

## Do Trainers Know Best?

Staying on the front of the surfboard, Ron Zemke calls it. More sedately, Pat McLagan describes it as "deliberate efforts" to develop knowledge, skill, and ability.

Whatever you call it, learning is the trainer's mania. In the name of professional development, in aid of their careers, or in the grip of some Maslovian need, trainers work hard at learning. You can see it clearly at an ASTD conference, where even familiar sessions are packed year after year by people intent on renewing their inner resources. You can see it clearly at the annual ASTD Expo, which this year seemed not so much a competitive sales event as a knowledge pool full of eager swimmers.

Though trainers are notable for holding forth, they are equally notable for taking in. Their eagerness to network, their quest for inner and outer resources, their conspicuous consumption of the printed word, all

mark this group as one with a strong need to learn.

It is a logical and praiseworthy addiction, for the growth of its individual members will be the building blocks for the growth of the profession.

An addiction to learning may be the pathology of the information age. And like any pathology, it carries risk. There is a danger in the pursuit of learning without a purpose. Trainers certainly know that learning proceeds best and sticks strongest when real needs drive it and it is tied to some job or task.

Bob Schwartz, head of the Tarrytown Center, a school for entrepreneurs, offers a hopeful prognosis for the learning-addicted. He says that the mastery of information can produce knowledge, and the mastery of knowledge can produce wisdom.

May it never be said of members of the training profession that either knowledge or wisdom becomes the enemy of their learning.



*Editor*