or at a minimum aligned with the strategic priorities of your top 2-3 most influential stakeholders.

This is where the gap analysis comes into play, a well-constructed gap analysis will help you pinpoint the most important priorities and will frame every major decision you make for the first twelve months you are in the role. When you get this piece of the equation right, you and your new TDO will be off and running. To construct a finely tuned gap analysis you need to be able to answer the following types of questions:

- What assets do I have in place today that we can build from and leverage?
- What are the 2-3 top business priorities for each of my major stakeholders?
- What are the key TDO inputs that form the basis for creating a scalable learning platform?
- Have I already been given an annual budget or am I being expected to propose a budget based on my initial TDO strategy proposal?
- What are the industry norms for my industry regarding training investment per person (IPP)?
- How much were they investing in training before you got there, how do they know, how do they account for it?

It's important to get the answers to these questions as quickly as possible, without them you are operating in the dark. Remember you are building a scalable enterprise learning platform, the temptation is to get attached to a major initiative like a sales training rollout and begin going full force to support the initiative. That's fine and could create some early wins for you, but if not careful you will jump from initiative to initiative and lose the opportunity to construct a truly cohesive and scalable platform. Eventually a key leader will say, it's great that we are doing all of this training but …. *You know how the sentence ends.*

**The Gap Analysis**

The kind of gap analysis I am talking about is framed around identifying the key inputs required to build a high performing and scalable TDO. Each organization will have nuances regarding what they value as inputs, you have to assess that for your organization, but in balance there are a few staples that can apply across a wide swath of organizations. Once you identify the key inputs, order the priority in terms of impact, and then propose a solution to close the gaps. The illustration below is an example of a gap analysis that depicts the inputs required (in this particular organization's case) and the order of priority required to close the most important gaps. In this scenario I define the most important gaps as those that will prohibit you from quickly building a scalable learning platform.

## Building a Scalable Learning Platform
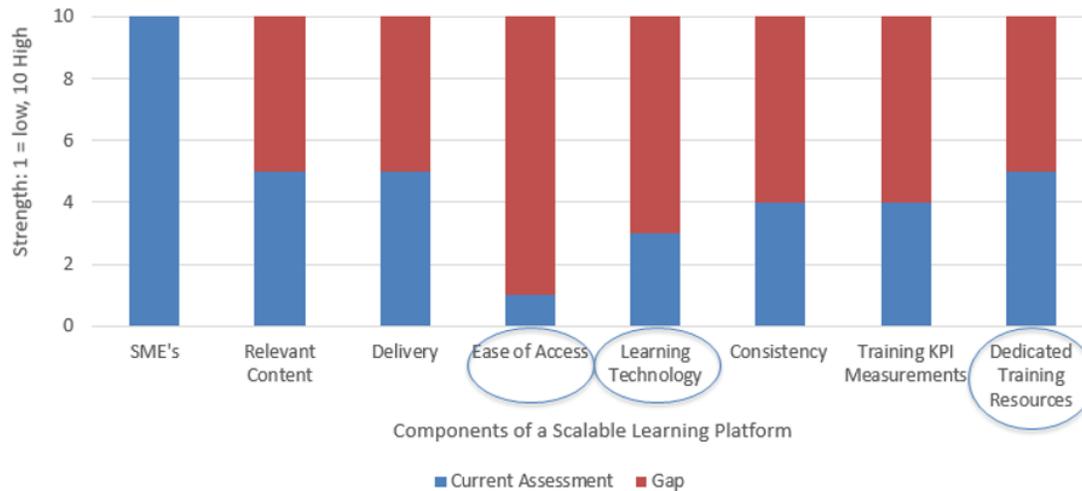
In the illustration you see that ease of access, learning technology and dedicated training resources were highlighted as the 3 most important priorities to attack immediately. If you answered the types of questions illustrated earlier, you can state with confidence that the priorities you've identified will accelerate the ability of the new TDO to support and drive the agenda of key stakeholders. In effect you are saying when we focus on these 3, we can improve significantly on the other inputs identified. Remember every input is important --- but not equally important at the outset. Now you can also build a budget that targets and focuses on the most important priorities. You still have to get buy-in from key leaders, but that is much more likely and easier to get done because they know you are recommending solutions and actions that will directly impact their agenda.

**Act Now**

- *30 days of discovery* --- Don't spend more than 30-45 days on your initial discovery process
- *90 Days* --- You have 60-90 days to develop a cohesive strategy for building your new TDO
- *The right inputs, the right priorities* --- Use a visual illustration to demonstrate the inputs required to build your TDO and then order the top 3
- *Get Started* --- You have to roll up your sleeves and do whatever it takes to build your TDO --- Strategist, Content Writer, Trainer, Budget Person, Team Coach --- you will wear many hats but don't lose sight of the real prize --- Building a High Performing TDO that positively impacts the growth of your organization

*Jesse Mendez is the founder of Trekker International and has built Talent Development Organizations from the ground up for multibillion-dollar organizations and has traveled the globe working with leaders to help people and businesses alike reach their full potential.*