

New Careers for Trainers

a When one door closes, another opens.

By Haidee E. Allerton

With Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

concern is that e-learning and outsourcing may make trainers (a.k.a. “workforce learning and performance professionals”) obsolete.

In fact, e-learning and outsourcing are creating new opportunities and new roles for trainers. Now that the e-learning dust has settled, it’s clear that the present and the future are about blended learning: some electronic delivery combined with face-to-face or classroom time. And many predictors believe that practitioners let go because their organizations are outsourcing parts or the whole of the training function will be rehired by the outsourcing companies. Not only that, but the changing content, delivery, and focus of this profession formerly known as training is engendering new titles, new careers.

T+D talked with several people in the learning field and career development. Here’s what they report on the new-careers front.

 **“The Future of the Profession Formerly Known as Training” (T+D, December 2003)**

Blended learning facilitators. “People who manage a blend of synchronous, asynchronous, and traditional training technologies.”

Jennifer Hofmann, a frequent contributor to Learning Circuits (www.learningcircuits.com) and president of InSync Training

Synergy, a company that specializes in synchronous learning.



Graduate student. “Lots of people going back to school in a poor economy.”

Beth Martin, *Answer Geek with Learning Circuits and senior usability specialist at UserWorks.*



Facilitators of OD or change management. “Trainers with strong process consulting skills are reinventing themselves as facilitators of organization development or change management.”

Knowledge architect. “With the advent of knowledge and content management comes a new career option, that of knowledge architect.”

“In both instances, these are extensions of skill sets that many trainers have developed over time. Moving into new roles in these areas is an evolutionary process that starts long before a trainer sees the need or is aware that it would prove career changing. With downsizings, mergers and acquisitions, outsourcing, e-learning, and relocations of corporate headquarters, trainers are finding that the jobs they love and excel at aren’t secure.

“The question of best fit for a trainer in a new career depends on where her or his area of greatest strength lies. For someone with terrific stand-up skills who gets a lot from interaction with groups, facilitating change can be interesting and enjoyable. Detail mavens who have honed abilities in taxonomy and content analysis are likely to be effective, engaged managers of digital content and information objects.”

Loretta Donovan, *Answer Geek for Learning Circuits and senior director, organization and employee development, Girl Scouts of the USA.*



“At WCU, we’re trying to add more multimedia to our online instruction and perfect our online teaching methods. Also, competition among online academic programs appears to be heating up.”

James J. Kirk, *director of the MS degree program in human resources at Western Carolina University.*



Performance coach. “I’ve seen a number of trainers shift their careers in the direction of personal coaching or performance coaching, if those are any different. One caveat may apply here: The

skills for training and those for coaching definitely overlap, but aren't identical. What I've seen happen too often with untrained coaches is a tendency to be overly directive and prescriptive, or to emphasize content over process. It's very important to respect the client's self-determination and not 'overfunction' for him or her."

Jeff Miller is president of Jeffrey Miller + Associates, which helps client companies increase their organizational effectiveness, and author of *The Anxious Organization: Why Smart Companies Do Dumb Things*.



"The first occupation that came to mind was coaching. Many people are interested in having a personal coach, or being one. Undoubtedly, trainers will pick up on this trend. More than 90 organizations in the United States currently certify people to become coaches, and the industry represents a substantial amount of revenue. The fuel for this trend is contained within several big-picture elements:

- the me.com era we're living in, in which people want personalized, tailored services
- life stresses that cause people to seek a special advisor, a friend, someone to talk to
- downsizing, job loss, a slow economy, and general malaise.

"Trainers, as a group, seem to be upbeat people. They like learning and helping others. They encourage people to stretch into new skills and experiences. Those who come to the field via psychology have a built-in advantage because coaching is similar to counseling. Those who come to training through technology may have an advantage because more and more coaching is being done online. Trainers are creative people who might be well equipped to inspire others to explore

creative solutions to life problems.

"Given the explosion of the number of personal coaches, I suspect that the U.S. federal government might get involved within the next decade to create consistent guidelines and protect consumers from quackery and unethical opportunists."

Elaine Voci is an e-learning futurist and consultant who previously served as director of corporate e-learning strategies for SkillSoft Corporation.



Whole life coach. "Some trainers have developed skills and interests that attract them to whole life coaching. As a coach, they get to enjoy close, one-on-one contact with learners, provide laser-precise help, and experience a client's personal growth over time."

Brooke Broadbent is a coach and keynote speaker trained by the Coaches Training Institute and Co-Active Space.



"There are great ideas on this at the Career Moves page on the ASTD site

 http://www.astd.org/virtual_community/comm_careers/career_resources/Career_Move/career_moves.pdf.

"I'd also include knowledge management jobs, such as chief learning officer or chief knowledge officer."

Amy Newman is a learning human resources consultant with People Momentum and an online instructor for eCornell's HR certificate program.



Webinar leader. "Some are making the transition from classroom."

Project manager. "Some people trained in instructional design, especially instructional technology, are finding work as

project managers for e-learning development, as marketing managers for course design and development services, and, in some cases, in techie positions such as setting up and maintaining a network."

Performance consulting. "This is another option, especially for senior people with a broad base of business experience (people who are career-long instructional designers with limited business experience would likely have difficulty in these positions).

"Even people who are having difficulty finding work still self-identify as trainers. I have a friend who has been laid off as a trainer and had to take a secretarial job. She's finishing a certificate in instructional technology and hopes to find placement with these new tools and a certificate in designing and developing online courses."

Saul Carliner is an assistant professor of educational technology at Concordia University of Montreal. His books include *Designing E-Learning* (ASTD, 2002), *An Overview of Online Learning* (HRD Press, 1999), and the forthcoming *Design Basics*.



Mentoring specialist. "This is a great way to utilize people as resources and engage in cross-training and development."

Retention consultant. "Training is often used as a way to entice people to stay at companies."

Knowledge management specialist. "So much of a company's value and capabilities are in the heads of the employees."

Laura Francis is senior writer and editor for Triple Creek Associates, an organizational development firm specializing in mentoring.

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