

THE ASTD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

"WE WILL BE CALLING UPON VOLUNTEERS — MEMBERS AT ALL LEVELS, TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY LEADERSHIP AND ASSISTANCE."

BY LEONARD
NADLER

It is quite possible that many members of ASTD are not fully aware of the nature and extent of the professional development activities that are essential to our organization. There are many people working in this important area, both volunteers and staff. As your national vice president for Professional Development, I am pleased that the *Journal* is devoting this issue to this vital area.

ASTD's 1980 President, Craig Musick, has organized the various ASTD activities into clusters. This is not meant to be a rigid organization, but rather a means of facilitating communication among the various committees and task forces that are all concerned with the same kinds of problems and activities.

There are two kinds of groups in our cluster. The first is the committee, which is established by our by-laws and is permanent. The second is the task force, which is appointed by the president and has a limited life.



Leonard Nadler

Among our committees are: Professional Development, Institutes and Research. The Professional Development Committee (PD Committee) has a long history of working in a very difficult area. I was a member of one of the original Committees, under Norman Alheiser, in 1966. It was a frustrating experience, for we just could not get a handle on the situation. A few years later, under Pat

Farbro, we tried again. Despite good leadership and real effort, we were still not successful. In the early 1970s we tried again, with a Committee which included Malcolm Knowles. That PD Committee also failed to make any significant progress. Despite the lack of specific progress, each of these efforts should be recognized for their contributions to the necessary early work in this area.

In more recent years, with leadership by people like John Collings and Neal Chalofsky, we have finally begun to see some real progress. By no means are they anywhere near completing their work — they probably never will. However, there have been some significant steps taken in a variety of directions, all of which promise to give us models and data regarding what is a "professional" in HRD.

The Institutes Committee is one of the vital elements of our professional development activities. This is one of the ways that ASTD delivers a direct service to its members, by providing learning experiences to help them improve their understandings and compe-

tencies. This Committee has a long history, and has had many good people leading it, as well as other nameless people who devoted so much time and energy to the Committee. The recent publication of the pamphlet, *ASTD Institute Programs January-June, 1980* indicates the kind of solid activities they are making available through the form of "Institutes." This term is now used in a generic fashion. One of their tasks is to get a more specific delineation of just what is meant by an Institute.

The Research Committee is just another indication of how we have come of age. We continue to rely on research from other groups and related disciplines. Now, however, we have a significant group within ASTD that is directly concerned with this area of professional development.

Among the Task Forces, we have: Chapter Programming and the National Forum. In both cases, the Task Force is not being asked to produce anything, only a series

of recommendations. From these, your Board will be able to take whatever action seems appropriate.

The Chapter Programming Task Force is a response to a need which we identified. (Yes, we do use some of our techniques on ourselves!) Apparently, there are some chapters which have no difficulty in providing various kinds of professional development for their members. These are usually the larger chapters, but not exclusively so. The medium and small chapters appear to have some problems. The Task Force is exploring the issue and will be preparing recommendations for the kinds of programs and delivery services which will facilitate the professional development programs of these chapters.

The National Forum Task Force is a unique group. They are responding to another need — namely that some of your leadership feel that ASTD should be in direct communication with some people at the top levels of organizations,

who are concerned with other aspects of human resources (e.g., management, engineering, and environment). It is a unique first effort, and some wonderful people have been devoting much energy and resources to identifying a direction.

Lest anybody be misled, there are other clusters with equally significant challenges and activities. At some future time, I am sure that you will be hearing more about all the other hard working volunteers who are building our professional society.

As we increase our activity in the area of professional development, we will be calling upon volunteers — members at all levels, to provide the necessary leadership and assistance. I hope that many more of you will be volunteering. In addition to "contributing to the field" you will find such committee and task force service to be a significant part of your own professional development. — *Len Nadler*

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