

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Developing the Next Generation



In many parts of the world, the demand for talented workers is an ongoing challenge for organizations. Recently, I spoke to 1000 Japanese human resource development managers at the HRD 2003 Japan Conference and Exposition, and they echoed similar concerns about the

increasing shortage of skilled workers. Conference attendees told me that one of their most important priorities is developing and coaching the next generation of leaders to lead organizations through times of change and economic uncertainty. In the United States, many experts predict that in the near future there will not only be a shortage of workers, but also a significant gap between existing skills and those needed to fill open positions. Millions of jobs in the high-tech sector go unfilled each year because there aren't enough skilled people to fill them.

The skill shortage issue is also of concern to a top U.S. business leader who recently warned of something called the "Smart Gap," or a fast-approaching critical shortage of people who can really

think. He says, "The knowledge worker is going to be at the center of company desperation."

Those words are very powerful. But they only further reinforce the importance of learning and skill building. As learning and performance professionals, your expertise is critical to helping individuals and organizations build their capability to achieve success. But each of us cannot do this work alone. We must pave the way for future leaders of the profession.

One way to accomplish that is by encouraging students to join the profession. Recently, ASTD solicited students all over the world to apply for a one-year membership to ASTD, thanks to a generous donation from John Coné, ASTD's 2002 board chair. John said he developed the fund to support and cultivate the next generation of practitioners and leaders in the HRD field. Although the 2003 winners have already been chosen, students will be able to benefit from the John Coné Student Membership Fund for a long time to come. Applications will be accepted every year through 2012.

As all of us know, learning is not a one-time event; it happens every day no matter who you are or where you live. I applaud all of you in the ASTD community for your commitment and for encouraging others to join the profession. Together, we have the power to help individuals and organizations realize success.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ina Sung". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "g".

President and CEO
ASTD