ASTD

Competency Study

The Training & Development Profession Redefined

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Examples of the Proven Value of the ASTD Competency Model

If the cliché "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" carries any weight, then individuals, organizations, education institutions, and the training and development profession will find plenty of real value to extract from the 2013 ASTD Competency Model.

The benefits to professionals are self-evident in the Model-aligned Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) certification program, judging from the growing number of training and development professionals currently earning their CPLP certifications.

Forward-looking organizations have also discovered the Model's value and are aligning the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors of their training and development staff to current professional practices while preparing to meet future ones. Other organizations are using the Model to build comprehensive performance management systems for their organizations.

Individual contributors and practitioners, especially those in leadership positions, increasingly rely on the Model as a well-researched tool to help them identify the specific skills they need to advance their and their staff's careers.

For those who teach and plan curricula for training and development professionals, the ASTD Competency Model has proven itself a valuable classroom tool and a foundation on which to build academic curricula.

While these benefits are certainly true, nothing validates real-world application like examples from the field. What follows are a few examples that clearly demonstrate the previous Model's value to four organizations: the University System of Georgia, ASTD's Metro DC Chapter, Hilton Worldwide, and ASTD's San Diego Chapter.

University System of Georgia

The University System of Georgia's Board of Regents recognized the need for developing HR leadership at the system level in 2009 after a close examination of its 35 academic institutions.

At the time, each of these institutions had its own HR department and each institution's level of training and development capacity varied. Some programs were well established, while others had limited personnel and resources dedicated to training and development.

Faced with this challenge, Tina Woodard, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Organizational Development in the Board of Regents' office, launched the Professional Development Consortium (PDC; for more information on the PDC, see http://www.usg.edu/hr/development/professional_development_consortium). Consisting of HR and OD staff from six key institutions within the University System of Georgia, the PDC leveraged the existing training and development capacity of these key institutions to create Regional Training Centers responsible for (a) conducting training needs assessments for institutions in its region, (b) developing training programs, and (c) sharing resources.

The mission of the PDC is to facilitate collaboration and organizational learning with a central goal of increasing the training and development capacity between HR and OD professionals at each institution.

The ASTD Competency Model and other ASTD products played a key role in accomplishing these objectives. The system used the ASTD Competency Model as the basis for conducting system wide, regional, and institutional needs assessments. For example, through surveys and qualitative discussions, the Competency Model was used to identify gaps in training and development knowledge and skills among the HR and OD staff.

PDC staff created a core set of system wide training courses for professionals in the university system using the results of these needs assessments. The PDC also conducted train-the-trainer sessions with institutions that had fewer than

average established training and development personnel to ensure these programs were administered effectively. Individual institutions and the university system also purchased a number of ASTD publications such as *Infoline*, the ASTD Learning System, ASTD Press books, and *T+D* to help build training and development capacity.

To further deepen training and development capacity, the university system assembled a virtual study group to prepare HR and OD professionals within the system to obtain a Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP) designation. However, the goal of this effort is not solely to obtain credentials, but also to build training and development skills among employees and increase community among individuals doing training and development work. Study group participants and facilitators are also using ASTD's preparation resources (for example, the CPLP Study Group Leader's Guide) to meet these objectives.

In short, the University System of Georgia uses the Competency Model to identify the competencies needed to perform training and development work and then uses ASTD products to help increase its HR and OD employees' collective skill set.

ASTD's Metro DC Chapter

ASTD's Metro DC Chapter takes full advantage of ASTD's Competency Model and uses it as a key strategic and organizational guide for the 350+ member chapter that includes the District of Columbia and portions of Virginia and Maryland.

According to former Chapter President Michelle Moore, the first benefit of the Model is that it provides the Metro DC Chapter members with a common language to discuss the training and development field. She said the Model also provides organizational focus as well as a strategic framework to discuss the overall direction of the Metro DC Chapter. She noted that this benefit is especially appreciated during chapter board meetings when the language of the Model helps keep everyone on the same page when critical discussions occur.

Program development at the Metro DC Chapter is also tied to the Model. The chapter organizes a variety of evening and daylong workshops for its members and all use specific components of the Competency Model as the basis for the learning events. Moore noted that by using the Model she is able to ensure that members' needs are met and no important developments in the training field are overlooked.

The Competency Model also plays a key role in the chapter's career development and sponsorships and in internal professional development operations. Moore noted that during her tenure as president, the Competency Model was

her go-to document when members approached her with questions about career development. She said that the Model allowed her to discuss very specific aspects of a member's career and to make concrete recommendations that she could link directly to information in the ASTD Certification Institute's Candidate Bulletin.

Sponsoring organizations also benefited from the use of the Competency Model, Moore said, because it allowed chapter leadership to address specifically how their sponsorship supports the training and development field.

Clearly, the Competency Model is an important operational tool that provides a wide range of benefits for the Metro DC Chapter. Other ASTD chapters should consider the use of the Competency Model and the potential it offers to improve key stakeholders' service and support.

Hilton Worldwide

Hilton Worldwide uses the ASTD Competency Model in at least three specific ways to support its strong commitment to the continued growth and development of its global workforce and to ensure that all its training and development professionals have the right competencies for success.

First, Hilton uses the Model along with an established enterprise wide general competency model to provide a lens for assessing the technical skills and the job knowledge of employees during annual and midyear reviews and to zero in on areas for improvement. Team members and their managers also use ASTD's Career Navigator—a tool designed to help individuals and their managers assess and identify needed current and future knowledge and skills—as part of this standard assessment protocol.

Second, Hilton supports the Competency Model through its support of CPLP certification; nearly every member of its curriculum design team has the CPLP designation. Hilton's consistent support of the Model is rooted in the belief that the Competency Model defines the field for practitioners, provides a common language for better communication, and sets a solid competency baseline for all team members.

Third, the Model's clearly defined set of broad and specific competencies provides a neutral basis to examine individual team members' and the organization's strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge then helps identify gaps that need attention.

Hilton's use of ASTD's Competency Model is a concrete example of how leading-edge organizations can use and adapt the Model in ways that provide real individual and organizational value while offering clear pathways for positive career and organizational improvement.

ASTD's San Diego Chapter

Former ASTD San Diego Chapter President, Phillip Tanzilo, says his experience in 2006 of using the ASTD Competency Model to turn around the once-struggling chapter is a good example of the Model's transformational power.

Not only did the Competency Model drive the chapter's renewed strategic planning efforts that year, it also served as a standard tool to assist with career and personal development advice, and was the basis for all of the chapter's marketing and programming decisions. The coordinated effort, Tanzilo says, achieved some remarkable results.

According to Tanzilo, when he took over as chapter president in 2006 during an economic downturn with high local unemployment, membership was falling and finances were in the red. He and the other 14 board members were looking for some guidance to turn the fortunes of the chapter around. When he and the board discovered the ASTD Competency Model, they all knew they had struck gold.

Tanzilo said the Model was the perfect supporting tool for the 2006 strategic planning theme, "Fresh, Focused, and Aligned," and as it turned out, the Model became the basis for the most important chapter functions, operations, and mission directions, including chapter leadership.

The ASTD Competency Model served as a valuable and comprehensive career and personal development road map. Tanzilo says that this core value was quickly realized among chapter members as new programs were rolled out that directly aligned to the Model.

The board also saw value in the Model as a tool to provide consistency to the job of board member. Prior to the Model's introduction, the chapter had a difficult time transitioning new board members to service. It was also difficult to find the right individuals to serve in the vacant slots created by departing members. The ASTD Competency Model was the natural benchmark for board members to use when they created their own Board Leadership Competency Model, designed specifically to ensure that each board slot is filled with the right individual who has the key values, knowledge, skills, and abilities to do the job.

In addition, the San Diego Chapter used the nine Areas of Expertise (AOEs) in the 2004 ASTD Competency Model as the basis for marketing its professional development programs. This alignment provided a much-needed message about the value of membership to new and potential members. Monthly chapter meetings also featured speakers aligned to the Model, as did the chapter newsletter, *Training Trends*. Even the chapter's first annual conference in 2006, *Your Turn to Learn*, aligned its learning tracks to the AOEs in the Competency Model.

The efforts paid off for the chapter both in internal chapter operations and external results. The consistency that the Model brought to board leadership resulted in greater engagement. All 14 volunteer board members were retained that year in clearly defined roles. Membership increased that year from 390 to over 500 members, and the chapter finances improved from being in the red to having a cash reserve. Clearly, use of the Model was a real win for the ASTD San Diego Chapter.

The 2013 ASTD Competency Model was developed with the input of hundreds of thought leaders, experts, and training and development practitioners. It provides a common language and framework of competencies that define the current and future states of the training and development profession.

The Model redefines training and development competencies in light of profound changes in technology, the economy, and new expectations that organizations have about the contribution of employee training to their success. As such, it is a blueprint for success for training and development professionals, for organizations, for educational institutions, and for the profession.