

Illiteracy: Not Just Media Hype

Thirteen years ago, most companies would have denied the possibility of illiteracy within their organizations. Today, major networks offer prime-time coverage of the issue, ASTD reports that 37 percent of employers sampled participate in some sort of basic skills training, and leading training journals highlight articles on illiteracy for the month of September—"Literacy Month." Who knows? A concert entitled "Read Aid" may be next.

Although I am encouraged by the attention this problem is receiving, I am also concerned. Illiteracy inspires in us an emotional reaction, certainly, but doesn't always seem to affect us personally. After the media hoopla subsides, we may tend to lose sight of our commitment to the solution—the commitment we made in all seriousness as the bandwagon passed by. As trainers, what will we be doing about the problem at this time next year?

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Trainers as Leaders

If their companies are to succeed, trainers in business today must assume a leadership role, working hand-in-hand with line management to prepare members of the organization to achieve at the necessary levels. To be effective today, trainers must be leaders—initiators, instigators, innovators. Gone are the days when we could just sit back and wait for the phone to ring. Trainers *must* take a more assertive role.

Corporate executives need their professional trainers' knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet corporate objectives. These executives often fail to realize the resource they have available in their training departments.

To increase your effectiveness in your organization, seek leadership opportunities. Make yourself available as an integral resource in the development of technical plans and implementation steps. Become involved in your local ASTD chapter in a leadership capacity. Chair a committee, or manage a project. Seek opportunities to practice your leadership skills; they will be vital to the future of your career.

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Correction

In a case of familiarity breeding sloppiness, October's "Issues" department contained not one but two misspellings of former ASTD National President Donald L. Kirkpatrick's name. We regret the error.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

How would you react if your company cut out health insurance, tuition reimbursement, retirement plans? Some business groups have suggested such drastic measures as a remedy for rising employer costs. The elimination of all work benefits is a hot issue for many HRD professionals and their companies. We'd like to hear *your* opinions. Send your viewpoints to "Issues," Training and Development Journal, 1630 Duke St., Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313.



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