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Lost Focus?

I have been a reader of *T+D* magazine...for well over a half century. In recent years, I have seen a slow and steady movement away from individual learning in the workplace to other areas such as organization learning. I'm not against including other areas, but it seems that we have lost the major focus of the field.

Recently, I read an article (in another publication) that seemed to be right on target. It said: "The most obvious, and in the global economy most necessary, solution...is worker training. The Trade Adjustment Assistance program provides assistance to workers displaced by NAFTA-related factory closings; a similar program could easily be crafted to respond to off-shore outsourcing. Requiring companies that outsource to contribute a portion of savings to training would internalize the costs and provide the funds. And job training would not only alleviate periods of protracted unemployment, by making workers more agile, but also make the U.S. economy more efficient and productive. Thanks to its combination of high-job mobility and a highly educated workforce, one of the U.S. economy's greatest strengths is its ability to reemploy workers quickly without dramatic cuts in their wages. And, thanks to that flexibility, notes the McKinsey report, 'Over the past 10 years, the

U.S. economy has created a total of 35 million new private sector jobs.' It would be ironic if, in an effort to protect jobs, we closed off one of the most powerful means by which they are created." That appeared in the *New Republic* (February 2, 2004, page 12).

When ASTD moved to Washington, D.C., many years ago, one major reason was to be close to the decision-making arms of government (as well as some of the lobbyists of the private sector). A close reading of the words from the *New Republic* could provide a beacon to where ASTD can be revitalized in the current marketplace.

*Leonard Nadler
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A Seat at the Table

Excellent article by Kevin Oakes [E-Learning, February]. I enjoyed it, and agree with it totally.

I am a trainer, ex-sales manager, consultant, etc. The organizations that struggle are the ones whose employees do not understand their role or contribution. Often, it is never told to them. Sins, either way.

Try working in higher ed. Faculty believe they are the only reason the school exists. Staff believe the place couldn't run without them. Both groups are correct, to a point. Students, the customers, make the world turn.

If you want to know what's in our future, I recommend *Millennials Go to College* by Howe and Strauss. It's enlightening.

*Michael H. Baker
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I just read [Oakes's] article. It really brought home some of the things I need to learn about and become better at. I graduated with a business degree but went into teaching for eight years, only to start back in business two years ago as a trainer. Now I'm in management, and the things Oakes talks about—such as reducing expenses, improving customer satisfaction—are [relevant] for me. Some of my colleagues...talk about how this isn't part of their job, but I agree with Oakes. We need to focus on these things to make an impact on the company. I need to start gathering the data to make my case...and coordinate it with my colleagues. I'm looking forward to the challenge!

It was a timely and thought-provoking article.

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Correction

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act is misspelled "Sarbanes-Oxley" in Sam Adkin's article "Beneath the Tip of the Iceberg" (February). We regret the error.