

# milestones

AND PRACTICAL RESEARCH  
MARK PROFESSION'S

# EVOLUTION



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## Experts weigh in on the past, present, and future of the profession.

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BY PAULA KETTER

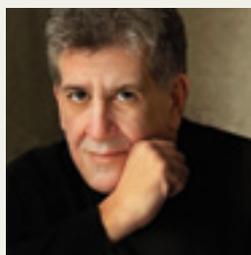
**A** lot has changed in the past 70 years, but as you will read in this article, the need for skills development, the importance of learning and development, and the link between employee performance and organizational success have remained strong during the growth of the training and development (T&D) profession.

I connected with some of the biggest names in the industry—John Coné, Elaine Biech, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, John H. Zenger, Elliott Masie, Frances Hesselbein, Patricia A. McLagan, Beverly Kaye, and Marjorie Blanchard—and asked them to reminisce about the past 70 years of workplace T&D, and to share their vision for where the profession is headed.

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## The Amazing Era of Self-Service Learning

BY PATRICIA A. MCLAGAN

The learning professional's role in self-service learning is to help learners make learning more effective, efficient, productive, innovative, and fun.

This is the era of self-service. We pump our own gas, file our own taxes online, tally and bag our own groceries, and do our own bank transactions. At work we do our own word processing and correspondence, plan our own travel, and create our own boarding passes. The self-service era extends to workplace learning and performance, too. The ubiquity and variety of learning resources available without professional filtering by learning and organization development professionals, librarians, or experts has opened a global idea and expertise candy shop for anyone with a need, question, problem, or dream.

Self-service learning is not something we have to tell people to do—they are already there. In fact, people everywhere have been managing their own learning since the beginning of time. Some of that learning is accidental—we learn from mistakes, through accidents, or by surprise when we are focusing on something else. And some of that learning is intentional—planned and focused on helping us achieve a dream, solve a problem, or reach a goal.

*Excerpted from the December 2011 issue of T+D.*

### How has the trainer's role evolved during the past 70 years?

“Fifty years ago the role of trainers was that of an internal guerilla group trying to change the command-and-control culture of the organization. The trainers' values and message were often not aligned with those at the top. Today the trainers' role seems much more targeted to help the organization achieve its objectives. There is much closer alignment with senior leaders.” —**John H. “Jack” Zenger**

“The development part has become much more important than the training part. No longer is the emphasis primarily on rote learning of fixed elements. Scripts and manuals are still important—particularly in sales training or in remote call centers—but the focus has moved from what is taught to what is learned; that is, how to help people internalize new behaviors.” —**Rosabeth Moss Kanter**

“Seventy years ago, trainers were predominantly educators who worked in business. Trainers have gone from telling learners what they know, to designing [initiatives] aimed at what they think learners need to know, to curating collections of what learners might need to know, to guiding learners among myriad options toward what those learners want to know. The most crucial element of that evolution is the willingness to trust learners to manage their own development. Today, trainers are business leaders with a learning specialty. And like all evolution, it has not happened uniformly and everywhere.” —**John Coné**

“The biggest evolution is from classroom to boardroom. Trainers must not only possess the professional savvy required to develop others, but also must acquire the business acumen to move their companies forward. While continuing to grow and develop themselves and keeping up with the hottest technology, trends, and techniques, trainers must also hone their skills and knowledge about what it takes to make their organizations the most profitable, marketable, and competitive.” —**Elaine Biech**

### What is one of training and development's greatest legacies?

"I'd say it is the belief that learning truly matters to individuals. My own retention and engagement research showed me (many times over) that talent will stay with an organization if they are growing, challenged, and continually learning. Compensation simply does not rate as high on anyone's list of what matters."

—**Beverly Kaye**

"More than anything else that is ongoing in organizations, T&D keeps the focus on the vital asset that is each and every person's capabilities (knowledge, skills, motivations, creativity). T&D is the guardian of people as living and growing and—ultimately—indispensable resources upon which all other resource productivities depend (people run facilities, provide services, act on data, etc.). T&D exists to unleash all the latent potential in the workforce." —**Patricia A. McLagan**

"We have led the way in ferreting out solid, practical research about the factors that create high performance individuals and teams; along with what makes extraordinary leaders. That ability to discover and disseminate good research is one of the major contributions."

—**Zenger**

"We have left a legacy of investing time and resources to create new skills and employment opportunity in the workplace." —**Elliott Masie**

### What milestone in ASTD's history has had the most impact on the field? Why?

"Keeping trainers informed and up-to-date on all of the technology changes over the years. Working through trainer certification with all that that involves. Keeping up a steady flow of publications in the field, and through the learning sessions, helping to highlight success stories and intellectual property that fuels our industry and work." —**Marjorie Blanchard**

"The most impactful evolution of ASTD's purpose was widening the focus of the association to connect learning and performance to business results. I know that some would say it was always assumed or implied. ... ASTD put organizational results firmly at the forefront. I think ASTD led a fundamental change in the view of our profession that we now take for granted." —**Coné**

"The ASTD Certification Institute launched the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) [credential] in 2006. The CPLP designation finally granted those in the field a chance at being a 'professional.' ... By requiring mastery of a complex set of knowledge and skills through formal education and practical experience, the CPLP gives everyone a chance to prove that they have the experience, knowledge, and performance to call themselves 'professionals.' The CPLP raises the bar and transforms the field of training based on formal qualifications, education, and examination." —**Biech**

## ASTD Whitepaper Highlights Skills Gap

According to the 2012 ASTD whitepaper, *Bridging the Skills Gap*, 84 percent of ASTD member respondents indicate that there is a skills gap in their organizations now, up from 79 percent in 2009 when ASTD conducted the same survey.

Middle- and high-skills jobs comprise the largest gaps. Middle skills describe highly specialized mechanical, technical, and production careers that may require industry or government certification but not necessarily a bachelor's degree. Growing middle-skills industries, such as manufacturing, construction, and healthcare, are facing the most significant skills shortage.

Some of the reasons for the skills gap, according to respondents, include not enough bench strength in the company's leadership ranks, training investments have been cut or there is a lack of commitment by senior leaders to employee training and development, and skills of the current workforce do not match changes in company strategy, goals, markets, or business models.

To download a copy of the whitepaper, visit [www.astd.org/About/Our-Public-Policy-Work](http://www.astd.org/About/Our-Public-Policy-Work).

## CPLP Credential Validates Training Profession

Since its launch in 2006, nearly 1,500 learning professionals have earned the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) credential. The mission of the program is to promote a standard of excellence and provide training and development professionals with a platform to demonstrate and validate their competencies, prove their worth, and increase the impact that they have on organizations.

The CPLP credential covers nine areas of expertise in The ASTD Competency Model and is based on two components: a knowledge exam and a work product submission. The CPLP certification exam is offered in 19 international locations.

For more information, visit [www.astd.org/Certification](http://www.astd.org/Certification).

“The decision to make ASTD international rather than just focused on the United States had many positive consequences. Besides propelling it to grow much larger, it enabled its members to be better prepared to serve multinational clients, and the diversity has made it a stronger organization.” —Zenger

### Which evolution in the training and development profession is the most surprising or unexpected? Why?

“Who could predict the role technology would play in T&D? The most surprising element is the way staff members assumed that learning opportunities were an integral part of a worker’s contract. ‘Learning and growing’ became an expectation the organization had in providing supervisor opportunity at every level.” —Frances Hesselbein

“The most surprising development to me was the rise of the CLO as a standard. Learning is not a specialized discipline in organizations. ... Though we might be able to cite exceptions at specific companies, there are no broadly accepted positions of chief productivity officer, chief innovation officer, chief creativity officer, chief teamwork officer, and chief risk taking officer. Yet somehow conditions arose that required a strategic learning leader. But unlike the total quality management movement, when chief quality officers mostly came and went, CLOs are still around. Amazing” —Coné

“Recently there has been a lot of talk about ‘flipping’ the classroom experience so that learners learn content online or before class and then they come to class to do their ‘homework’ or application work. This has evolved to a greater

reliance on e-learning, with the face-to-face experience becoming a lot more experiential. Learners have essentially the same access to information through the Internet that trainers do in many cases—or even more. Trainers need to turn information into helpful, actionable knowledge and practice.” —Blanchard

“The decrease in the number of full-time employees in the learning field. With a decrease in classroom trainers and the growth of external partners, the learning and development workforce in most organizations is shrinking in size, but not in impact or importance.” —Masie

### What will the profession look like in the next five to 10 years?

“More virtual. Also, ironically, more connected to large educational institutions, whether traditional universities offering MOOCs (massive open online courses) or new for-profit entities serving global markets.” —Kanter

“Our job will be preparing workers for a future we cannot describe. In 10 years we will have conceded that the market for learning will be dominated by individuals, not organizations. Few, if any, broadly used learning networks will be restricted to within any given organization. ... The profession will contain specialists who create, manage, and maintain fragments from which personal learning moments can be built. There will be people who specialize in the capture and proliferation of spontaneously generated learning. And there will be managers who recognize learning interdependencies within and among organizations, who guide individuals to assemble temporary learning networks, and who make and break experimental learning connections.” —Coné

“We will continue the trend toward evidence-based solutions rather than having training dominated by the latest bestseller. Savvy clients want data about the outcomes of learning and development efforts. At the same time, the focus will continue to shift to permanent behavior change in place of insights and good feelings. Knowing and feeling do not always

lead to changed behavior, and organizations will constantly move toward changed behavior as the goal.” —Zenger

“The boundaries of the classroom will be broader and looser than we can imagine. Learning may occur in coffee shops, bookstores, and trains. More learning will occur on the job with just-in-time technology in everyone’s mobile device. Organizations will finally recognize that their most valuable resource is people. The profession will expect anyone who provides development to this priceless resource to have a CPLP and to be true enthusiasts of experiential learning.” —Biech

### A rich history

The history of the profession is rich with change as practitioners have evolved from deliverers of training to business partners, leaving a legacy of investing in human capital and aligning people capabilities with business success.

Milestones in ASTD history—the CPLP credential and ASTD’s growth to an international association—have contributed to the evolution of the value of employee training. The rapid rise of technology and the Internet has played a critical role in the design and delivery of training, forcing practitioners to turn information into helpful, actionable knowledge and practice.

The past five to 10 years have changed this profession at lightning speed, but the next 10 will have a profound effect on the role of the trainer in the field. As Biech says, “T&D professionals will orchestrate the opportunities for many self-directed learners who are searching for the fastest way to ‘download learning.’”

■ **Paula Ketter** is editor of *T+D*; pketter@astd.org.



## ASTD’s Annual Research Highlights State of the Industry

In 1998, ASTD created a landmark study of human performance practices that revealed new insight into the amount and focus of investments in human capital and about the links between that investment, innovative work practices, and performance.

The 2012 *ASTD State of the Industry Report* reveals that more than \$156 billion was spent on employee learning by U.S. organizations. Of that figure, \$55.3 billion was spent on formal training in the United States. The report data are presented in three groupings—ASTD BEST Award winners, consolidated responses, and Fortune Global 500 companies—against which training professionals can benchmark learning investments and best practices in their organizations.

“The report portrays a healthy environment for the L&D industry as senior leaders continue to value investments for the development of their staff,” wrote ASTD Director of Research Laurie Miller in the November 2011 issue of *T+D*.

