



# What's Going on in the World of Training?

By Paula Ketter

OVER THE LAST 60 YEARS, T+D has spent an exorbitant amount of time dissecting the training profession—from “What’s Wrong With the Training Profession” to “The Challenge of Training in the Nineties.”

The questions asked and the philosophies examined not only stirred up strong emotions about how things were being done, but also helped shape the industry into what it is today.

## January 1963

In the January 1963 *Training Directors Journal*, Ernest L. Loen asked, “What in the world is going on in training?”

*The training profession too often engages in rehashing well-worn, if often sound, training methods, occasionally interspersed with impotent warnings of the need to better evaluate conventional training needs. Truly fruitful controversy and constructive criticism are missing!*

*Most in-company attempts at formal supervisory training or economics training are nonsense, as is much of the sales training if it is lopsidedly “classroom” oriented.*

*At any rate, apart from its inapplicability and malpractice, I dislike the very name “training” as much now as I did when I advocated against it in earlier ASTD years. Nobody wants to be “trained,” not even seals, if they were able to comprehend the term semantically.*

*When we thus reduce the scope of desirable training-staff functions to induction, job instruction, and the interdepartmental coordinative assistance ... we need to seek new and bigger horizons for the personnel-development staff specialist.*

## June 1973

Rex F. Sheets, in the January 1973 issue of *Training and Development Journal*, compared his training philosophy of 1961 to his updated beliefs in 1973. In his 1973 piece, he noted that a third dimension of training has emerged: organization development or OD. His definition of OD centered on developing the most effective organization through the maximum utilization of our human resources toward the achievement of financial and social objectives.

*Education and training remain interchangeable in the final analysis. But, more than ever before, the organization’s growth must be seen as a synthesis of the growth of its members.*

*As is usually the case, there is a great lag between a conceptual change and the specific activities it engenders. W. Warner Burke put it this way at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management, “If as much organization development were occurring as is claimed by people who say they are doing OD, we would have much more evidence of change in organizations than I believe presently exists.”*

*The entire training process, as we have known it in the past, has changed. The whole attitude, toward and for this process, has gained in importance and need.*

*Those who perform best in this profession are likely to see themselves as the agents of change for our organizational way of life and for the fulfillment of the organization’s responsibility to society. I believe the development field has grown, changed, and progressed in the past 12 years, and I think those who have been dedicated to the field have grown as well.*

## July 1991

In the July 1991 article in *Training & Development*, Stephen L. Cohen examined the challenges presented by a changing workforce, changing workplace, and more global economy.

*HRD must address the learner’s changing environment. The time will come when training is inextricably linked to how people learn rather than how they are trained. We must improve knowledge, skills, and attitudes—particularly those that are critical to staying competitive.*

*Technological advancements, competition, restructuring, “me-ism,” and globalization point to the need for lifelong learning.*

*In the increasing mercurial environment of more frequent job changes and a less skilled workforce, training must be as efficient a possible. Otherwise, we can expect haphazard, costly approaches and useless results.*

*Training in the year 2000 won’t be for a job but for a set of competencies. The competencies will code sets of job descriptions. The resulting printout will list the most suitable jobs for a particular employee. It will also provide an individualized development plan for the employee to better prepare for those jobs.*

*If we can provide training that fits workers’ propensities and traits—and prepares them to manage effectively the changing states with which they’re confronted—we’ll reach the pinnacle of learning.*

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