



Association for  
Talent Development

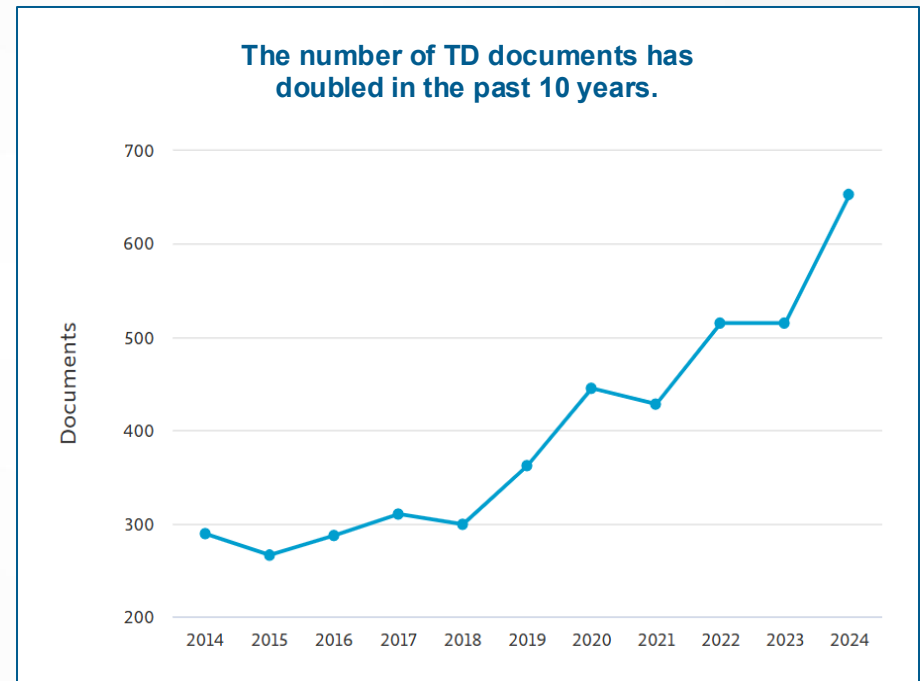
# Building a Talent Development Structure Without Borders 2.0



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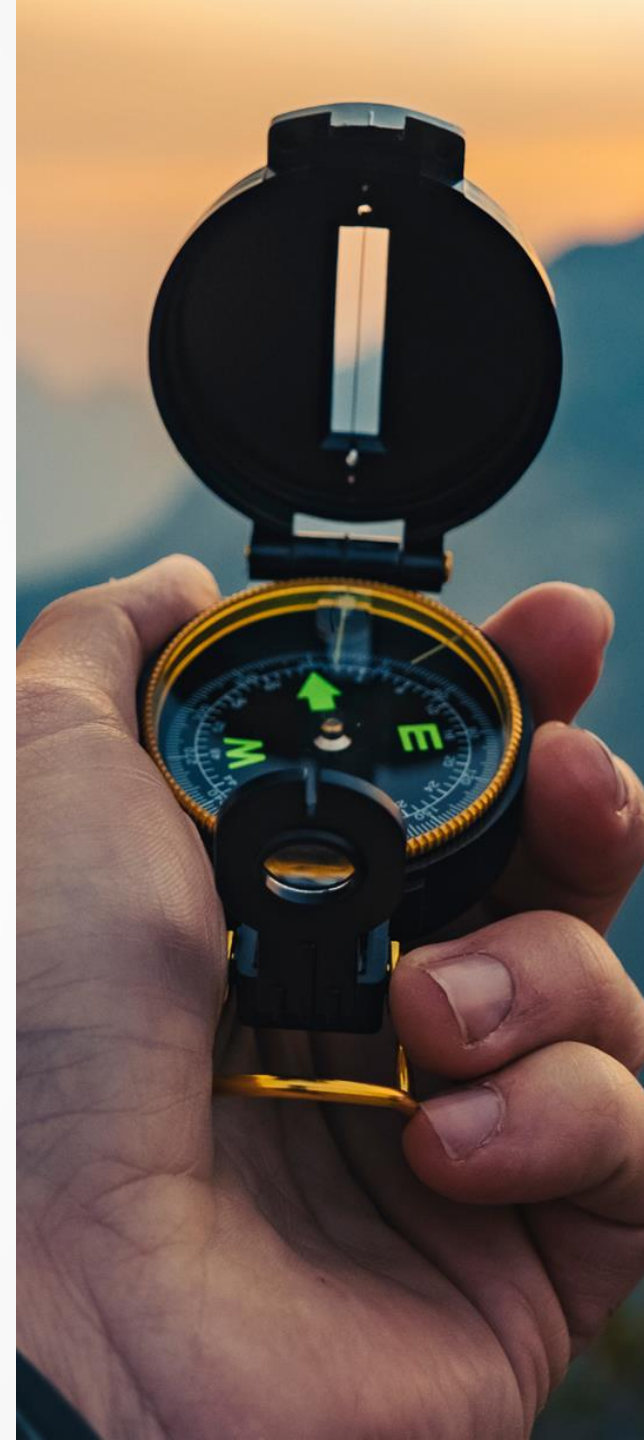
# Introduction

Talent development (TD) is central to advancing strategic goals, sustaining competitive advantage, and building organizational agility in an increasingly dynamic business environment. Since 2014, there has been a significant increase in literature on talent management and talent development, with annual publications nearly tripling. This surge signals a widespread acknowledgment across industries that effective talent strategies have become a strategic necessity rather than a discretionary effort. As organizations respond to accelerating technological change, global market shifts, and evolving workforce demographics, the emphasis on developing and managing talent has intensified. The expanding body of academic and practitioner-focused work points to a clear consensus—well-executed talent initiatives are key to improving employee engagement, retention, and capability, all of which are critical drivers of long-term organizational performance.



In 2015, in partnership with Rothwell & Associates, ATD published groundbreaking research that named and defined 39 talent development functions in a broad framework. The original study was intended to be a guide that allowed organizations to rearrange, remove, and add functions to fit their needs.

In this updated study, ATD, along with Rothwell & Associates, determined that some of the original 39 talent development functions were no longer relevant to the field—and were able to parse the 39 to 18 functions. This should provide talent development departments with a lens to focus on effectively developing employees, while keeping the larger organizational strategy and goals in mind. The purpose of this research is to describe the functions of talent development that organizations can use to build their own individualized talent development structures.



The ATD talent development framework is intended to be a guide. It's okay if your organization doesn't prioritize all 18 functions. It's also possible that your organization prioritizes functions that aren't listed in this new framework. These 18 functions are not required to be a strong department or organization. Every organization is different, so do what is best for your organization. Talent development is an evolving discipline, that is influenced by so many outside factors.

Since 2015, the world has changed, and that means talent development has also had to transform. Between changes in the world economy, the pandemic, and the rise in AI (just to name a few factors), all of these have influenced how organizations are developing, retaining, and inspiring employees to achieve organizational goals and strategies.



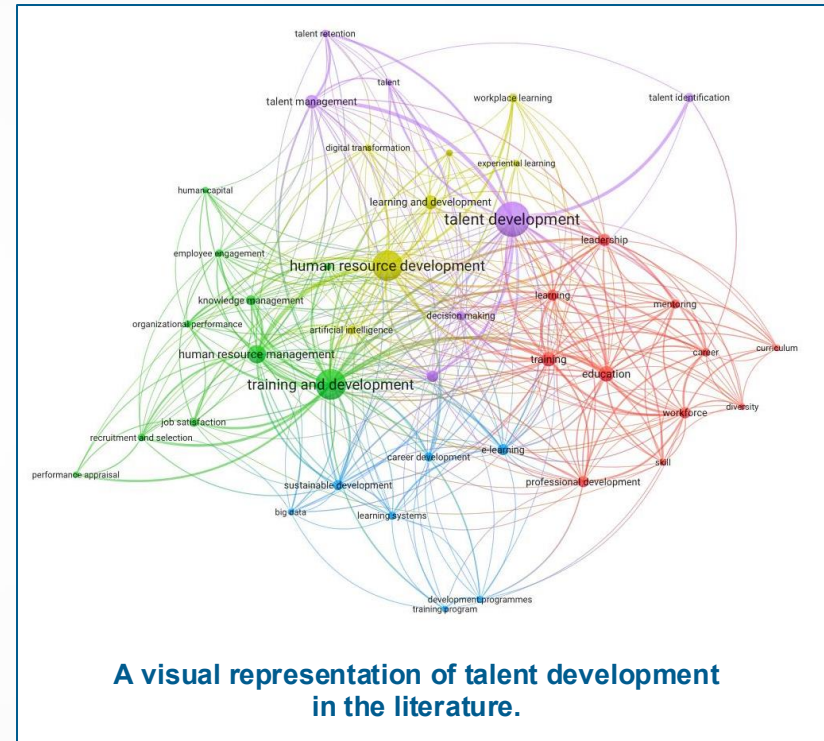
# Talent Development Trends From the Literature

# Trends

Talent development is an imperative function to have a successful business strategy. Over the past 10 years, talent development has become a focal point of academic and professional interest. To examine the field's intellectual structure and thematic evaluation, the research team conducted a bibliometric analysis of the literature between 2014 and 2024. A bibliometric analysis is a rigorous method of using statistical analysis to track trends in the literature. In their study, they found over 4,000 records of talent development in journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, and books. Based on these 4,000 records, the team identified three central thematic clusters of information in the literature:

- Training and Development
- Human Resources Development
- Talent Development

These themes are interconnected but sufficiently distinct to warrant individual attention. Let's take a look at each theme.



# Training & Development

Training & development (T&D) focuses on strengthening employee skills through structured learning initiatives such as curriculum design, on-the-job training, and the use of digital technologies. Emerging trends like e-learning, data analytics, and personalized learning reflect a shift toward scalable and adaptive approaches. Although instructional design was not prominently featured in the dataset, related areas such as experiential learning, learning systems, and performance improvement were frequently cited. These concepts suggest a growing interest in how learning affects both individual performance and organizational outcomes, reinforcing training as a continuous, data-informed process.



# Human Resources Development

Human resource development (HRD) serves as a strategic umbrella that integrates employee development, organizational learning, and cultural change. Key areas include professional development, human capital, knowledge management, and performance appraisal, all aimed at enhancing both individual and organizational effectiveness. Organizational development and employee engagement are central, reflecting the connection between workplace experience and company values.



# Talent Development

Talent development (TD) plays a central role in linking an organization's long-term workforce goals with the career growth of its employees. It encompasses several important areas such as identifying talent, developing leadership potential, planning for succession, and retaining key personnel. Research shows a growing emphasis on building strong internal pipelines to prepare high-potential individuals for future leadership roles (Rothwell, 2015). In addition, coaching and mentoring are frequently cited as essential practices for cultivating leadership skills, strengthening employee commitment, and advancing diversity and inclusion within the workplace (Rothwell & Chee, 2013).



# Trends

Through an analysis of the literature, a few trends became apparent in talent development.

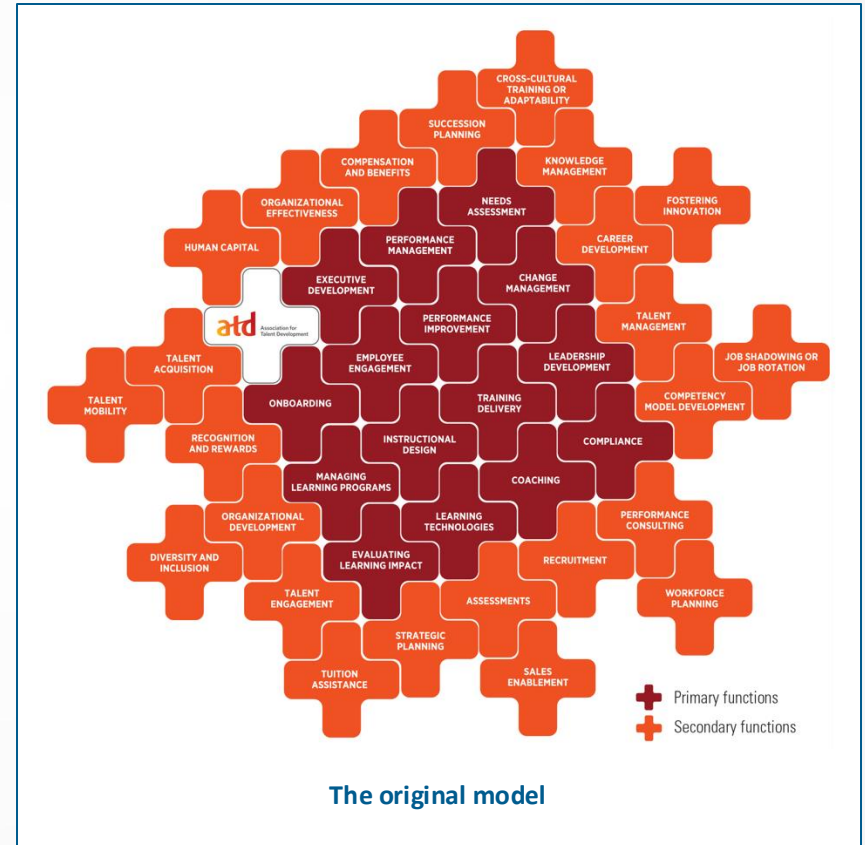
1. Talent development must be embedded within strategic planning structures of an organization. Cross-functional collaboration plays a critical role in keeping TD initiatives relevant and integrated.
2. Talent development should consider relying on a governance body to evaluate, adjust, and prioritize TD initiatives.
3. Talent development should use a data-driven approach to decision making. TD leaders are making stronger connections between learning outcomes and specific organizational goals.
4. Talent development needs to clarify the scope and ownership of the TD function at their organization. Using the model in the next section may help organizations determine what is part of their functions.



# Talent Development Functions Model

# The Original Model

In 2015, ATD published 39 functions in a broad general framework. The functions were arranged into two categories based on how central they were to the talent development structure—primary functions and secondary functions. Primary functions were tasks that take the majority of a TD professional's time. Secondary functions were tasks that take up some of a TD professional's time.

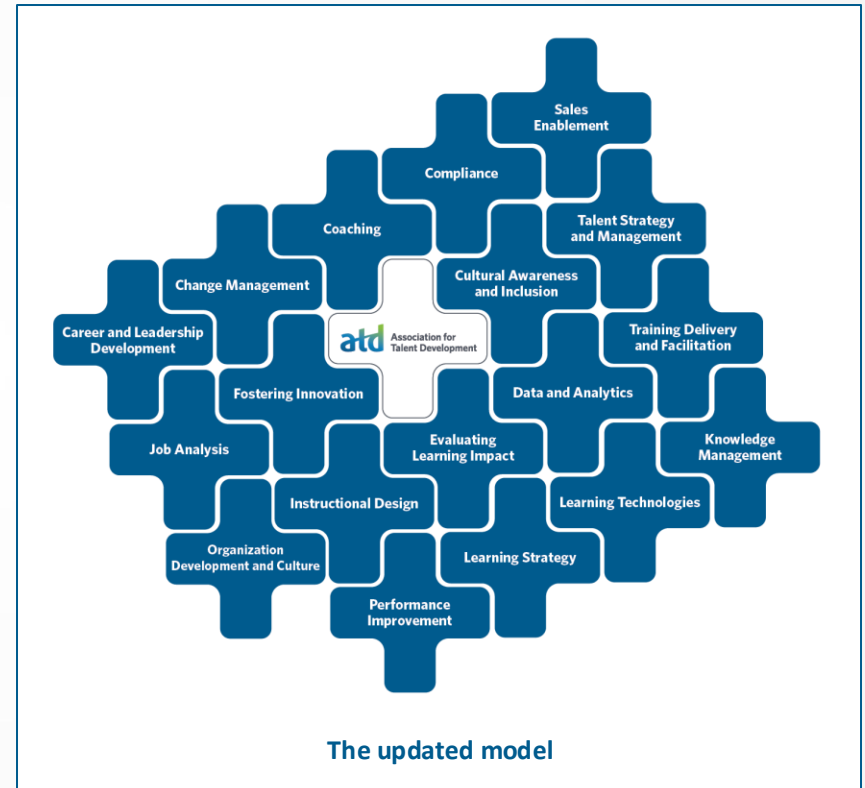


# The Updated Model

The updated model has 18 functions in a broad general framework. In this model, there are supporting functions for some of the main functions.

Every organization is different—so some of the supporting functions might be primary functions at your organization. This model is meant to be fluid so that you can establish the talent development structure that best fits with your organizational goals and strategies.

TD professionals are invited to build their own TD puzzle by visiting [puzzle.td.org/](http://puzzle.td.org/).



# Defining the Terms

For the talent development industry to be cohesive, we need to have clear definitions of each of the functions. This allows us to have a shared understanding of what terms mean, so that the talent development industry is unified. ATD has published the *TDBoK™ Guide: Talent Development Body of Knowledge* to be a comprehensive collection of concepts and definitions that “lay the foundation and guiding principles for those who develop talent in the workplace.” Many of the definitions used for the 18 functions are directly taken from the TDBoK Guide.

**Career and Leadership Development.** Career development is a planned interaction process between an organization and an individual that allows the employee to grow within the organization. Leadership development is any activity that increases an individual’s leadership ability or an organization’s leadership capability, including activities such as learning events, mentoring, coaching, self-study, job rotation, and special assignments to develop the knowledge and skills required to lead. Supporting functions include tuition assistance, executive development, job shadowing, and job rotation. When asked, 78 percent of TD professionals said career development was very important and 85 percent said leadership development was very important.



**Change Management.** Change management is the process for enabling change within an organization by using structured approaches to shift individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a future state. Seventy one percent of TD professionals said this is an important function at their organization.

**Coaching.** Coaching, as defined by the International Coaching Federation (ICF), is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential. When asked, 60 percent of TD professionals said coaching is an important function.

**Compliance.** Compliance is an action that is mandated by a law, agency, or policy outside an organization's purview. It is generally accompanied by a training program requirement. Supporting functions include compliance training, accessibility, and professional ethics. When asked, 61 percent of TD professionals said compliance was an important function at their organization.

**Cultural Awareness and Inclusion.** Cultural awareness and inclusion refers to the ability to convey respect for different perspectives, backgrounds, customs, abilities, and behavior norms, as well as ensure all employees are respected and involved by leveraging their capabilities, insights, and ideas. Supporting functions include cross cultural training. This is an updated function to the new model.



**Data and Analytics.** Data is the unstructured facts and numbers that are specific but not organized in any way. Data has no context and is limited by direct experience or interaction. Analytics is the discovery and communication of meaningful patterns in data; for example, talent management analytics refers to the use of HR and talent data to improve business performance. This is an updated function to the new model.

**Evaluating Learning Impact.** Evaluating the impact of talent development programs is correlated with learning and business effectiveness. Talent development professionals should be able to implement a multilevel, systematic method for gathering, analyzing, and reporting on information about the effectiveness and effort of learning programs. Collecting data relevant to business strategies and goals helps decision making, improves learning programs, and increases the value proposition of learning with senior leaders and business stakeholders. Supporting functions include assessments.

**Fostering Innovation.** Innovation is the act of translating a new method, product, or idea into a service or goods that create value. More than half of TD professionals said fostering innovation is a very important function at their organization.



**Instructional Design.** Instructional design is an essential element of an effective learning effort. The creation of learning experiences and materials is what results in the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills. Supporting functions include needs assessments. Two-thirds of TD professionals said instructional design was very important function.

**Job Analysis.** Job analysis identifies all duties and job responsibilities, as well as the respective tasks completed on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis that make up a single job function or role. This is an updated function to the model.

**Knowledge Management.** Knowledge management is a systematic approach to achieving organizational goals by creating, capturing, curating, sharing, and managing an organization's knowledge to ensure the right information and knowledge flow to the right people at the right time in the right way for the right reasons. Sixty-five percent of TD professionals said this was a very important function at their organization.

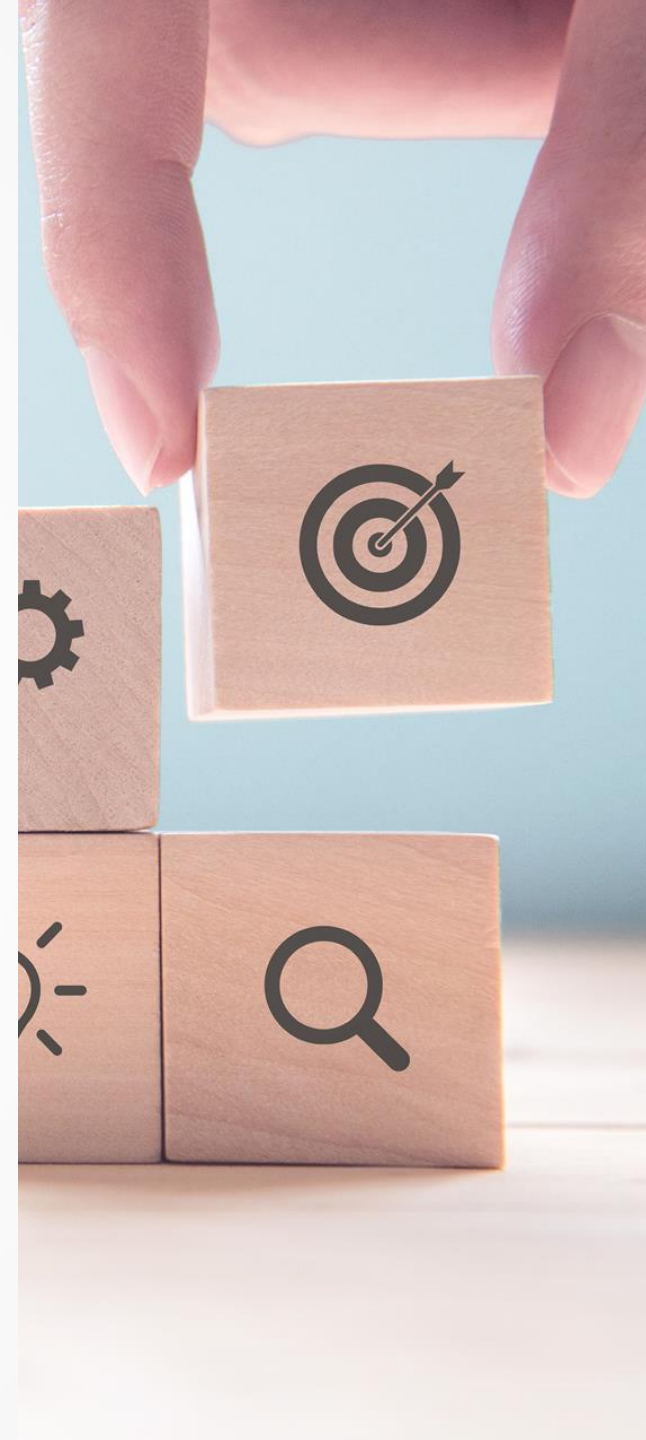
**Learning Technologies.** Learning technologies refers to the tools, platforms, systems, applications, and software used to enable an organization's talent development strategy. This can include resources for administration, content authoring, training delivery, assessment, and talent development. More than half of TD professionals said learning technologies is a very important function at their organization.



**Learning Strategy.** Learning strategy is what an organization needs to know and do to achieve its overall business value and reach its goals. Supporting functions include upskilling and reskilling, learning initiatives, and cross functional collaboration/business partnering. This is an updated function to the model.

**Organization Development and Culture.** Organization development is the process of developing an organization so that it's more effective in achieving its business goals. OD uses planned initiatives to develop the systems, structures, and process in the organization to improve effectiveness. Organizational culture is the unspoken pattern of values, assumptions, and beliefs that guide the behavior, attitudes, and practices of people in an organization. Supporting functions include organizational effectiveness and employee engagement. More than 50 percent of TD professionals said organization development is a very important function at their organization.

**Performance Improvement.** Performance improvement is a holistic and systematic approach to meeting organizational goals by identifying and closing human performance gaps. Supporting functions include performance consulting. More than three-quarters of TD professionals said performance important is a very important function at their organization.



**Sales Enablement.** Sales enablement supports a sales team in achieving its goals by providing it with the tools and resources it needs to win. The discipline spans sales strategy, sales training, coaching, content creation, process improvement, sales career development, and sales compensation, among other areas. Nearly a quarter of TD professionals said sales enablement is a very important function at their organization.

**Talent Strategy and Management.** Talent strategy and management is the practices used to build an organization's culture, engagement, capability, and capacity through the implementation and integration of talent acquisition, employee development, retention, and deployment processes, ensuring these processes are aligned to organizational goals. Supporting functions include talent acquisition, talent engagement, human capital, strategic planning, succession planning, performance management, workforce planning, onboarding, talent mobility, and talent management. This is an updated function to the model.

**Training Delivery and Facilitation.** Training delivery and facilitation is a means by which TD professionals help individuals improve performance at work by learning new skills and knowledge. The practitioner serves as a catalyst for learning by understanding the learner's needs, creating the right environment for learning, building rapport with participants, and using the appropriate delivery options and media to make learning engaging, effective, relevant, and applicable. More than four in five TD professionals said training delivery is a very important function at their organization.



# How Are the ATD Capability Model and the TD Functions Model Related?

ATD's Talent Development Capability Model™ is a framework to guide the TD profession in what practitioners need to know and how to develop themselves, others, and their organization. You'll notice that there is overlap between the Capability Model and the TD Functions Model. This is intentional. The skills and capabilities that TD professionals need to be competent in their role are going to be similar to the functions and responsibilities of the department. For example, TD professionals need to understand knowledge management. They need to know the principles of it, methods and techniques, be able to implement a knowledge management strategy, and have skills in facilitating communities of practice. These are skills at the individual level for the TD professional to learn about and ultimately become a knowledge management expert. As a department, knowledge management might be the responsibility of the TD department. This means that it is the department's responsibility to create, gather, categorize, disseminate, and use intellectual capital to help the organization achieve their business goals.

When there is harmony between the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of the individual TD professional and the responsibilities of the TD department, this sets the TD department up for success. A successful TD department can help the organization achieve their business goals and strategies.



# Advice From the Experts

# KnowBe4, Inc.

*Dr. John N. Just, Chief Learning Officer*

In the rapidly advancing world, cybersecurity is a critical function of all organizations. KnowBe4, “is the world’s first and largest New-school Security Awareness Training and simulated phishing platform that helps you manage the ongoing problem of social engineering”. Like many organizations, they face the challenge of aligning their talent development strategy with their corporate objectives. As external factors like AI disruptions, hybrid work models, and the changing learning preferences of employees emerged, the company needed to prioritize and refine its approach to talent development. According to CLO, Dr. John Just, talent development is an “active investment in the workforce” to maximize their capability “to execute on the organization’s mission.” Viewing talent as an investment, executive leadership focuses on maximizing workforce potential rather than merely managing administrative tasks. This shift ensured that talent development remained a core business function rather than an HR obligation.



# KnowBe4, Inc.

*Dr. John N. Just, Chief Learning Officer*

To enhance learning engagement, KnowBe4 embraced microlearning, event-driven coaching, and in-house AI-driven tools like Jarvis (an AI-based sales coach that could be interacted with and conduct role-playing), offering structured, on-demand learning. Prioritization was driven by “ROI-based calculations” to ensure accountability and alignment with company goals. This approach supported the business cases and strengthened their ability to secure board support, as they aligned every initiative with measurable returns.

Dr. Just explained the value of conducting annual focus groups with internal customers to validate trends, uncover blind spots, and bridge the gap between leadership assumptions and worker experiences. By asking open-ended, unbiased questions, they gathered invaluable insights and shaped effective learning and development strategies.



# GS Caltex

*Byong Yun Kim, Senior Manager,  
HRD Team Leader*

With more than 20 years of experience in human resource development, Byong has played a key role in evolving talent strategies at GS Caltex's Yeosu Plant. After early career roles at LG International, CJ, and Deloitte, he began leading the HRD and industrial relations teams in 2011. Overseeing a team of seven, he has shifted the company's focus from traditional promotion-based development to a more inclusive and strategic approach.

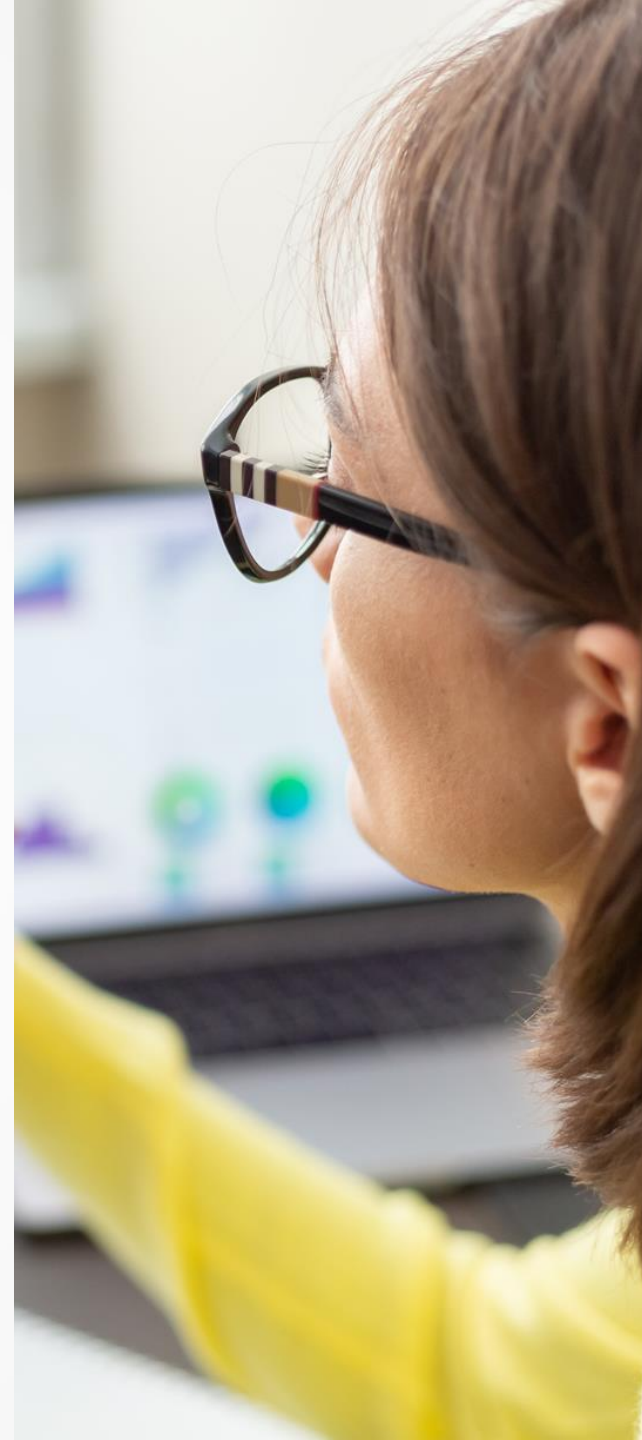
At GS Caltex, talent now encompasses both high-potential employees and consistent high performers. Byong's emphasis on developing the latter reflects a long-term view of workforce growth. Talent development is integrated with performance evaluations, competency assessments, and career progression, blending with talent management to create a cohesive HR strategy. As the industry confronts digital disruption and environmental challenges, Byong has led efforts to upskill employees in areas like simulation-based training, digital twins, and AI-driven analytics. He also addresses knowledge retention by promoting cross-generational learning and industry benchmarking through global insight trips.



# GS Caltex

*Byong Yun Kim, Senior Manager,  
HRD Team Leader*

Operating within a hybrid structure, the Yeosu HRD team manages technical training independently while aligning with corporate-wide talent goals. Leadership development has also evolved, replacing the “Energy Leadership Model” with the more agile and collaborative “Wadership Model.” Amid increasing outsourcing, Byong ensures that core expertise is preserved while external partners are effectively integrated. His strategic leadership continues to position talent development as a vital force in GS Caltex’s adaptability and resilience.



# Navy Federal Credit Union

## *Mike Kosiarek, Vice President of Learning & Talent Development*

As Navy Federal Credit Union expanded to 24,000 employees, its talent strategy had to evolve to keep pace. “We can’t operate like a 5,000-person company anymore—we have to scale our talent strategy to match our growth,” explains Mike Kosiarek, vice president of learning & talent development. Recognizing this, Navy Federal Credit Union launched the Integrated Talent Strategy, a multi-year initiative designed to align talent development with business objectives.

The philosophy is built around six key principles: performance, leadership behaviors, differentiation, accountability, transparency, and continuous development—all serving as the organization’s “North Star” for managing talent.



# Navy Federal Credit Union

*Mike Kosiarek, Vice President of  
Learning & Talent Development*

To balance structure with flexibility, they have centralized talent management processes while adopting a federated learning model. Business units handle their operational training, while broad-based skills, leadership, and career development remain centralized. The company is also prioritizing skills-based development, investing in AI, data literacy, and cloud computing. They embraced digital learning platforms like LinkedIn Learning, Pluralsight, and Datacamp, focusing their TD resources on more strategic, high-value initiatives, Kosiarek explained. The Talent Development (TD) Framework (puzzle cards) “are really useful because they spur and generate dialogue ... and we can reflect against when we think about our operating models.”



# Methodology

# Methodology

With the help of Rothwell & Associates, ATD collected qualitative and quantitative data from talent development professionals. Data collection methods included an online survey and in-depth interviews.

Data from the survey was used to create an updated model. The survey had a sample size of 158 respondents.

Seven in-depth interviews were conducted to create a comprehensive understanding the role of talent development at a variety of organizations.

ATD Forum members and CTDO Next members were asked for their opinions to validate the new TD functions model. Thirteen members provided feedback on if the updated functions aligned with the responsibilities of their team or department.

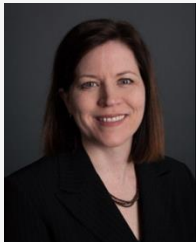
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# Research Team



**Jennifer Homer** is the vice president of career development for the Association for Talent Development (ATD), a global association serving learning and talent development professionals. In this role, Jennifer leads multiple functions including communications, governance, research, and the association's awards and recognition programs. She also works closely with ATD's content team and the ATD Certification Institute's credentialing programs. Jennifer has been with ATD for 25 years.



**Rocki Basel, PhD** is the director of research for the Association for Talent Development (ATD). Prior to joining ATD, she was a researcher for other national membership organizations. Her research interests include workplace culture, employee engagement, mental health, and organizational communication. She has a PhD in communication studies from Kent State University.



**William J. Rothwell, PhD, DBA, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, CPTD® Fellow, RODC, FLMI**, is a distinguished professor at Penn State with more than 300 publications. He is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Organization Development Network and Thomas F. Gilbert Distinguished Professional Achievement Award from ISPI. He was one of the original researchers of the ATD's Talent Development Framework.

# Research Team



**Aileen G. Zaballero** PhD, CPTD<sup>®</sup>, is a certified professional in talent development with more than 25 years of experience as an instructional designer, learning consultant and researcher. She was one of the original researchers of the ATD's Talent Development Framework.



**Farhan Sadique**, PhD, assistant professor at Kansas State University, provides consulting, training, and research expertise in organization development, workforce education, and microlearning, delivering evidence-based outcomes to strengthen leadership and organizational effectiveness.



**Jong Gyu Park**, PhD, is an assistant professor of management at the Chazanoff School of Business, College of Staten Island, City University of New York (CUNY). His research focuses on leadership, team dynamics, and organization development.

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