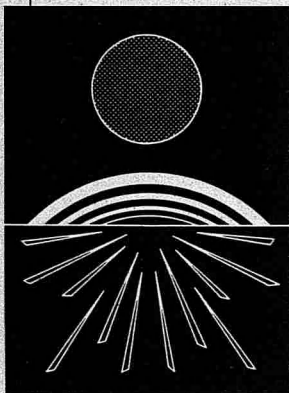


MODELS FOR EXCELLENCE:

The Results of the ASTD Training and Development Competency Study

By PATRICIA A. McLAGAN and DAVID BEDRICK



In 1981, the ASTD Board of Directors charged the Professional Development Committee to "produce a detailed and updatable definition of excellence in the training and development field in a form that will be useful to and used as a standard of professional performance and development by ASTD, organizations, educational institutions, training and development departments and individuals practicing or expecting to practice in the training and development field."

Since then, more than one thousand people have participated in various phases of a study which included eight questionnaires, reviews of more than 20 past studies and formal and informal reviews by human resource and training and development leaders, professors, ASTD officials and ASTD chapters.

The study methodology

Methodology and research design are crucial in any em-

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pirical investigation. The competency study comprised many individual studies having unique methodological considerations. Each study produced either a product or input to a later step, or both.

Step 1: Determining roles

This important first step determined the roles to be used as the units of analysis for the entire competency study.

Method: Through a literature review and reviews by several groups, a draft list of roles was created. A sample of 70 field experts then judged the exhaustiveness and level of these roles.

Additional evidence: An analysis of data collected on outputs and competencies both demonstrated uniqueness of the functions and competencies of the final 15 roles.

Step 2: Determining environmental effects

A description of the effect of environmental change on the T&D field was to be a product of the study. In addition, we believed information should be available as background to study participants in later steps. Due to the diversity and complexity of these environmental variables, the identification of forces required a unique sample of experts and became a separate study.

Method: To construct an initial list of changing environmental conditions, the study team reviewed literature and sent a questionnaire to the study review

team and the ASTD Professional Development Committee. The questionnaire asked respondents to list conditions and their implications for the training and development field. The conditions were then clustered into 11 force categories.

A second questionnaire asked the study review team and the Professional Development Committee to add, delete and edit the categories and conditions.

Additional evidence: A third questionnaire was designed which required respondents to assign probabilities to the future conditions. This questionnaire went to the study review team, the Professional Development Committee and a selected group of experts. Those conditions assigned probabilities greater than .75 by more than 50 percent of the respondents composed the final list of future conditions.

Step 3: Identification of outputs

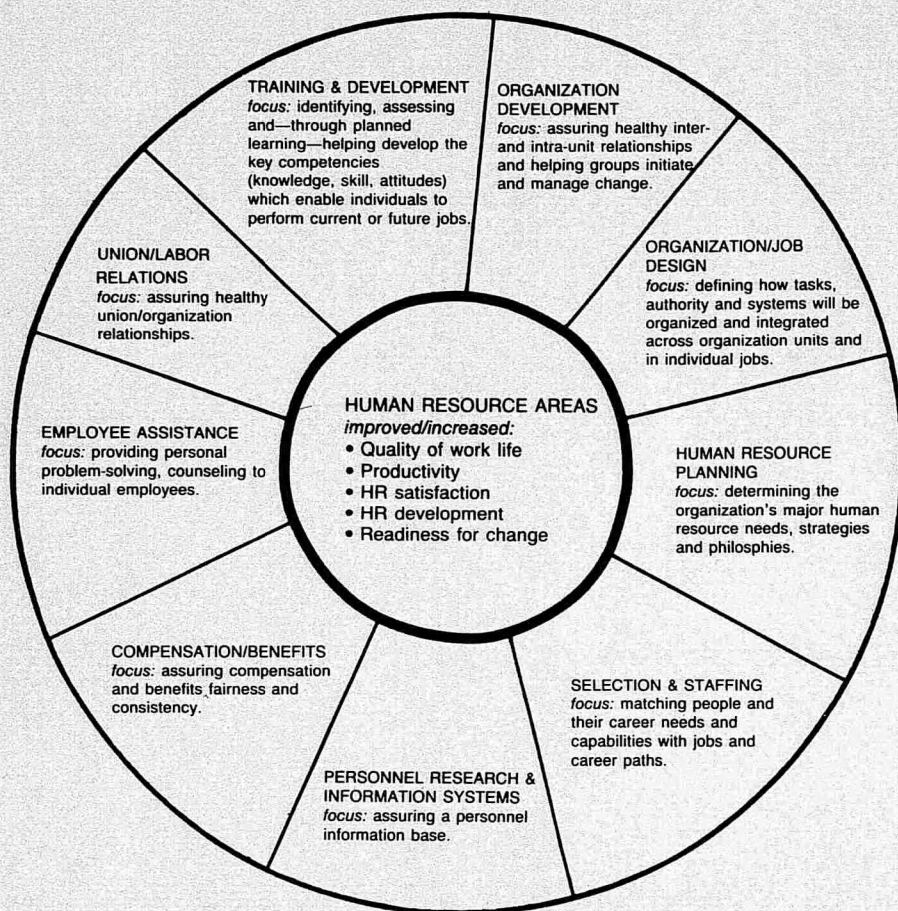
A list of the outputs produced by the training and development field was a study product as well as a resource for later steps.

Method: Through a literature review, the study team drafted a list of outputs. The study review board and the Professional Development Committee sorted outputs to roles. These outputs were sent to role experts whose task was to delete, add and edit outputs. These were edited by the Professional Development Committee and used in Step 4.

Additional evidence: More than 50 percent of the role experts for



Figure 1: Human Resource Wheel



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Elementary Linkage Analysis, identified a very similar grouping. *Step 6: Creation of behavioral anchors*

An adaptation of Smith and Kendall's (1963) method was used to develop validating behavioral anchors. The major difference was that our study described competencies rather than behavioral dimensions.

Method: Initially, behavioral anchors were provided by participants representing roles judged to require expert levels of competency. They were reviewed and edited by eight experts.

Additional evidence: In a traditional retranslation, a new group of experts assigned the randomized anchors to competencies and levels. Anchors appropriately assigned to a competency by more than 65 percent of the people were retained.

Products of the study

The study has produced nine products for use by training and development practitioners, managers, professors, ASTD and other adult education and training-related associations and people who want to enter the training and development field. These products are:

1. A human resource wheel
2. A definition of the training and development field
3. A list of 34 highly probable future forces expected to affect work in the field
4. A list of 15 training and development roles
5. A list of 102 important outputs of training and development work
6. A behaviorally anchored competency model for the training and development field
7. Profiles describing the outputs and competencies important for each role
8. Four role clusters
9. A matrix of roles and competencies

Product 1: A Human Resource Wheel. The study team was charged to define the training and development field. Since it is one of many human resource specialty areas, we began to

each role agreed on the future criticality of a total of 102 outputs.

Step 4: Identification of competencies and their relation to roles

This was the major element used to describe roles. Criticality and level of competency were considered for each role, allowing them to be profiled on level of critical competencies.

Method: The project team reviewed past research for lists of knowledges, skills, abilities, tasks and outputs which were used to generate and infer a draft list of knowledges and skills that were then rationally clustered into competency areas. Role experts edited, added and deleted competencies, then rated the criticality and level of expertise required of each competency for their assigned roles. Both criticality and level were determined by the percent of people

who rated a competency at or above a specified level. Only those competencies agreed to be critical by more than 60 percent were retained for each role.

Additional evidence: Further evidence of the importance of the initial competencies was that every competency was critical for at least one role.

Step 5: Study of competencies and their relation to each other

Similarities and differences were examined in order to create useful groupings of roles that had similar competency requirements.

Method: Several analyses, including a factor analysis and cluster analysis, were performed to cluster the roles. The clusters found in the study report were identified by imposing a criterion of a minimum correlation of .5 among all roles within a cluster.

Additional evidence: Another clustering technique, Mcquitty's

define the field by describing the larger arena of which it is a part. Through a series of questionnaires sent to senior human resource professionals, we identified and defined the major human resource areas, specialties or fields. A human resource wheel is the result of this effort. It defines nine human resource practice areas. These areas interrelate through their concern for human resource productivity, satisfaction, development, readiness to change and work life quality. Each area has a different focus, however, and uses unique technologies. An individual may perform roles in one or several of these nine areas. Their focuses are different enough, however, to justify separating the areas for analysis purposes.

Product 2: A Definition of Training and Development. The second conclusion of the study is that training and development's

unique focus is "identifying, assessing—and through planned learning—helping develop the key competencies which enable individuals to perform current or future jobs." The key words here are: "individuals" (the focus of T&D interventions is the individual, not, as in organization development, the group); "learning" (the mode of change is not, for example, group problem-solving); and "current or future jobs" (training and development includes, by this definition, career development).

Product 3: A List of 34 Forces Expected to Affect T&D Practices. Since the goal of our research was to develop a study that would be "useful and used," and since individuals and organizations would use the study results in the future, it was important to predict the conditions which would probably affect training and development work

during the next five years. Thirty-four forces in seven categories emerged during this phase of the study. They are:

Technological

- Proliferation and accessibility of computer technology
- Faster, cheaper real-time communication (teleconferencing, electronic mail)
- More interactive video usable for large-scale learning applications
- Broad range of specialized programming carried by cable TV
- Increase in visibility and availability of production technology (robotics, office automation, etc.)
- Increased use of personal computers
- More importance placed on technical/computer competencies
- Increase in areas to be studied resulting from technological advances

Organizational

- Increased effort (dollars and time) spent on improving productivity
- Increased size of the service industry relative to the total economy
- Increased industry sophistication

Educational System

- Increased number of training/educational programs to develop the HRD professional
- Increased availability of high quality, packaged educational programs
- Increase in flexible (relative to client need) packaged educational programs
- Increased number of teachers seeking jobs in industry as opposed to educational institutions

Learning

- More knowledge available about human learning and motivation
- Increase in technologies that facilitate learning
- Increased need for expanded thinking models to organize vast amounts of information
- Increased dominance of information processing as the major learning model

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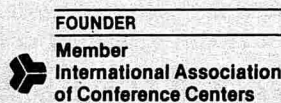
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Table 1: 15 Training and Development Roles

- Evaluator:** The role of identifying the extent of a program, service or product's impact
- Group Facilitator:** The role of managing group discussions and group process so that individuals learn and group members feel the experience is positive
- Individual Development Counselor:** The role of helping an individual assess personal competencies, values and goals and identify and plan development and career actions
- Instructional Writer:** The role of preparing written learning and instructional materials
- Instructor:** The role of presenting information and directing structured learning experiences so that individuals learn
- Manager of Training and Development:** The role of planning, organizing, staffing, controlling training and development operations or training and development projects and of linking T&D operations with other organization units
- Marketer:** The role of selling training and development viewpoints, learning packages, programs and services to target audiences outside one's own work unit
- Media Specialist:** The role of producing software for and using audio, visual, computer and other hardware-based technologies for training and development
- Needs Analyst:** The role of defining gaps between ideal and actual performance and specifying the cause of the gaps
- Program Administrator:** The role of ensuring that the facilities, equipment, materials, participants and other components of a learning event are present and that program logistics run smoothly
- Program Designer:** The role of preparing objectives, defining content, selecting and sequencing activities for a specific program
- Strategist:** The role of developing long range plans for what the training and development structure, organization, direction, policies, programs, services and practices will be in order to accomplish the training and development mission
- Task Analyst:** Identifying activities, tasks, sub-tasks, human resource and support requirements necessary to accomplish specific results in a job or organization
- Theoretician:** The role of developing and testing theories of learning, training and development
- Transfer Agent:** The role of helping individuals apply learning after the learning experience

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and adjust the competency model and other study products to support any new visions for the field.

Product 4: Fifteen Training and Development Roles. Training and development work is structured many ways. In some organizations, the work individuals perform is highly specialized (e.g., some people only train or instruct, while others only research). In others, training and development generalists perform a broad range of functions. In order to define the field in a manner useful for a broad range of situations, the study team reviewed past studies and future predictions and then proposed that 21 roles (functions, not job titles) constitute the field. Three questionnaires sent to senior human resource practitioners produced a revised list of 15 roles.

This gave us a complete, yet manageable segmentation of the field which met the goal of providing useful information to specialists who may perform as few as one role, and to generalists, who may perform all roles. Table 1 lists the 15 roles and their definitions.

Product 5: 102 Outputs for the Training and Development Field.

Job studies frequently focus on tasks, responsibilities and activities for the work being analyzed. The approach adopted for this study focuses instead on the outputs (products, services, information) which people in the field must produce in order to function with excellence. When we know what outputs are important, we can ask the key competency question, "What knowledge and skill does an individual need in order to produce important outputs?" With this in mind, the study team identified 146 outputs which training and development practitioners provide to each other and to their clients (learners and organizations). This list was refined in questionnaires to a final list of 102 outputs which will be critical

Sociological (Lifestyle/Values)

- Increased incidence of multiple and changed careers
- More dual-career families
- More single parents
- More women in the work force
- Greater concern for the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual)

Economic

- Increased profit pressure in private sector, and budget pressure in public and nonprofit sectors
- Increased scarcity of all resources
- Increased cost of college resulting in declining percent of entering work force who will be college educated
- Increased travel costs

- Decreased funding for social programs
- Increased population
- Increased need for business/industry to operate in an international environment
- Increased average age of work force

Governmental/Political

- Increased need for business/industry to operate in an international environment
- Increased importance of energy conservation

The competencies identified during the study assume that these forces are reality. When the study is updated, the Professional Development Committee will review these forces, change the list to reflect new predictions

The Competency Study In Action

Trying out new roles

Marlys Jones has been an instructor at a large east coast hospital for more than three years. "It's time to think about my next career move," she tells herself. "I enjoy teaching and definitely want to stay in the training and development field. But, what's next?" Marlys uses the ASTD Competency Study to begin an assessment of her strengths and potential career directions. She notes that, while her job title is "instructor," she has really been performing two of the 15 T&D roles addressed in the study: instructor and transfer agent. She turns to the list of competencies required for the interface role cluster. "I'm definitely skilled in most of the competencies for this cluster, but I've not been performing all the roles in this group. I could expand my current job easily to include group facilitator or marketer. These roles require competencies I'm already using. That opens some new doors. Most of the courses I teach have not required me to perform the role of group facilitator. I could ask to co-facilitate the conflict management program. That will give me a chance to sharpen my group process and feedback skills and still draw on the strengths I've developed in instruction-oriented programs. I could also try to broaden my responsibilities to include some marketing activities. I hadn't thought of it before, but my competencies certainly are relevant to that role. The next time we send a team to describe our training programs to local physicians, I want to be part of that group."

Exploring the training field

Carl Haskell wants to move out of public education. He's taught high school seniors for years and is hoping to use his skills in

private industry. "I know that the training and development field is growing," he remarks to a friend who designs education and training programs for a local aerospace firm.

"What do I need to do to get into the training field?" he asks.

"I can tell you what I'd do," his friend responds, "and what I think is important to get a training position in my company. But I suggest you do some self-assessment and gather some data about the field. The ASTD Training and Development Competency Study can help you understand the kind of work people perform in this field, what they produce and the knowledge and skills that are important. There are about 30 knowledge and skill areas. The study calls them competencies. Their definitions include scenarios of people doing work in the field, and they will give you a good idea of what it's like to work in training and development."

Improving the selection process

Theresa Riker turns off her dictaphone, thinking, "This is definitely the best job description I've written and promises the best selection process we've ever had in the training department. Thanks to the ASTD Competency Study, I had useful terminology for describing this new job. I checked off the *outputs* we expect the person we hire to produce, identified the major *roles* we expect him or her to perform and then listed the important *competencies* for the job. Most of the information I needed to define the job was right here in the study. I elaborated on a few things and organized it for our purposes. Since the person doesn't need to be an expert in all the areas, my staff and I are willing to help the new person

develop some of the competencies. Other competencies must be strong at selection. Those are the ones we'll focus on in interviews. The selection profile I just dictated should communicate what we need. We'll refine our interview strategy tomorrow."

Starting an academic program

Wayne Wolfe pushed through the revolving doors of the fifth company headquarters he'd visited in a week. All the training directors he'd met had been enthusiastic about the new human resource development degree program Wayne's university was planning to inaugurate next fall. Planning had been complicated, involving training managers and directors from most of the local businesses, government agencies and foundations and the local ASTD chapter. The ASTD Competency Study had provided an excellent framework for identifying the issues the new curriculum should address. The new program would be competency-based, focus on the roles described in the study, and include competency-based internships with local organizations. Local training and development managers felt the program would prepare people to fill their T&D positions. Wayne's college administrator was happy because the curriculum had a solid framework.

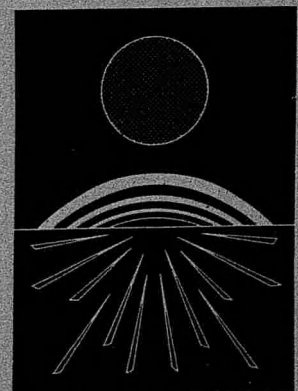


Table 2: Competencies in the Training and Development Competency Model

1. *Adult Learning Understanding*... Knowing how adults acquire and use knowledge, skills, attitudes. Understanding individual differences in learning.

2. *A/V Skill*... Selecting and using audio/visual hardware and software.

3. *Career Development Knowledge*... Understanding the personal and organizational issues and practices relevant to individual careers.

4. *Competency Identification Skill*... Identifying the knowledge and skill requirements of jobs, tasks, roles.

5. *Computer Competence*... Understanding and being able to use computers.

6. *Cost-Benefit Analysis Skill*... Assessing alternatives in terms of their financial, psychological and strategic advantages and disadvantages.

7. *Counseling Skill*... Helping individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, alternatives and goals.

8. *Data Reduction Skill*... Scanning, synthesizing and drawing conclusions from data.

9. *Delegation Skill*... Assigning task responsibility and authority to others.

10. *Facilities Skill*... Planning and coordinating logistics in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

11. *Feedback Skill*... Communicating opinions, observations and conclusions such that they are understood.

12. *Futuring Skill*... Projecting trends and visualizing possible and probable futures and their implications.

13. *Group Process Skill*... Influencing groups to both accomplish tasks and fulfill the needs of their members.

14. *Industry Understanding*... Knowing the key concepts and variables that define an industry or sector (e.g., critical issues, economic vulnerabilities, measurements, distribution channels, inputs, outputs, information sources).

15. *Intellectual Versatility*... Recognizing, exploring and using a broad range of ideas and practices. Thinking logically and creatively without undue influence from personal biases.

16. *Library Skills*... Gathering information from printed and other recorded sources. Identifying and using information specialists and reference services and aids.

17. *Model Building Skill*... Developing theoretical and practical frameworks which describe complex ideas in understandable, usable ways.

18. *Negotiation Skill*... Securing win-win agreements while successfully

representing a special interest in a decision situation.

19. *Objectives Preparation Skill*... Preparing clear statements which describe desired outputs.

20. *Organization Behavior Understanding*... Seeing organizations as dynamic, political, financial and social systems which have multiple goals; using this larger perspective as a framework for understanding and influencing events and change.

21. *Organization Understanding*... Knowing the strategy, structure, power networks, financial position, systems of a SPECIFIC organization.

22. *Performance Observation Skills*... Tracking and describing behaviors and their effects.

23. *Personnel/HR Field Understanding*... Understanding issues and practices in other HR areas (Organization Development, Organization Job Design, Human Resource Planning, Selection and Staffing, Personnel Research and Information Systems, Compensation and Benefits, Employee Assistance, Union/Labor Relations).

24. *Presentation Skills*... Verbally presenting information such that the intended purpose is achieved.

25. *Questioning Skill*... Gathering information from and stimulating insight in individuals and groups through the use of interviews, questionnaires and other probing methods.

26. *Records Management Skill*... Storing data in easily retrievable form.

27. *Relationship Versatility*... Adjusting behavior in order to establish relationships across a broad range of people and groups.

28. *Research Skills*... Selecting, developing and using methodologies, statistical and data collection techniques for a formal inquiry.

29. *Training and Development Field Understanding*... Knowing the technological, social, economic, professional and regulatory issues in the field; understanding the role T&D plays in helping individuals learn for current and future jobs.

30. *Training and Development Techniques Understanding*... Knowing the techniques and methods used in training; understanding their appropriate uses.

31. *Writing Skills*... Preparing written material which follows generally accepted rules of style and form, is appropriate for the audience, creative and accomplishes its intended purposes.

during the next five years. The list includes items such as:

- Instruments to assess individual change in knowledge, skill, attitude, behavior, results (An evaluator output)
- Computer software (An instructional writer output)
- An individual with new knowledge, skill, attitudes or behavior in his or her repertoire (An instructor output)
- Identification of forces/trends impacting training and development (A strategist output)
- New concepts and theories of learning and behavior change (A theoretician output)

Product 6: The Competency Model for the Training and Development Field.

In this study, competencies are defined as "the knowledges and skills which are key to producing the critical outputs of the training and development field and its roles." They describe characteristics of people. They are the tools individuals bring to their work. Knowing the critical competencies for training and development can help people in and around the field make more effective judgments concerning selection, development, assessment, human resource planning and career planning. Three rounds of questionnaires to experts representing each role produced a final list of 31 competencies for the training and development field (see Table 2). Study investigations also produced behavioral anchors demonstrating each competency at basic, intermediate and advanced levels (see Table 3).

Product 7: Role Profiles.

Perhaps the most useful product of the study is a set of role profiles defining the critical outputs and assembled competencies for each of the 15 training and development roles. These profiles can be assembled to reflect the unique role configuration of any job in the training and development field. For example, a training and development specialist

who is required to perform the instructor, group facilitator and evaluator roles can use the profiles for these roles to help further define his or her job. A training and development specialist whose roles are needs analyst, theoretician, program designer and instructional writer can refer to the profiles for those roles as an aid to job definition, assessment and development planning.

Clearly no one—unless his or her job encompasses many of the roles—would be expected to be an expert in all 31 competencies, or to produce all 102 outputs. Each role requires only a limited number of outputs and competencies drawn from the complete lists. Table 4 shows one of the 15 role profiles.

Product 8: Four Role Clusters.

Roles that share a core group of competencies can be considered a role cluster. Likewise, individuals who have expertise in the core competencies for a role cluster can probably, with minimal development, perform all roles in a cluster. Four role clusters emerged in the ASTD Study:

- Interface cluster—Group facilitator, instructor, marketer, transfer agent
- Concept development cluster—Instructional writer, program designer, theoretician
- Research cluster—Evaluator, needs analyst, task analyst
- Leadership cluster—Manager, strategist

Each cluster has a list of shared (core) competencies (see Table 5 for an example). All roles in a cluster have at least a .5 correlation with all other roles in the cluster. Three roles did not meet the criterion for inclusion in a cluster: media specialist, individual development counselor and program administrator.

The role clusters have major implications for job design. When the job design goal is economy and maximum use of competencies, a job should require similar

Table 3: Sample Competency Statements from the Model

The Competency

7. Counseling Skill...

Helping individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, alternatives and goals

Examples of Behaviors Illustrating Levels of Expertise

Basic:

The T&D Specialist uses a career planning kit as an aid in helping an individual who has sought career assistance. She *empathizes with the employee's quandary* and, based on the data from interest questionnaires, *helps the employee explore a variety of suitable new career directions.*

Intermediate:

A participant in a leadership program is befuddled by survey feedback he has gotten from people he asked to assess his leadership style before the program. The program facilitator notices him puzzling over his data, asks if she can help, *listens to and acknowledges his concerns and helps him interpret the results and decide on a course of action.*

Advanced:

When asked to help an angry, shocked, fifty-year-old ex-executive who has just been fired, the T&D specialist *gives him time to vent his feelings and concerns* and then *helps channel his energy* into self-assessment, opportunity search.

Table 4: Sample Role Profile

Role Profile: Program Designer

Definition:

The role of preparing objectives, defining content, selecting and sequencing activities for a specific program.

Critical Outputs:

This role produces the following:

- Lists of learning objectives
- Written program plans/designs
- Specifications and priorities of training content, activities, materials and methods
- Sequencing plans for training content, activities, materials and methods
- Instructional contingency plans and implementation strategies

Critical Competencies:

The following competencies are critical for people to perform the outputs for this role:

- Adult learning understanding
- Competency identification skill
- Computer competence
- Intellectual versatility
- Model building skill
- Objectives preparation skill
- Organization behavior understanding
- T&D techniques understanding
- Writing skills

Comments:

- The outputs will retain the same level of importance over the next five years.
- This role has a similar (positively correlated) competency profile to the following other T&D roles: instructional writer and theoretician.
- This role's profile is unlike (negatively correlated) the following other T&D role: program administrator.
- This role requires the *highest* level of expertise of any role in the following competency areas: objectives preparation skill and T&D techniques understanding.
- This role is part of the concept development cluster which includes instructional writer and theoretician.

(clustered) roles. When the job design goal is job expansion and diversity, jobs should include roles from several clusters. The study proposes many other implications.

Product 9: The Roles and Competencies Matrix. This product is a matrix showing critical competencies for all roles and,

conversely, the roles for which each competency is critical. Table 6 shows a portion of this matrix.

The matrix also identifies which role requires the highest expertise in each competency. For example, futuring skill is critical in the following roles: manager, marketer, strategist and theoretician. However, the strategist role requires the

highest level of expertise in this competency.

Summary

The ASTD Competency Study presents nine products for training and development managers, practitioners, career aspirants, professors and others who educate and train people for this field and for ASTD as a professional society. It also contains general recommendations from the study team for using these products to clarify the training and development mission, develop strategy, structure jobs, assemble project teams, staff T&D positions, assess incumbents and develop career aspirants; to develop career and human resource plans; and to communicate priorities to management and college administrators.

The challenges of working in a global, information and service economy will require continual education and training everywhere. A competent cadre of excellent training and development professionals can help workers in all sectors rise to the challenge. But we need models and a common language for communicating and developing excellence in our own ranks. The competency study is a major step toward the professionalization of the very important field of training and development. It demonstrates that ASTD is committed to leading, creating and refining the models that can make synergy and professionalism happen.



Table 5: Sample Role Cluster Profile

Each of the four role clusters has a unique profile.

The Research Cluster:
 Evaluator, Needs Analyst, Task Analyst
Core Competencies for the Cluster

- Competency identification skills
- Computer competence
- Data reduction skills
- Feedback skills
- Intellectual versatility
- Performance observation skills
- Questioning skills
- Research skills
- Writing skills

Table 6: Segment from the Roles/Competencies Matrix

This chart shows the critical competencies for each role and all roles for which each competency is critical.

	Manager	Marketer	Instructional Writer	Media Specialist
24. Presentation Skill	•	•	•	•
27. Relationship Versatility	•	•		
30. T&D Techniques Understanding			•	
14. Industry Understanding	•	•	•	
21. Organization Understanding	•	•		
6. Cost/Benefit Analysis	•	•		•
12. Futuring Skill	•	•		
13. Group Process Skill	•	•		
17. Model Building Skill			•	
22. Performance Observ. Skill				
18. Negotiation Skill	•	•		
28. Research Skills				
2. A/V Skill				•