

ASTD 1979-80: A Time of Challenge!

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1979 ASTD President

As an educational society serving the complex field of training and human resource development, ASTD experiences diverse and sometimes conflicting demands from its constituency. Entry-level people clamor for basic, hands-on practical experiences; experienced pros need a forum for sharing advanced concepts and new technology. Each member demand contributes to the evolution of ASTD's role in the profession, because these demands help shape our image of what we want and need from our educational society.

As the human resource field becomes increasingly complex, organizationally and theoretically, the challenge confronting ASTD is one of constant readjustment and adaptation. We began in 1944 as the American Society for Training Directors. In 1964 we broadened our outreach to become the American Society for Training and Development. And in 1975 we added the credo to our logo: "Dedicated to the development of human potential." The series of successive accommodations reflected our continuing redefinition as a Society which expanded from a focus on training alone, to one which encompasses a multiplicity of related disciplines from the behavioral sciences. ASTD counts among its members more discreet development functions than one has fingers and toes! Our Division network, for example, includes Career Development, Technical and Skills Training, Sales Training, Media, Organization Development, International, and a proposed Research Group — not to mention 40 special interest groups cutting across industry and functional lines from banking to utilities.

The Society's growth parallels that of the field it serves. It was 1969 when the term "Human Resource Development" (HRD) was first coined by Len Nadler. Then came Ted Mills' landmark *Harvard Business Review* article, "Human Re-



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sources: Why the New Concern?" And within a year or two we were talking about HRM — Human Resource Management — which reflected a very broad view of the traditional employee-relations function, but more importantly, began to alter the placement of the "development" function within organizations. For example, Organization Development (OD) — which never should have been a separate responsibility from line management — became increasingly consolidated within the HRM system, along with other disciplines such as career development, outplacement, compensation, and manpower planning. And as organizations were just becoming familiar with HRM, a "new" and captivating area of interest emerged on the scene, called Quality of Work Life. QWL

had been around for a long time, in fact, but it was not until the mid-70s that serious and documented work from Europe became part of the professional literature.

The root of this rapid growth in the human resource field arises from several factors. Among them are: (1) the unprecedented decline in U.S. productivity; (2) persistent inflation; (3) chronic unemployment; and (4) the loss of our competitive edge in world markets, accompanied by the dollar decline. While all this has been happening, a transition of values has also occurred. New demands are being made on corporations by workers who feel they are entitled to enjoy a meaningful and satisfying work career; to be treated equitably; and to be assured that their organization is producing products of the highest value and consumer safety.

As a result, management is turning to the experienced Human Resource professional for counsel and intervention in dealing with complex human resource challenges. It is no longer possible for top human resource executives to be single-disciplines. They must be generalists. Nor is it possible for effective

trainers to be devoid of basic OD skills or some understanding of performance technology to assist them in the diagnosis of individual learning strengths and deficiencies. Further, we have learned that if change in worker behavior and productivity is desired, training can be one of the most costly and least effective solutions — if the development effort is not reinforced and supported by management and, especially, by the immediate superior of the trainee.

The strategy for orchestrating such reinforcement activities requires a set of knowledge, skills and organizational experience beyond those competencies and experiences required to design and deliver classroom training. Now, more than ever, it is critical that the various

disciplines of the human resources area learn to learn from one another, to collaborate with management to improve slugging worker productivity, and to create organizational conditions which facilitate and support individual job satisfaction and growth.

ASTD's role in helping meet these challenges is a significant one. From an open systems perspective, ASTD may be viewed as a social and educational institution filling a rather complex and unique role in the profession. The Society unites diverse interests, levels and disciplines to form a potentially powerful coalition of resources in the public interest. These various groups are what Russell Ackoff calls "stakeholders," and include: *trainers*, be they sales, management, supervisory, technical, etc.; *specialists*, such as media technicians, evaluators, manpower planners, curriculum developers (of varying responsibility levels from stand-up trainer to HRD top executive); *related associations*, such as the College Board, American Council on Higher Education; *publishers and suppliers*; *educational institutions*; and *policymakers* seeking input for proposed legislation or for organizational philosophy strategy.

Our membership is derived from these and other groups. We join an educational community with an expectation of positive return for our money and our involvement. Each member, in a very real sense, is an *investor*.

"Returns on Investment"

What are some of the "returns on investment"? For many members they include (1) access to information; (2) access to a professional network; and (3) access to professional self-development.

Access to information through:

- *Member Inquiry Service* (a clearinghouse of source / resource referral)
- *Speakers Bureau* (updated rosters of professional presenters)
- *Operation Talent Match* (a new automated system for locating colleagues for idea-ex-



change)

- *Training and Development Journal* (monthly)
- *National Report Newsletter* (tri-weekly)

Access to a professional network through:

- Chapters (111)
- Regional Councils (9)
- Divisions (6)
- Special Interest Groups (40)
- Caucuses (2)
- *Who's Who* Membership Directory
- Conferences (local, regional, and national, some cosponsored)
- Committees and Task Forces (30)

Access to professional self-development through:

- Institutes
- Workshops
- National Conference
- Self-development guides
- Books
- Monographs
- Cassettes

"Our 1979-80 Goals Cluster"

1979-80 goals are consistent with the Association's purpose as stated in our Articles of Incorporation — "to achieve a better utilization of the human ability and potential in business, industry, government, the professions and education. . . ."

These goals recognize that while many members' jobs are based upon technical knowledge and skills in training, we must also keep current with the multiplicity

of professional, legal, socioeconomic and research developments which affect our field and its future.

Our 1979-80 goals cluster in four areas:

(1) *Representation and Leadership in the Human Resource Field*: Leadership means the ability to shape future events. Rather than just reacting to the changing needs of the field, we are striving to reach out to identify and monitor the societal and world developments which affect the utilization of human resources. This involves research activities which build a data base for understanding and evaluating key issues and trends; providing vehicles for the dissemination of innovation identified through research; and influencing the thinking of major policy bodies whose decisions will impact the future of training and development.

For example, proceedings from a recent "Symposium on Determining the Payoffs of Management Training" will soon be published for the ASTD membership. Such efforts, which pull together the best minds dealing with a specific aspect of Human Resource Development, provide a vehicle for ideas to jell; for experiments and innovations to be made public; and for papers reporting these discussions to be disseminated to a wide audience.

(2) *Professionalism*: Self-development opportunities for mem-

bers, encouraging continual self-assessment through institutes and a diversified publishing program, are significant building blocks for improving members' personal competence as well as providing on-the-job methods to enhance overall professional practice. For example, the 1979 Institutes program will be expanded at mid-year to include additional offerings on "managing change," complimenting our traditional emphasis on training design and the management of the training function.

Further, the Professional Development Committee will soon release self-assessment guides and competency criteria for HRD professionals to assess their skills and areas for further study.

Moreover, the addition of two outstanding individuals to our professional staff will greatly contribute to a more assertive program of professional development as well as adding strength to our Chapter system. (They are "Mac" McCullough, director of Professional

Development, and Dr. Vida Stan-
 ius, director of Member/Chapter
 Services. Between them, Mac and
 Vida have more than 40 years of
 experience in the field of adult ed-
 ucation and training.)

(3) *Member and Leadership Development:* Quality rather than quantity of member services contributes greatly to the professional development and leadership training provided to members.

This year, all services are being evaluated with a view toward consolidation as well as providing the best possible resource match for members' needs. And, as always, we remain committed to the advancement of women and minorities.

(4) *Maintaining a Healthy Organization:* Healthy and prosperous growth is the goal of every successful organization. Consequently, the Board of Directors and the staff work hard to assure that our resources (human and financial) are well-utilized. Clarification activities have minimized

volunteer/staff overlap; committees and task forces have been reduced to a more manageable size; and our management control systems have been successfully extended to both staff and volunteer leaders.

In Summary

The nation faces serious socio-economic problems, complicated by decreasing productivity, inflation, unemployment, technological change, and international competition. A hopeful sign, however, is that the nation is rapidly coming to recognize that its primary capital investment for the future must be in its people — and the training and lifelong education of the American workforce.

ASTD is on the vanguard of the movement, and our challenge as a Society is to help our members effectively meet the increasing responsibility they share as training and development professionals. Can we do it? By working together, of course we can — and we will! — *Jan Margolis*



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