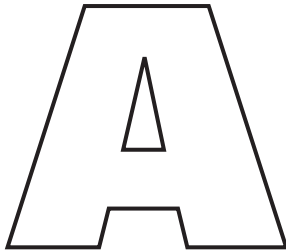


# From Zero to



ASTD is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, making it one of the oldest U.S.-based associations for the profession. From a small band of professionals—12 charter members to be exact—to a network of thousands of men and women that literally spans the globe, ASTD now has members on six of seven continents, and we're working on Antarctica.

A decade ago when we turned 50, we observed that milestone with appropriate gravitas: a celebration, a special issue of this magazine. A half-century of existence is a big deal. And now we're a decade older. "So what?" you may ask.

For me, the "So what?" lies in the extraordinary amount of change that ASTD and the profession have experienced in the past 10 years. After the one-two punch of the economic recession, we (collectively) took a hard look at ourselves. It seems to me that the profession and ASTD, the professional association, have come out of that experience not older and wiser but younger and savvier. And much more relevant.

## What's the evidence?

Take a look at ASTD's decision to offer professional credentials based on a set of standards for the profession. The five hallmarks of a profession, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, are

- a national organization that speaks on its behalf
- a code of ethics
- a body of knowledge
- research that develops the field
- a credentialing organization that sets standards for the profession.

With credentialing in place, built on a body of knowledge, ASTD will play a role in all five of those defining characteristics of a profession.

Take a look at the supplier community—at the ads in this magazine, at the companies that exhibit at our conferences, at the suppliers who sponsor our research and publications and events. If someone had asked me 10 years ago to predict which companies would be on the ASTD Expo floor at our 60th anniversary conference in Washington D.C., I would never have guessed that IBM, Raytheon, Sun Microsystems, or General Physics would be there. To me, it's a sure sign that learning has entered the business mainstream when such companies want to participate in this market.

Take a look at the relevance of the profession compared to what it was 10 years ago. Our president and CEO Tony Bingham says, "I foresee the day when no organization will question the value of learning." That day is closer at hand because of such developments as advances in the measurement and evaluation of training, because of the emphasis that the profession places on performance, and because responsibility for learning and performance is moving steadily up in organizations. Who ever heard of a chief learning officer 10 years ago?

Take a look at ASTD's demographics. Ten years ago, the "average" ASTD member was in his or her late 40s. Now, because of all of the technology jobs related to learning and, I believe, because the career ladder reaches higher into organizations, the profession is attractive to younger people than it was a decade ago. To borrow a phrase from Warren Bennis, the profession now has a better balance of "geezers and geeks." It's also home to a growing number of women.

Visit ASTD's headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, and you'll see that the staff is more wired than in any past decade. Our CEO, Tony, is a case in point: The only time he's not electronically connected to the rest of us is when he's asleep. He and the IT team have pushed us into a state of wiredness that has helped us be a truly global organization. Ten years ago, we didn't have a Website, we didn't have digital magazines, we didn't hold virtual meetings, we didn't have online communities. And we certainly didn't *blog*. Now, we do all that and more, and we're exploring electronically customized membership, online location of experts, and social networking opportunities. Wags used to say that ASTD stood for Ask Someone to Dance. Now it could stand for Ask Someone to Download.

And here's another first: We're publishing a picture of ourselves. This is the ASTD staff (missing a few) in the year 2004. Average number of mobile devices per employee: 1.3. Number of people in the profession we connect with in a day: more than 1000.

Happy Sixtieth!

Pat Galagan  
ASTD staff member since 1983

