With (from left to right)
Warren Bennis,
Geary Rummler,
Gloria Gery,
W. Warner Burke,
W. Mathew Juechter,
and Noel Tichy

Dead End
or Open Road?

ASTD and *T+D* magazine are about to observe a 60th anniversary. The field that we serve has changed over six decades, but never as dramatically as in the past three years. The knowledge economy, the training supplier market boom, the corporate leadership crisis, and the rise of e-learning have all made their mark on the profession. What do leading thinkers in our field make of the situation? What's on their minds as the economy fizzles, corporate leaders do the perp walk, and technology encroaches on learning and work?

What Lie

Here's what several monumental thinkers of ASTD's Advisory Group have to say about what's going on and what might happen. It's about a false dream, physics envy, the age of integration, and the opportunity to make a difference staring us in the face.

s Ahead

W e asked six highly respected industry leaders—Warren Bennis, Warner Burke, Gloria Gery, Mat Juechter, Geary Rummler, and Noel Tichy—to share their thinking about the current situation and where the field should look for direction in the future.

T+D **What's most on your mind? What's intriguing you now? What are you keeping an eye on? What should we be alert to?**

Burke I'm really interested in what's called *tacit knowledge*—how you draw out what people know but they can't articulate. That's highly relevant to the professional behavior of organization consultants. A lot of consultants' knowledge is tacit—that is, they can't quite tell you how they do what they do.

What will it take to make tacit knowledge useful? One, discovering new techniques for eliciting the knowledge that exists. There's research by Herb Simon based on his studies of master chess players. When asked, chess masters can't articulate how they play. Simon observed them for many hours and eventually determined patterns. That's an example of a third party eliciting knowledge that people don't know they have. In a graduate course I teach in which I send students out to do field work, I coach them by saying, "I'm not sure what it is I know, so you have to ask me questions to be sure that what comes out is useful to you." Knowing what questions to ask is very important.

A second interest of mine is the applicability of nonlinear, chaos-type theories to organizational change. I recently finished *Organization Change: Theory and Practice,* a book about nonlinear processes. The book's premise is that we plan organization change as if it's linear—step 1, step 2, phase 1, phase 2. But when the change actually happens, it's anything but linear. What we do in the organization change process is manage unanticipated consequences. The concept of change management is in part an oxymoron because you can't predict fully what's going to happen.

What you really do is manage the consequences of the interventions that are made. That's far more important than the intervention itself, and it's a chaotic, nonlinear process.

A third concern is what I call the "juxtaposition of technology and business processes," plus culture change as exemplified by the recent acquisition by IBM of Pricewaterhouse-Coopers. They're trying to be a major player around technology and business processes, and I fear they'll end up ignoring culture. Fourth is organization design, particularly social network analysis, which is especially important since 9/11, and the "magic number of 150" as in Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point.*

Fifth are inter-organizational and intra-organizational issues. We're into a stage of organizational behavior that has to do with both. By *intra*, I mean putting units together in

The Rule of 150

The Rule of 150 refers to a theory developed by British anthropologist Robin Dunbar that " the figure of 150 seems to represent the maximum number of individuals with whom we (humans) can have a genuinely social relationship, the kind of relationship that goes with knowing who they are and how they relate to us."

Groups of 150 are an organized mechanism that makes it far easier for new ideas and information moving around an organization to tip—to go from one person or one part of a group to the entire group all at once. At a bigger size, you have to impose complicated hierarchies, rules and regulations, and formal measures to try to command loyalty and cohesion. But below 150, Dunbar argues, it's possible to achieve those same goals informally.

unique and different ways through strategic alliances, mergers and acquisitions, and so forth. Some of those ideas aren't new, but their applicability is new.

Juechter One thing on my mind a lot is what e-learning is doing to the context in which learning occurs. Take learning objects. There's a great deal in the literature right now about learning objects and what they're going to do, but I haven't seen any that deal with the context of the information that's included in the learning object. I don't like the idea of people learning things such as leadership skills without some kind of value-based context that talks about the appropriate use of techniques, as well as the techniques themselves. You can say the same thing about such mundane topics as selling skills. Without some contextual reference point, those can be used for evil as well as for good.

My second concern is that I'm confounded by the failure of business leadership in the past three to four years and the dominance of money and greed over any kind of an ethical concern or connection to creating value for clients, which is what business is supposed to be all about. The great teaching question here is how can we do a better job of providing context given the shrinking time allowed for learners to digest topics? The other question is how can we do a better job in our leadership development so that we have leaders who have a balanced view of what their work is all about.

Tichy Something I'm seeing is CEOs building their own CEO-driven learning centers—Steve Ballmer at Microsoft; Paul Ottolini, who's Craig Barrett's replacement at Intel; Steve Ben-

nett at Intuit; Brad Anderson at Best Buy; Jim McNerny at 3M; Bob Nardelli at The Home Depot; David Novak, who came out of Pepsi and went to Yum! Brands; and Hank McKinnell at Pfizer. Those are CEO-driven efforts with highly involved teaching by the senior leadership around action learning projects. I think you're going to see a whole new generation of Crotonville-type entities in those bellwether companies. I think you'll see a period in which learning and teaching driven by CEOs will take off.

I also think the issue of business ethics is on the screen. There will be much more attention given to the environment and the community—more of what I call a "global citizenship agenda" in the post-9/11, post-scandal corporate world.

Bennis I have a series of questions and some primarily normative statements about the field itself. If I sound unseemly or even uncharacteristically provocative, that's my intention. I think our field may become a dead end, which is why this conversation couldn't be more timely. First of all, is the search for a management science trapping us all in a false dream? Are we overly narrow in our view of what leadership and management and change are about? Are we confining ourselves and our thinking by defining ourselves as a management "science"? How can we get beyond "physics envy"?

If you look at most academic management journals, the articles are still primarily based on a model of science, and I wonder how constricting that is. It moved me to think that unless we actually import findings and learning from other disciplines—including, and most of all, from the humanities and the emerging field of human development—I don't think

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we will be educating managers and leaders for the future. I think that's a serious neglect in management education today and has led to some of the things we see going on now. I'll use Enron as the tag line here; you know what I mean.

Secondly, I think we have to make explicit our tacit knowledge about values. Most of us in management and the related fields we're involved with do have a set of values, but we rarely make them explicit. Our values are nothing we should be ashamed of and must be adumbrated, illustrated, and debated. For example, I think all of us share at least these values:

● the spirit of inquiry. This is where the science part of us comes in, the quest for discovery and verification.

● a democratic-humanistic ethos that values inclusion and honors differences

● human rights

● a belief in the development of organizations and leaders that will foster inclusion, creativity, productivity, and fully integrated lives.

Those are examples of a manifesto that we have to be very explicit about. We imply those things, but we rarely put them up front. And I wonder why we don't.

Third, we need newer and different definitions of organizational success. The primary goal of a corporation, as we've all written or said ad nausea, isn't only maximizing profit and shareholder value. There's a much more complex need to look at—to use Jim O'Toole's phrase—*stakeholder symmetry.* There's nothing new about that, but we have to be clearer about how we look at, define, and measure organizational success. That's what's behind the scandals, fraud, deceit, and other disgraces now marching across the front pages of the daily press. Organizations have been using narrow financial in-

dicators to define success. And we've either colluded or gone along with that without screaming out loud that we are, at the very least, mad as hell and are going to do something about it.

Fourth, I want to mention leadership development, which we are all more than a little concerned about. The truth is that while we've made some progress in identifying the key competencies of exemplary leadership, I think we're still in diapers about our understanding of it. And unless we learn a lot more about the neurosciences, cognitive psychology, anthropology, and human development, we'll remain in the dark and in wet diapers—not very comfortable. I think we need new professorships, not just in finance, but in human development. There's a committee on human development at the University of Chicago that's interdisciplinary and does good science. Simply put, we have to learn a lot more about adult learning. Though there's some terrific stuff going on in that wide field by the likes of Howard Gardner, Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, Martin Seligman, William Damon, George Vaillant, and Robert Kegan, we have a long way to go.

I think we ought to understand a lot more about collective leadership. Does any one person have the eyes, the peripheral vision to see, let alone understand, what's going on and where the important inflection points are? We all know that none of us is as smart as all of us, but how do we organize, as Linda Hill puts it, "collective genius"? We have to be more definitive about that.

Finally, I think we need to understand a great deal more than we now understand about why most of our social systems and structures—whether a university, corporation, or church —are so magnificently equip-

"Without some contextual **reference point**, skills learned can be used for **evil** as well as good."

W. Mathew Juechter

ped to suppress truth. How do we get organizations to give up what Daniel Goleman refers to as their "vital lies"? How do we create social architectures and organization designs that weave honesty into the very fabric of the organization?

Gery I agree with Warren's comments about collusion to suppress the truth, but I think misrepresentation and organizational lies are probably more insidious than that. Having said that, I'm going to dive into the technical arena. We're moving towards computer-mediated work environments where work processes are being actively supported by technology. That's different from just *data processing,* in which data is entered or retired. But I don't see those responsible for developing support resources, such as knowledge and training, influencing that. They're automating their old artifacts that were developed in an analog world and putting an *e* in front of it. They should instead be influencing the design of that space.

Further, I see us about to embark on an age in which we're truly transforming the work and learning space. We're entering the age of integration, in which things that were previously separate are brought together. Illustrative of that is software that supports work processing and that maps content to context. I think it's critical that we begin to look at very tight couplings of content to context. That's less applicable in the short-term to leadership or management than to work processes such as credit analysis or whatever, but we understand it and influence it. As software extends to other processes, the business of separating knowledge from its use and creating knowledge objects is impor-

tant. We must then tightly couple it to context. That's more important than just making knowledge assets available on the Web or through a portal.

One thing that troubles me a great deal is the isolation of training professionals from the technology people who are redefining work. And the technology professionals aren't being influenced by the people who actually *do* the work. I see a strong relationship between business processes and technology, and I'm concerned that HR people aren't involved in helping to structure new workspaces.

I also see us at the beginning of a new age of representing and reorganizing content and making it suitable for digital representation and use. Those major trends are occurring at the same time that the expectations for performance are increasing and people have less time to master knowledge or skills. Technology offers us the means to support people directly. Without it, quality will deteriorate. I'm also interested in tacit knowledge capture and how you integrate that into primary workspace, distribute it, and extend its use.

"I think you'll see a **period** in which learning and teaching driven by CEOs will **take off**."

Noel Tichy

Rummler Let me start with a quote I've used a lot: "If you pit a good performer against a bad system, the system wins every time." That provides the context for my view of the world, which is trying to understand the relationship between the individual and the system in which he or she operates. The whole idea of building a productive work environment is being driven by technology. Those in the organization who understand the people component in the combination of people and systems aren't participating in an appropriate way. I think HR and others are being left on the sidelines.

Another thing that fascinates me is the debate going on about talent. Three McKinsey consultants wrote a book called *The War for Talent,* based on research that showed that the best companies hired talented people and treated them like stars. Then Malcolm Gladwell wrote an article in *The New Yorker* attacking what he called "the talent myth" described in the McKinsey book; Gladwell asked if smart people are overrated. It's a debate about whether you hire talented people and feed them or you put money into building a productive environment that allows more than the top 3 percent of the population to be successful. I hear executives saying, "Screw the productive environment. If we get the right people in here, we're in good shape." Such an extreme emphasis on talent is a curious challenge for those of us committed to designing environments and learning to help people become effective.

Bennis I thought that Gladwell missed the point of what the authors of *The War for Talent* were trying to say. His article is carefully reasoned and persuasive, but totally incorrect. It dismisses the idea that human capital and social capital make the world go round. Gladwell just didn't want to get it.

Gery I thought the article was distressing for a different reason. I see a self-referencing group of people who feed on each other around a behavior (for example, being promoted) that doesn't result in performance. These people focus on being on a track more than on achieving results. Gladwell uses a lot of Enron examples. I also see organizations such as Enron in collusion around a lie that then becomes a caricature. There's a kind of managerial macho that says, "OK, I was

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Warren Bennis

here. I didn't really do anything and I'll move on without accountability." That's something I'm distressed by.

Burke All of that is on my mind with regard to selection of people for leadership positions. I had a debate with a headhunter, the head of a large, successful firm, and his biggest concern was why the people he'd successfully placed were gone two or three years later. He talked about the obvious possibility of a culture misfit, but there's something about the insidious nature of our systems, as Warren mentioned earlier, that seems to be so much more powerful than individual talent. Why do we continue to select flawed leaders? Those kinds of issues are extremely important for us to focus on.

Bennis We're in agreement about the recent shenanigans, chicanery, and felonious behavior of many corporations, but I don't think that as a group we were breaking any new ground. If we were having this conversation three years ago, do you think we would've said anything different?

Gery I don't know that we would've said anything different, but I do think that the number of examples and the degree of offenses are indisputable today.

Juechter It's the degree of damage. We have leaders with high levels of responsibility capable of producing incredible damage.

Gery And without apparent accountability. A major healthcare insurer just lost 65 percent of its stock value in two days last October. The Hartford, Connecticut paper had a dis-

cussion on how employees suffered the consequences of bad management decisions. Because 50 percent of employees' 401(k) investments were in the company's stock, the employees were punished. Just two weeks before the article appeared, the chief financial officer was revealed to be one of the top five highest compensated CFOs. I look at those juxtapositions and find the degree of offense to be huge. There doesn't seem to be accountability by the people who made the [bad] decisions; they walk away richly rewarded. The number of these situations is just too great.

Rummler As a cynical, skeptical performance analyst who understands a thing called consequences in a human performance system, I'm not surprised. And I'm a little surprised that anyone else is surprised. The first thing that any practicing behavioral technologist knows and any good comp person knows and any good vice president of sales knows is that what you decide to measure and what you decide to reward is what you're going to get. So when somebody stumbled on "let's hook senior management compensation to stock price," it's pretty predictable that you'd get what you got.

Juechter I've always held the belief that anybody in a position of high authority with high levels of responsibility to multitudes of people must have the good judgment to know the difference between right and wrong when they're manipulating numbers to drive stock prices. What's galling is that these people, for whom I've generally had a lot of respect for what they're able to accomplish, seem to be absolutely devoid of that.

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Gloria Gery

T+D Given that all of you have contributed your thoughts and theories, and in many cases your counsel, to leaders and organizations for many decades, what emotion do you feel about the state things are in? Do you feel any sense of responsibility?

Juechter I feel remorseful, but I think hooking cause and effect around global issues is hard; the issues are too broad. Statements about systems being to blame are irresponsible. People have to exercise a level of responsibility when they're in a system and they know bad things are happening.

Tichy The bubble brought out the worst in the cycle of greed, and it has cost all of us a lot. The biggest loss is trust in business leadership. The free-enterprise system requires rule of law, protection of intellectual property, trust, and transparency in the numbers. The system can fix those through regulatory change, jailing the bad guys, and changing the governance. Those are all necessary but not sufficient. Jeff Immelt, CEO of General Electric, has said, "If integrity is the high bar, it's way too low. Business leaders must win trust through performance with values, and through giving back to society." There are many CEOs of high integrity. They must prevail and lead with unyielding integrity in their organizations—live it daily in appraisals and treatment of suppliers, customers, and employees.

Gery In spite of how offended I am about the abuse of trust by senior executives and trusted service providers, I'm optimistic that we will get through this and move to higher levels of integrity and

results. We're in something of a "Come to Jesus" accounting period that makes us reflect. And organizations are trying to make amends by improving what they do. I continue, however, to be frustrated by the silos of development that result in such a mess of resources for people trying to learn and work. We keep pushing out courses, documents, portals, and Websites, yet fail to design environments that truly support quick, simple work performance and information access. We must get out of the mentality and methodology from the old artifacts we produced and reconceptualize how to organize support and resources for people. We must take their view, not ours, and provide filtered, focused resources that map to actual best-practice work processes rather than continue to organize resources around obsolete structures such as manuals.

Burke The primary emotion for me is depression. I get depressed seeing the same issues come up all of the time. They were there in the 1950s and 1960s when I began to be involved, and they're still there. I'm talking primarily about bad bosses and continuing to select flawed leaders. From 50 to 70 percent of people in leadership positions fail because of poor selection processes. I despair about the assumptions that we can *train* people to be leaders. You can't, but you can help them become more aware of the leadership skills they may or may not have. Self-awareness is very closely associated with success as a leader.

T+D You're of a generation that might've been inspired to pursue your careers by reacting to the hierarchical excesses of organizations in the 1950s and 1960s. What new directions do you think today's excesses and failures will take young people in their careers?

Tichy I run MBA orientation at the University of Michigan. This year, we spent four days on leadership and I had all 450 incoming MBAs write personal case studies of the biggest ethical dilemmas in their careers. Our message is that integrity is the cornerstone of free enterprise and all leaders need a clear teachable point of view on it. The second important element is to give back to society, to practice global citizenship.

Burke I think the Enrons, Tycos, and other recent scandals would cause young OD people to question the emphasis on the bottom line. That hasn't been questioned in the past 20 years. OD people have said, "We have to be more relevant and productive and understand how to influence the bottom line." But if we do that, we're often only making a few people at the top very rich. Is that what OD is all about? What ought to be happening is some more serious questioning—not that you'd ignore organizational performance in the broad sense. You'd put less emphasis on a singular index of organizational performance called profit.

Gery I'm not sure what a hierarchical excess is. Did I say that? I don't think I was inspired by such excesses (whatever they are), but rather was obstructed by them and had to leave to become successful. One of my bosses described me as "one of the most respected, least wanted" people in the company and told me that I "didn't know the difference between being right

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Geary Rummler

and dead right." I fear that today's excesses will drive young people of talent and integrity away from, rather than to, our major organizations. They're more needed now than ever before. If they do join, they'll probably limit commitment until they can trust. Wouldn't you? When people who come in every day and do their best see their leaders robbing the organization blind, they become more than cynical. They become detached and depressed and lose hope. At least there's energy in cynicism. On the bright side, there have always been scandals and excesses and we continue to proceed and prosper. Every day is a new day. I certainly have hope!

T+D Any last words?

Gery I guess I'd like to say that there has never been a more exciting time for those involved in performance development and learning. The need is huge, the alternatives wide open, the complexity tremendous. And the opportunity to make a difference is staring us in the face. I'd ask, "If not us, who?" It must be us. We have the skill and motivation, and the context is right. Full ahead! **TD**

Warren Bennis is university professor and distinguished professor of business administration at the University of Southern California and founding chairman of USC's Leadership Institute. He has written 18 books, including On Becoming a Leader *(translated into 19 languages);* Why Leaders Can't Lead; *and* The Unreality Industry, *co-authored with Ian Mitroff. His most recent book is* Geeks and Geezers, *a study of two eras and how tough periods called "crucibles" force us to decide who we are and what we're capable of being.*

W. Warner Burke is professor of psychology and education and coordinator for the graduate programs in social-organizational psychology in the department of organization and leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York. He's also senior advisor to the organization and change strategy practice of PricewaterhouseCoopers, now part of IBM. Burke is the author of many books on organization change.

Gloria Gery is an independent consultant based in Tolland, Massachusetts. She specializes in performance-centered software design and in developing and implementing interactive training and performance support systems. Her emphasis is in strategy development and in creating the necessary managerial approaches. Gery developed the performance support concept.

W. Mathew Juechter is an independent consultant based in Scottsdale, Arizona. He's a member of the board of directors of Learning Tree International and a director of The White River Institute, a not-for-profit learning community that exists to help people improve the quality of their lives. Juechter is the author and source for several articles on culture and organization change, including "Five Conditions for High-Performance Cultures" (Training & Development, *May 1998). He is a winner of the ASTD Bliss Award, the association's highest individual honor, and for many years was chair of the ASTD Council of Governors.*

Geary Rummler heads the Performance Design Lab based in Tucson, Arizona. A pioneer in the analysis and improvement of human performance, his innovations and applications of performance technologies have guided the thinking of practitioners for more than 30 years. He was at the center of the evolution of understanding human behavior and performance and helped codify the approach to improving performance. He combined systems theory with reinforcement theory and helped develop a methodology for conducting performance analysis. Rummler has been at the forefront of linking individual to organizational performance, identifying three levels of performance to examine: individual, process, and organization. That thinking evolved into the methodology of performance system analysis used today. Rummler is a winner of the Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning and Performance award given to individuals for exceptional contributions of sustained impact. He's also a member of the ASTD Board of Directors.

Noel Tichy is professor of organizational behavior and human resource management at the University of Michigan and director of the Global Leadership Program, an executive-development consortium of 36 companies. He consults to corporations around the world. His books include The Cycle of Leadership: How Winning Leaders Teach Their Organizations to Win, *with Nancy Cardwell;* The Leadership Engine, *with Eli Cohen; and* Every Business Is a Growth of Business, *with Ram Charan. In the mid-1980s, he transformed General Electric's leadership training program by having company executives, including Jack Welch, teach courses and by providing a forum for the leaders to be taught by their students. He advocates extending that "virtuous cycle" to a company's rank-and-file employees, as well as to its customers. His next book, to be written with Warren Bennis, will examine the processes through which political, military, and business leaders make tough decisions.*