

ASTD Reorganization Plan

The idea for forming a national professional society devoted to the training function arose from a meeting of a special interest group of industry training executives during the early war years. The proposal met with instant and enthusiastic approval. Thereafter, a group of training men met in early 1943 to explore further the formation of a professional society. Two years later, this young organization, called the American Society of Training Directors, had gathered considerable momentum. It had adopted a constitution, started to publish a journal, and attracted nearly 100 members.

At ASTD's first national convention, held in Chicago during 1945, the question of reconciling the Society with other older and stronger training groups was debated. The Society's leadership fully realized that their new and struggling organization was at a critical point in its short history. It was proposed that the ASTD constitution, which was somewhat rigid, be rewritten in an attempt to reconcile the points of view of these various training groups. This was done expeditiously and effectively. By 1946 a new constitution (*the one in effect today*) was adopted by the membership.

After these first hazardous years, the Society entered into a period marked by continuous and steady growth. By 1950 membership had risen to over 1,000 members. Today the membership has reached nearly 3,500. Paralleling these striking gains has been a steady increase in the number of ASTD chapters—from five in 1946 to 60 at the latest count.

The structure, procedures and practices of the past were undoubtedly suitable for a young organization during its formative years. Now, however, rapid membership growth and an emerging maturity has impelled a reappraisal of organization patterns and methods. New ideas and approaches must be evolved to keep pace with the Society's contemplated growth and broader scope. Your Board of Directors recognized this situation, when last May it employed the consultant firm of Booz, Allen and Hamilton to study our organization. During the past four months, ASTD has been going through an intensive period of re-examination. Together with representatives of the consulting firm, we have been subjecting the Society's organization

and programs to the closest scrutiny to assure ourselves that ASTD is geared to meet the challenge of the future.

One of our principal problems has been an ambiguous and quite out-dated Constitution and By-Laws. Consequently, we have asked our consultant firm to draft a new set of laws which will be more practical and embody the recommendations of the firm. These recommendations have been discussed in some detail with your officers and have been approved in principle.

You will be receiving within a few days a copy of the redrafted Constitution and By-Laws. In accord with our present constitution, the members of the Board have initiated this action to put this matter on the agenda. Each member will receive a notice of a special membership meeting and a proxy form.

At the membership meeting, the proposed Constitution and By-Laws will be thoroughly reviewed and discussed by the members in attendance. Revisions, additions, and deletions may be made at that time. The proposed Constitution and By-Laws as approved by the membership at this meeting will then be sent to the various chapters for approval, as required by the present constitution.

The proposed redrafted Constitution and By-Laws represent an attempt to correct the problems and weaknesses present in our national ASTD organization. Some of these major problems include:

1. *The size of the Board of Directors is excessively large, making it unwieldy as a governing body.* The national character of ASTD tends to make the Board, as currently organized, a widely dispersed body. It is clearly more difficult to assemble and provide for the constructive contribution of every member when the number of individuals concerned is as large as 27. It has often been difficult to assemble a simple majority quorum. It is recommended that the present four region system be replaced by a nine region system. The present District Representative type of Board would be replaced with a General Council (see 3. below) and a smaller, more easily convened Board of Directors. This would tend to reduce in size the current regional structure which is too broad geographically and, if the proposal is accepted, would not require periodic boundary changes.

2. *The Board's committee system needs simplification, clarification, and strengthening.* A positive program of activities in a national organization of this scope is necessarily dependent upon the specialized and dedicated attention of a balanced and well-articulated committee structure. Currently,

ASTD's By-Laws call for seven standing committees. This is a reasonable number with a clear and necessary purpose. However, the total number of other committees has grown at an alarming rate reaching a total of 33. This tends to make the entire committee structure somewhat cumbersome and the contribution of the individual committees is quite uneven. Recommendations provide for re-alignment of the committee structure—a plan which is designed to reorient committees more closely toward basic Society objectives and to simplify the present structure. The proposed committee structure should allow considerably easier supervision of activity and measurement of progress.

3. *Individual chapters have not participated sufficiently in the national program and have a sense of distance from the national organization.* There is a general feeling among ASTD chapters that the national organization is somewhat remote from the individual chapter organizations. Although chapter officers are consulted on national policy during conferences, there is little contact during the year. It is recognized that the strength of the national program is derived from a strong chapter organization and consequently, this gap must be narrowed. To take care of this problem it is proposed that we have a General Council consisting of the chapter presidents who are directly elected by the chapter members. Elected officers and other members of the Board of Directors would also be members of the General Council. The Council would be considered as a legislative, as distinct from an administrative or program policy body. The Council would approve, on behalf of the members, all future changes in the Constitution and By-Laws. They would serve as a general advisory body on program and policy matters and would formally elect the President and the Executive Vice President annually.

4. *The resources of the business office have not fully been utilized and its full potential not sufficiently realized.* ASTD is fortunate to have an attractive, well-organized business office, staffed with competent employees, which stands ready to provide a wide range of services to individual members and chapters. This office indeed is the focal point of the day-to-day operations of the Society.

Although there is substantial communication between this office and many members, it is clear that many chapters and members have only a rudimentary knowledge of the office's full potential. New chapter presidents, for example, do not always know the manuals that are available to ease their problems of organization and membership. Nor are they aware of the resources of the business office which may provide them with needed training information or leads.

Hence, in order to shorten the communications gap between members and the national organization, a definite effort must be made to promote the general usefulness and potential of the business office to the membership. Correction of this problem should come with the proposed organization of the Board, a simplified committee structure, an active General Council and full-time executive management.

5. *Lack of full time executive management.* The growth and development of ASTD has been not unlike the development of other national societies. The growth pattern of such groups usually falls into three broad phases. The first phase covers the period of time when officers and members conduct virtually all the administrative business of the organization. Phase two is usually thrust unavoidably upon a growing group; that is, when the administrative burden grows so heavy that a paid staff and office quarters must be acquired. The third phase starts with the realization that full-time executive leadership on the staff level is essential to the furtherance of a dynamic program.

ASTD has grown quite rapidly and enjoyed a successful history, particularly since 1950. Its programs and services have been considerably enlarged. Nevertheless, there have been many difficulties: the Board has been unable to concentrate exclusively on policy-making, planning and over-all leadership; there has been no aggressive national membership acquisition program; and national organization-chapter communications has suffered. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that ASTD employ a full-time Executive Director, as the chief staff officer of the society. Within the policies of the Board, the Executive Director would be given latitude to perform the administrative, business and promotional activities of the Society.

Your officers are of the opinion that the proposed new Constitution and By-Laws are in the best interest of a growing, dynamic Society. A membership meeting will be held to examine and review the proposed changes. Your officers will be grateful to those who find it possible to attend that meeting. For those who are unable to be present, we will appreciate the signing and prompt return of the proxy forms which will be sent to you. The final proposals will be submitted to the chapters for approval.

RALPH M. HARTMANN
President

Note: Chapter Presidents were recently sent a copy of the consultants' final report of the organization study made of ASTD.