

A landmark study reveals eight current and emerging workplace trends, and offers recommendations to help workplace learning and performance professionals prepare for the future.



Trends You Need to Know Now

The famed baseball player Yogi Berra once said,
“The future ain’t what it used to be.”

How right he was.

The 8 Trends

Change in the business world continues to occur at an unprecedented rate, which, in turn, is driving change in the workplace. The rate and depth of change are causing workplace learning and performance professionals to rethink what they're doing now and what they should be doing in the future.

An ASTD commissioned study, "Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies," has identified eight existing and emerging trends driving change in the workplace, plus significant implications these trends have for workplace learning and performance practitioners.

The trends section of the study includes interviews with and input from focus groups and more than 100 thought leaders and practitioners in the learning and performance field, a review of more than 30 research studies and articles related to trends affecting the profession, and survey responses from more than 2000 workplace learning and performance professionals, mostly ASTD members.

1

Drastic times, drastic measures.

Uncertain economic conditions are causing organizations to rethink how to grow and be profitable. Although no one has a crystal ball to predict future economic conditions precisely, a preponderance of data suggests that the U.S. economy will experience slow to moderate growth over the next few years. Uncertainty exists due to the war on terrorism, additional costs associated with higher levels of security, and the impact terrorism is having on economic stability and financial markets. Several sources indicate a likely prolonged labor shortage, translating to a return to a seller's market for talent. Those conditions will cause corporations to continue to look to

improve efficiency, productivity, and service quality with decreased budgets and continued cost controls.

In addition, there will be a greater focus on innovation as organizations look for ways to redefine their business models. To grow, organizations must discover and put into action new sources of value. That means a radical rethinking in addition to doing more with less. Phil Harkins, CEO of Linkage, describes this shift: "Over the past decade, the world (and especially the U.S. economy) has been focused on efficiency and effectiveness. It will take more focus on people and creativity to get organizations to the next level. Our profession is at risk if we don't learn how to help organizations create and innovate. Learning and performance professionals who do that will be the heroes. Right now, they are the pioneers."

Transforming organizational structures are changing the nature of work for employees and learning professionals. Organizations continue to evolve in hopes of finding the most efficient structure to succeed in the current volatile economic environment. Changes include streamlining structure and becoming more flexible, networked, flat, diverse, and virtual—a blurring of lines between work and home, and where and when work occurs. More employees are telecommuting full- or part-time. Many people are overworked and are expected to be available nearly 24/7. The number of dual-earner families has increased. People are trading time for money, and that is affecting stress levels and the quality of family life. People want to be living while they're working, not just working for a living.

2

Blurred lines—life or work?

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Outsourcing is more commonplace for functions not considered core to the business. In some cases, that means human resource operations. BP is just one of hundreds of global corporations singing the praises of business-process outsourcing (BPO), in which entire business tasks—such as human resources, accounting, and claims processing—are outsourced. Some companies want to offload learning. According to Michael Brennan, corporate learning program manager for industry analyst IDC, corporate executives rate training as the function they'd most likely outsource—ahead of sales and marketing, HR, finance, and accounting.

3

Small world and shrinking.

Globalization affects how and with whom we communicate in the marketplace and in the workplace. More products and services are being consumed outside of their country of origin than ever before, thus increasing global economic interdependence and global competition. In addition, organizations are embracing offshore outsourcing as a way to stay competitive. Many functions are being shifted to India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Canada, Russia, and other countries for their low labor costs, high workforce-education levels, and stabilization of technology. According to the 2002-2003 SHRM Workplace Forecast, corporations such as Ford, General Motors, and Nestle employ more people outside of their headquarters countries than within those countries.

Almost any company, whether in manufacturing or services, can find some part of its work that can be done off site. Forrester Research projects that labor migration of service- and knowledge-based jobs will ship 3.3 million American jobs overseas by 2015, 70 percent of which will move to India. Communication and information sharing are occurring across the globe in multiple languages and multiple cultures. Global competition is making way for global cooperation.

4

New faces, new expectations.

A more diverse workforce means accommodating new attitudes, lifestyles, values, and motivations. Diversity in the workplace will continue to increase. As indicated by the U.S. Census Bureau National Population Projections, the Hispanic population will increase by 11.2 percent between 2000 and 2025, to become the largest minority group in the United States. All other minority groups will increase by about 9 percent, while the number of Caucasians will decrease by approximately 19 percent. The world population is growing at a high rate in developing countries, while remaining stable or decreasing in the developed world. The result will be income inequities and economic opportunity leading to increased immigration and migration within and between nations. More temporary workers will be used for specific tasks, and there will be a greater demand for highly skilled workers.

The aging American workforce population means more retirees and potential gaps in availability of experienced workers. According to AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), by 2015 nearly one in five U.S. workers will be age 55 or older. Retirees now often want to keep a foot in the workplace door. AARP's research shows that nearly eight of 10 baby boomers envision working part time after retirement; 5 percent anticipate working full time at a new job or career; only 16 percent foresee not working at all.

5

Work be nimble, work be quick.

The accelerated pace of change requires more adaptable workers and nimbler organizations. Change has become an inherent part of work life. According to some sources, the rate of change is doubling every 10 years. During this same period,

the speed of information processing has increased significantly. Research is beginning to identify the qualities of organizations capable of adapting quickly to change—whether to respond to opportunities or react to potential threats.

Last year, IBM built a US\$2.5 billion chip factory designed for flexibility. Considered an adaptive factory, it can change what it produces depending on what's going on in the marketplace. With an eye toward on-demand computing, IBM has made a fundamental shift in its business strategy, requiring a nimble workforce and a leadership base equipped with the talent and guidance to train them. With its "Role of the Manager@IBM" program, IBM is combining e-learning, in-person workshops, and management communities in a four-tiered approach to address not just the individual and the team, but also the entire organization.

Many organizations have focused on and been successful at reducing cycle times. Lockheed Martin Maritime Systems & Sensors in Syracuse, New York, has reduced the shop cycle time for a ground-based radar system from 10 months to less than five months, while continuing a single-shift operation. The defense contractor has accomplished a 41 percent increase in productivity through the use of Six Sigma quality principles, lean practices, and team-based problem solving. Siemens AG's Computed Tomography division in Forchheim, Germany, has implemented process improvement initiatives that have shortened delivery time from 22 weeks to two weeks, cut processing times 76 percent, reduced inventory 40 percent, and improved delivery reliability from 80 percent to 99 percent.

6

Security alert!

worldwide. It has created a renewed focus on workplace security and the increased vulnerability of intellectual property. Employee monitoring and screening

Heightened security concerns are changing expectations for our personal lives and the role of organizations and governments. There's cynicism, pessimism, and anxiety about the future. The threat of terrorism is an ongoing concern

are occurring more frequently. Concern over travel for business purposes is resulting in the increased use of alternate forms of communication such as teleconferencing, videoconferencing, and Web seminars.

People are looking to their governments and organizations to provide a safer work environment. Steve Piersanti, president of publishing firm Berrett-Koehler, says "More and more people are seeing that things are 'not OK' and are trying to change their lives. A growing number of people are questioning things—things that have yet to have an impact. We are in a new time, where there's a potential opening for rethinking things." Indeed, times are changing and require new thinking.

7

Life and work in the e-lane.

Technological advances are transforming the way we work and live. Technology has become more than just a useful tool; it is becoming a way of life and has helped organizations achieve incredible market efficiencies. Internet technologies are being successfully implemented in all types of industries. Email is faster and easier, and has language translation capability. Wireless technology allows for text, video, pictures, and conversations to be shared at one's fingertips. For young people who will soon be entering the workplace, technology is an extension of their bodies and personalities. "E" will not be a new or separate thing. Technological advances are affecting the way that work is done and how, when, and where learning occurs.

8

A higher ethical bar.

Ethical dilemmas are affecting employees' loyalty, trust, and sense of security. Business scandals involving Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, Adelphia, Health South, Global Crossing, the New York Stock Exchange, and others have raised is-

sues about corporate responsibility to the community and to the workforce. Executives in Australia, Singapore, China, and Europe have made poor decisions that resulted in major catastrophes that undermined their companies' stability and credibility.

The integrity of management and leadership has come into question. The level of trust in the workplace is at an all-time low. According to DDI's recently released Leadership Forecast study for which 1600 leaders worldwide were surveyed, 57 percent said they're paying more attention to the ethics of their immediate managers and supervisors.

The Implications

There's no doubt that the trends we've described are significantly affecting the business world and the workplace learning and performance profession. Those trends have implications for professionals who want to stay ahead of the curve and ensure a successful future.

Know the business, grow the business.

Understanding the business and aligning learning and development strategies to contribute to an organization's strategy is an absolute necessity for workplace learning and performance professionals. It's no longer enough to be expert at learning and development theory and implementation. To be effective, training, learning, and other performance interventions need to align with business strategy. Workplace learning and performance professionals need to understand where the business wants to go. By anticipating the impact of organizational strategy on the business and aligning interventions accordingly, practitioners will play a critical role in determining whether an organization is successful in achieving its goals.

As Pat McLagan, president and CEO of theRITEstuff Inc. and McLagan International, says, "We need to sort out what's important from what's not. We need to know what problems to pay attention to and see what's important in the scheme of things, not just urgent. When HRD responds out of a sense of urgency, we can develop credibility as a reli-

able pair of hands. But that doesn't get us the seat at the table. We need to say XYZ is happening and that has ABC impact on us short term and long term, and then make a case for what to do. It's a proactive position based on big picture and systemic thinking that we need in the long run."

A key part of GM's global transformation involves developing HR people so that they understand and can take on the role of internal consultants. Through mandatory coursework in business acumen, change management skills, and the ability to forge relationships across the organization, GM's HR people will be assisting business units that are having trouble achieving goals.

Another transformation is occurring in organizations that see incentives in outsourcing the learning and training function to eliminate fixed costs, focus on core competencies, become more strategic, and contain the high and unpredictable costs of enterprise learning. Accenture is the behind-the-scenes supplier to Avaya through the Avaya University it staffs and runs. Through its blended learning solution, Avaya's classes have shifted from 80 percent instructor-led to less than 50 percent. More than 200 Avaya employees were hired by Accenture to serve their former company and other clients.

 "A New Market Emerges" by Paul Harris (September 2003 T+D)

It has been stated that few workplace learning and performance professionals possess both the business acumen and functional expertise necessary to move

A Business Understanding Checklist

Here are ways to ensure your future success.

- Understand the organization's business, its business model, and how it makes money in its industry.
- Speak the language of the business to gain credibility.
- Understand the balance sheet and how it relates to business success measures.
- Provide advice on how human capital can be developed and aligned to meet current and future business needs.
- Recognize and act on emerging opportunities to quickly help prepare the workforce to respond to them.
- Understand what makes an organization a change- and learning-friendly environment, and then support and develop that environment.
- Partner with senior leaders to establish learning and development strategies that support the organization's business strategy.

A Business Performance Checklist

- **Focus your efforts on improving those areas that will enhance business performance—such as customer loyalty, product quality and innovation, speed of development and delivery, and sales effectiveness.**
- **Make sure there's a crystal-clear business case for an initiative prior to any investment, including the identification of the initiative's drivers (such as increased market share, improved leadership capability, reduction of key talent turnover).**
- **Establish clear measures that help answer the questions, Why are we doing this in the first place? and Have we been successful?**
- **Demonstrate ROI and business contribution by tying initiatives to lasting and important business metrics that are key differentiators—such as revenue, market share, quality, customer service and loyalty, retention, turnover, efficiency, and innovation.**
- **Share results with those who matter, such as business partners and senior management.**

initiatives are producing expected changes in people performance and, ultimately, in the business.”

The high road starts here.

Expectations have elevated for operating ethically and with social responsibility. Workplace learning and performance professionals are in a do-good profes-

sion. We hypothesize that those who have chosen learning and development believe in a culture of trust, continued development, and ethical behavior. Yet, it can't stop there. Workplace learning and performance professionals need to help their organizations develop a culture of integrity that is worthy of—and builds—employee trust. By doing that, practitioners will not only elevate the integrity of the profession by helping it answer to a higher calling, but also contribute to a larger impact on society.

Show them the value.

Training, learning, and other performance interventions must focus on improving results and positively affecting performance. Workplace learning and performance professionals must demonstrate a payback from their efforts in the form of improved organizational performance and measurable results. In the current economic environment, there are no employment guarantees. It's important to regularly prove your value. According to the ASTD State of the Industry Report, more organizations than ever before are conducting some kind of evaluation, and more are attempting higher levels of evaluation. Yet, only about one company in 10 is attempting any results-based, Level 4 evaluation.

That has to change!

Bill Byham, founder and CEO of DDI, advises, “ROI analyses may not always be practical, but it is critical for practitioners to ensure their

their companies and the profession forward. If there ever was an opportunity to make a difference, this is it.

Margaret Wheatley, president of the Berkana Institute, encourages workplace learning and performance professionals to “go deeper into what we know, to move from certain tools and techniques to understanding the deeper wisdom of those processes. We should be much less dependent on techniques, and more dependent on insight and clarity about human beings. That's asking a lot, but it's the work that needs to be done.”

Cisco Systems is an example of an organization that has taken the high road, recently winning the Ron Brown Award for corporate leadership, which recognizes companies for outstanding community relations. Cisco won for an Internet-based program that trains students in 149 countries in Web technology, with a focus on developing countries. Fannie Mae also is a winner of the award for a program that CEO Franklin Raines said helps retain employees. The program has lent 2200 employees a 7 percent down payment on home purchases and forgiven the principle after five years.

Be tech savvy, or be sorry.

Workplace learning and performance professionals need to understand technology and its use and application. The demand for just-in-time-learning and multiple learning options is changing the nature of how we work and learn. A combination of Web-based training with classroom instruction, knowledge management systems, email, videoconferences, guided chat rooms, and phone conferences can contribute to an optimally effective blended-learning strategy. Training and learning must be developed and delivered more quickly and flexibly, in a variety of modalities, and at the moment of need.

The concept of training is shifting to the provision of learning opportunities and knowledge that improve performance.

Although there will continue to be a place for class-

An Ethics Checklist

- Advocate and model organizational practices that respect the individual and support a humane workplace in times of instability and change.
- Value multidimensional learning experiences that facilitate the development of emotional and spiritual intelligence, as well as knowledge skills.
- Operate ethically and with integrity—the old “walk the talk.”
- Lead by example, and serve as a role model for the organization’s values.
- Model personal development by actively identifying new areas for your own personal development.

room training and organized training events, the new challenge is for workplace learning and performance professionals to capture and catalogue information, and enable learners to access it when it is needed.

There are numerous ways that learning can and should be delivered, such as through colleagues, subject matter experts, managers, online learning communities of expertise, chat lines, and a variety of technology-based tools. The challenge is to provide a balance of alternatives that results in a flexible, yet efficient, learning environment.

AmeriCredit modified its training to appeal to the learning styles of all employees and created a database to track each employee’s learning style. More than 70 percent of the company’s employees are in the database, and training facilitators are tailoring their sessions to reflect an awareness of each trainee’s learning style.

Workplace learning and performance professionals may need to be re-skilled to understand the options available for achieving their organization’s learning objectives. In some cases, that may require practitioners to undergo training on a host of HR technology products in order to facilitate the process for the organization.

CEO of Click2Learn, Kevin Oakes, advises,

“The profession is not changing. Many of the things we knew we should be doing 10 years ago, but we’re still not doing them. We all need a basic knowledge of technology so that we can use it to its best advantage. We need to learn how to blend different modalities of technology. We need Web-skilled instructional design. We need to break our complacency and move fast. We need to be bold and take risks and have a bias for action. Otherwise, this profession will continue to be an afterthought in most companies as opposed to what it can be: a mission-critical, strategic function.”

According to Gloria Gery of Gery Associates, a noted expert on e-learning, we need to restructure knowledge resources and integrate them around work processes. She says that, based on people’s roles, we need to filter what they see, what they need to know, and what they do in their work processes.

Technology puts more information into the pipeline, but it causes information overload. It needs to be analyzed, cataloged, and made accessible

when needed. There are numerous ways that learning can and should be delivered, such as through colleagues, subject matter experts, managers, online learning communities of expertise, chat lines, and a variety of technology-based tools. The challenge is to provide a balance of alternatives that results in a flexible, yet efficient, learning environment.

Weaving a world-wise Web

As companies move or expand operations into other countries, the need for workplace learning and performance professionals to understand and respond to the issues of globalization and diversity increases. Cultural differences influence how people are valued in organizations. Companies operating abroad may need to break out of their own paradigms and understand the cultural issues that could lead to low productivity and labor strife from lack of motivation and alienation of culturally diverse populations.

Indeed, globalization will change things in new ways. Technology is making it possible for companies to become more decentralized, with employees distributed across wider geographic regions. Managing projects in multiple locations will become more common. Workplace learning and performance professionals will be dealing with different styles of learning and communication, using new and different technologies. Learning and performance consultants will need to determine what training opportunities will engage employees in diverse locations across the globe. A bigger challenge will be to determine how to keep widely dis-

A Technologies Checklist

- Learn about new and emerging learning technologies and support systems and how they can best help deliver training and learning.
- Analyze and select training and learning technologies based on a needs-driven approach to meet diverse learner needs and accomplish learning goals and objectives.
- Integrate training and learning technology options to produce coherent blended-learning solutions that best meet an individual’s learning needs and learning styles.

A Diversity Checklist

- Understand cultural differences and how to develop, design, and implement training and learning solutions for a global, culturally diverse audience.
- Help develop your organization's leaders develop cultural sensitivities and abilities so that they can produce, market, and sell products and services in other cultures.
- Leverage diversity to help employees, including leaders, understand and maximize relationships with associates from other cultures, countries, races, and backgrounds.
- Make your learning community and learning resources available worldwide.

tant than ever. The cost of recruiting, training, and onboarding new talent is high. Therefore, developing strategies for retaining and developing existing talent is paramount. To build organizational capability, workplace learning and performance professionals should be helping their organizations select better talent and develop that new or existing talent to be productive faster, to contribute more, and to stay longer.

Pfizer, for example, conducted an intervention with district managers to spot people at risk for turnover and engage them in conversations about opportunities with Pfizer. After one year, a 2 percent drop in turnover saved the company \$2.4 million in its training budget and brought a return of \$3.6 million in cost avoidance and increased productivity.

Peter Senge, noted author and founding chair for the Society for Organizational Learning, says that everyone faces intense competition for key people.

“Consider the predicament that some organizations find themselves in. Take, for example, the oil business. Who really wants to be in the business of drilling for oil and producing a product that inevitably produces

persed employees connected to corporate goals.

Talent purveyor: scout, agent, coach, champion

Demographic changes are making it increasingly hard for companies to find and keep qualified employees. Workplace learning and performance professionals can play a critical role in determining what kind of talent is needed to meet company goals, and then devising development and retention programs based on that need.

Though the soft job market of the past few years may have masked the impact of the coming talent shortage, the need to manage and retain talent proactively is more important

global warming? What would make that something you'd want to do if you were a capable, young, professional with a desire to make a positive contribution in the world? Perhaps, if you could be part of creating the next energy infrastructure, you might consider that part of your life's work.

“So, forward thinking companies will increasingly start to position themselves to be attractive to the best people that they want to draw in who truly want to contribute to economic, social, and environmental well being,” says Senge.

How to prepare

You're probably asking yourself, So, what do I do now to better prepare myself for what's coming? We've attempted to paint a picture of what you can expect over the next few years and how the profession will be affected. In an upcoming issue of *T+D*, we'll share the foundational competencies and professional areas of expertise that learning and performance practitioners will need to succeed in the future. **TD**

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A Strategic Checklist

- Ensure that employees have the right skills to meet the strategic challenges of the organization.
- Work with senior management to identify high-potential individuals to fill key positions in the future.
- Help the organization realign talent to meet the organization's critical business needs.
- Ensure that the supply of talent equals the organization's demand.
- Help implement career development and talent management strategies to keep the organization's high-potential and high-performing employees.
- Help leaders diagnose development needs, identify training and development opportunities, and create a learning culture.
- Promote an environment where employees feel they make a difference, are valued, and are continuing to learn.
- Capture employees' hearts and minds to keep the best people who can create, innovate, and move the organization forward.