Winter 2009

American Society for Training & Development
NEBRASKA CHAPTER

ASTD
WORKPLACE LEARNING & PERFORMANCE

Upcoming Events

February Monthly Meeting
Creative Ways to Improve Performance with a Geographically Diverse Workforce
Wednesday, February 11
11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

March Monthly Meeting
Let's Move from Labels to Living
Wednesday, March 11
11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

For information on these and other upcoming events, visit www.astdnebraska.org

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President's Message - January 2009

Heather S. Davis

As I assume the Presidency of ASTD Nebraska for 2009, I do so with a grateful heart for the remarkable opportunity the membership and former leadership of this organization has given me. It is a pleasure to serve such an amazing group of people. Those that preceded me have laid the groundwork for a dynamic year and I am truly blessed. I have been taking this transition time to reflect on the past and future.

"Tough times bring opportunities", Tony Bingham, the President and CEO of ASTD National said to this year's gathering of ASTD chapter leaders at the ASTD Leader's Conference (ALC) in October. Tony was describing the state of the training industry nationwide. He shared that corporate executives continued to focus on their people and skills but travel budgets for training were down. Because travel was down, interest in web-based instruction is up.

We've seen reflections of Tony's national observations locally here in the Omaha metro area. The launch of the E-Learning Special Interest Group (SIG) this year with unprecedented attendance levels has demonstrated to us that the membership is interested in connecting with local experts and learning more. Even if you are firmly rooted in the classroom, it is in your best interest to find out about teaching online.

Fortunately, current Omaha unemployment statistics are not following national trends and our unemployment rates have increased only slightly compared to the rest of the country. That's some comfort to the job seekers among us. Several individuals who have lost their jobs due to layoffs from local organizations in multiple industries have contacted their friends in the ASTD Nebraska for help. We are currently working to connect job seekers and potential employers through our Career Resources and connections. We have been reviewing resumes, job postings, and performing mock interviews for those recently unemployed and those who would like to be prepared in case they become unemployed.

Even if you are not currently seeking employment, it is important to be ready to promote yourself and your skills to your current organization or potential one should the unexpected occur. At our January monthly program, you will learn to promote yourself better by creating "brand you" and you can register for the separate afternoon session where you can have your resume reviewed and do a practice interview.

Whether you plan to seek opportunities elsewhere or stay put, I hope that you use 2009 to build your connections with your ASTD Nebraska member and leadership

(Continued from page 1)

community by committing to use the resources that we provide you for career growth and opportunities that we provide for connecting with others:

- Put our monthly programs on your calendar, attend, and make new connections
- Include ASTD involvement in your yearly resolutions
- If you have available training jobs in your organization, use our free posting service to attract the best and the brightest to your organization
- If you are experienced, mentor someone else through our mentoring service
- If you want to change your direction or want to be mentored, sign up for mentoring
- Get official recognition of your skills by becoming CPLP certified. We offer study groups to support you.
- Volunteer for ASTD – it's the best networking opportunity in the area

Undoubtedly, your commitment to your career in these tough times will pay off with more opportunities for you in the future.

More Information:

- Nebraska unemployment information - http://www.nebraskaworkforce.com/nelmi.htm
- E-Learning – Read "How Much Longer Can Your Organization Afford Classroom Training?" in this newsletter.
- ASTD Nebraska website Career Center – Find out more about job opportunities, resume critique service, and mentoring. Don't forget to log in as a member to see the latest jobs.
- ASTD Nebraska website front page – Find out more about January's monthly program separate afternoon session.

Comments? Concerns? Questions? Contact Heather at president@astdnebraska.org.

ASTD - Nebraska Chapter

Our Mission...

The mission of the Nebraska Chapter of ASTD is to enhance members' abilities to train, develop and support clients and organizations and our local and global communities.

The Nebraska Chapter's Vision...

...is to be the preferred leader in workplace learning and performance.

Strategic Goals

Operations ~ Support the Chapter's foundational business processes

Membership ~ support and advance member's career development

Profession ~ Demonstrate the value of the Workforce Learning and Performance profession

Community ~ Provide service to our community to encourage growth in ourselves and others

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CPLP

For more information visit www.astd.org/content/ASTDcertification

CPLP 2009 Testing Schedule			
Testing Window	Registration Deadline Date	Knowledge Exam	Work Product*
March 2009	Feb 13, 2009	March 21 – April	September 3, 2009
May 2009	April 3, 2009	May 23 – June 13	
Sept 2009	August 7, 2009	Sept 19 –Oct 10	March 4, 2010
Nov 2009	Nov 3, 2009	Nov 17 –Dec 13	
*Work product score turnaround is 8-12 weeks.			

ASTD Nebraska February Program

Creative Ways to Improve Performance
with a Geographically Diverse Workforce

Wednesday, February 11, 2009 ~ 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Scott Conference Center
6450 Pine Street ~ Omaha

Laura Handrick, Vice President of Innovation for The Maids International, applied a revolutionary approach to tackle on-the-job performance, and will share the lessons she's learned. With input from a franchisee-task force, Laura overcame the historical training model of a family owned business to redefine communication, content and delivery to meet the needs of The Maids Home Services' multi-lingual employee base.

Initiating unprecedented collaboration among creative staff from all over the world, Handrick supervised the development of materials that could teach, inform, and support employees, no matter their language or culture. Join us for a fresh perspective on how we can more effectively employ alternative delivery media to upgrade performance with a diverse and geographically distributed workforce.

Register online at www.astdnebraska.org. ASTD Nebraska members must sign in to receive the member rate. If you prefer, you may also register by calling ASTD Nebraska at 402-850-6710 or by emailing contactus@astdnebraska.org.

February Program Speaker—Laura Handrick

Laura Handrick is Vice President of Innovation at The Maids International, a franchise organization with over 160 business units across North America. Laura has an extensive background in the service industry, including food service, retail and franchising. In addition to a degree in Economics, she earned a masters degree in Educational Technology from San Diego State. She has presented at several national conferences for ASTD, ISPI, Masie's Learning Conferences and LearnShare, and recently served a two-year term on ASTD's International planning committee. Laura has expertise in human resources and eLearning, and has facilitated groups in activities ranging from talent planning to strategic management and communicating organization change.

ASTD Nebraska 2009 Monthly Programs

Mark your calendars now for the 2009 ASTD Nebraska Monthly Programs!

We are excited to announce the new venue for our 2009 monthly programs will be the Scott Conference Center, located at 6450 Pine Street. The Scott Conference Center is a state-of-the-art conference center that offers advanced technology and versatile meeting space that will better suit our needs.

Due to this change in venue, it was necessary to adjust the meeting schedule from the first Wednesday of every month. For 2009, all monthly programs will be held on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, _except_ for the May meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, May 27th and the October meeting, which will be held on Wednesday, October 7th.

As a result of this change in venue, and due to the current economic status, it is necessary to increase our monthly programs fees slightly. The new fee will be $20 for members and $35 for non-members.

2009 Programs—January –June

January 14th ....Promoting Your Best Resource – YOU!

February 11th .....Creative Ways to Improve Performance with a Geographically Diverse Workforce

March 11th ....Let's Move from Labels to Living

April 8th ....Moving Beyond PowerPoint-on-the-Web: Creating Successful, Interactive eLearning

May 27th ....Performance Consulting, the Link Between Training & OD

June ....Family Social, TBD

Watch for more dates to be published soon.

Monthly Programs Format:	
10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Sign-in/Welcome
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Networking – take advantage of this time to get to know your fellow ASTD members
11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Lunch/Networking activity
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Monthly program/presentation

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ASTD Special Interest Groups

For more information about e-learning topics, attend ASTD Nebraska's E-Learning Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings. ASTD Nebraska members can join the ASTD Nebraska E-Learning SIG Yahoo! group and/or attend SIG meetings for free! Join the Yahoo! Group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ASTDNEE-Learning and watch the ASTD Nebraska website for more information about monthly SIG meetings.

Employee Learning Week

Employee Learning Week (ELW) is an important opportunity for companies to demonstrate their commitment to workforce development. ASTD declared December 8-12 as Employee Learning Week to increase awareness of the value of learning and its link to organizational results.

ASTD Nebraska and National ASTD would like to congratulate the following organizations as Champions of Learning for their formal recognition of Employee Learning Week:

Crew Training International

HDR

Wisconsin Physician's Services

ASTD Nebraska has worked to increase Employee Learning Week's recognition and is happy to report that the State of Nebraska and the cities of Omaha, Papillion, and Ralston have officially recognized Employee Learning Week for 2008 by official proclamation! It's never too late to make plans to celebrate Employee Learning Week in your organizations in 2009. Be nationally recognized as a Champion of Learning by implementing any of the suggested methods available on www.employeelearningweek.org. There you will find all you need to make your Employee Learning Week celebration a success! For more information, please contact Patricia Harrold, CPLP at patricia.harrold.ctr@offutt.af.mil.

Board members of the ASTD Nebraska and Lincoln chapters jointly attended a proclamation ceremony at the State Capitol in Lincoln on Wednesday December 10th, where Governor Dave Heineman proclaimed the week of December 8th through the 12th as Employee Learning Week in Nebraska.

Writing Tip: Use a Forecasting Subject Line

By Stu Tanquist

Productivity Tip
When you want your emails to get things done, begin with a forecasting subject line. This simple step will turn your readers from passive to active. It often determines whether your email gets read or not.

Forecast the Bottom Line of Your Email in the Subject Line
Forecasting subject lines tell the reader what you're going to tell them. In other words, they forecast the business application of your email - they tell readers how your email affects them.
Effective subject lines offer more than a general topic description. Assume for a moment that you work in human resources. Which of the following is more likely to pique your interest, a topic subject line or a forecasting subject line?

"Benefits Plan" [General topic description]
"Recommendation for Enhancing Our Benefits Plan" [Specific forecast of the bottom line]

The Power of Forecasting Subject Lines
People are naturally curious. Consider the previous example. By disclosing the business application of the email, readers will wonder, "What is the recommendation? How could the benefit plan be enhanced?" These questions grab the reader's attention and turn them passive to active.

Examples of Forecasting Subject Lines
Use the following subject line openers to enhance reader interest:

Review of...
Request for...
Proper Handling of...
Recommended Use of...
Instructions for...
Comments about...

To further increase productivity, follow these four guidelines for writing forecasting subject lines:

Should repeat key words from paragraph 1
Should be written last - after a rough draft is completed
Should not be a sentence or a question
Strive for no more than 50 characters

A Small Step that Offers Big Results
Forecasting subject lines are a simple yet powerful tool for writing to get things done. By stating the business application of your message in the subject line, you will entice your readers to learn more and take action. Consistently follow this simple tip and watch your productivity grow.

Stu Tanquist served on the board of the third largest ASTD chapter for four years and authored two best selling Info-Lines. He teaches employees how to meet important deadlines and keep projects on target by writing emails that get things done. Stu can be reached at www.BerryWritingGroup.com or 612-799-1686.

How Much Longer Can Your Organization Afford Classroom Training?

Lee Johnsen, SPHR, CPT, CPLP; Partners in Development

A True Story

A few weeks ago I attended a three day training session in Dallas, TX. Between the times I left my house and I arrived at my hotel, over six and a half hours had elapsed even though it was just under a two and a half hour flight. No doubt I would have arrived at the hotel earlier had I not had to parley with the airline's customer service about my lost luggage, how quickly they might locate it and the potential that I would receive it before the class began the next day.

At the training session were eighteen leaders and executives who had traveled from locations as near as Plano, TX and as far as Portland, OR and Mexico City, Mexico. It was an interesting session with engaging class discussions, readings, group activities, case studies and three videos. The instructor was very skilled, experienced and engaging. Overall, it was an enjoyable and stimulating learning experience.

When I returned home (after a two-and-a-half hour flight delay) and prepared my expense report, my travel expenses totaled nearly $1250.00. Multiplying that amount by the 18 participants made me realize that over $22,000 was spent simply on getting participants to and from the learning experience along with housing, meals, etc. It occurred to me that the era of "glamorous" business travel was long gone and that organizations have to find a better way to leverage those travel budgets in ways that bring greater value and learning to training participants.

As you consider the future of classroom training in your organization, ask yourself:

- In how many different locations are your employees—U.S. and/or international?
- How many dollars are being spent to cover travel costs?
- How often do you hear employees say they can't take time away to attend training?
- How many leaders/managers does your organization have who lead virtual teams?
- While there are certainly more questions to ponder, these can begin some important dialogue about the future of training delivery in your organization.

Curbing Travel Expenses in the Short-Term

It has been reported that as much as forty cents of every dollar spent on in-person corporate learning is eaten up by travel and lodging costs.[1] There are some fairly easy, short-term ways to reduce travel expenses associated with training. According to the ASTD 2007 State of the Industry Report, one organization reduced the number of traditional training classes for a four-day course, centralized the classes in locations easy to reach by driving, required double-occupancy at the hotel, and restructured the course to begin late on Monday morning. The result was a savings of a whopping $162.5 million![2] No doubt these savings are impressive, but they are at best short-term fixes.

What's Wrong with this Picture?

In 2006, live, instructor-led (in-person) training accounted for 71.36 percent of the learning hours delivered.[3] The consolidated average for technology-based learning reached 30.28 percent of learning hours provided in 2006. Of this online learning, roughly 80 percent was self-paced.[4] The problem with self-paced learning as a whole is that most of it is never completed. According to Development Dimensions International, 50 – 90% of web-based courses are never completed.[5] For some aspects of technical training, this completion rate may be acceptable if we believe that people should simply access the information they need to learn based on their existing knowledge and

Classroom Training *(Continued from page 8)*

experience. That approach is not so effective when people must learn processes and skills that build upon one another such as coaching, interviewing, and leadership styles in order to successfully apply them.

There Is Another Way

Too often those of us in the workplace learning and performance profession find ourselves caught in this dilemma of having to choose between instructor-led classroom training and self-paced e-learning. But there are other options. E-learning, blended with other performance development techniques and structure, can significantly improve both completion rates and learning-to-performance application. The rest of this article explores an approach that takes some of the best of both classroom instruction and e-learning and blends them into a highly organized, highly-interactive, time-specific learning experience that participants complete.

First let's distinguish between e-learning and blended learning. For this article, we will use the following definitions.

E-learning is the use of internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance (Rosenberg, 2001).

Blended learning is a combination of learning methods that help to advance and promote learning. Some of these learning methods may be delivered via the web, while others engage a variety of technologies. Additionally, these can be supported by face-to-face instructor-led training that focuses on skill practice and application.

This learner-centered model illustrates some of the components that might be part of a blended learning experience.

A Blended Learning Approach

For ordinary people to be able to accomplish extraordinary things, they need a combination of structure and support. A successful blended learning course provides both of these to participants so that they are more likely to complete and apply their learnings to their work. This sort of blended learning of approach draws on the best of classroom and e-learning. To be more specific, this approach is instructor-led, organized, time-specific and highly interactive. Participants enroll as a class and, together, participate in a variety of methodologies that provide learning and performance application of the content.

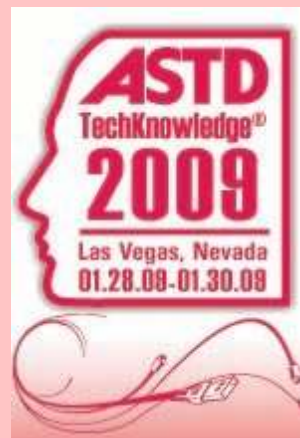**Classroom Training** *(Continued from page 9)*

Let's look at a comparison between an instructor-led classroom course and a blended learning course in leadership. Note that the content is the same for both courses.

	Instructor-led Classroom Course	Blended Learning Course
Number of Participants	20	20
Course Length	1 ½ days (12 hours)	3-4 hours / week over four weeks
Participant Materials Costs	Same	Same
Travel costs	$300 – $600 (or more) for out-of-area participants	None
Training Delivery	Instructor-dependent	Technology-dependent
Instructor Facilitation	Conducted in the classroom during class time	Conducted anywhere at anytime during the course
Learning Time	Instructor-managed	Self-managed and instructor-managed
Learner Equipment	None	Telephone and PC with audio and video functions
Learning Structures	Course schedule Classroom exercises, assignments and discussions Discussion groups	Course schedule Weekly assignments, exercises and online discussions Virtual discussion groups
Learning Support	Instructor-facilitated discussions Verbal feedback and support from the instructor and other course participants	Instructor-facilitated webconferences Online and telephone coaching Other course participants—either in person or online Text feedback and support (discussion boards and e-mail) Online Q & A
Skill Practice Opportunities	During class time	During webconferences Virtual team case studies Individual applications between weekly assignments

When participants have an opportunity to learn over time and to apply the concepts and skills as they're learning, they report a high level of confidence in their ability to perform these on the job. In addition, they develop a sense of community (support) with other participants located anywhere in the world which broadens their organizational perspective and commitment.

Shifting from Instructor-led Classroom Training to Blended Learning

As your organization begins to budget and make plans for the year ahead, think about ways in which you may be able to shift some of your resources to the development of blended learning courses. For any learning and development intervention to be successful, it has to be positioned within the broader context of the business strategy.

Classroom Training *(Continued from page 10)*

Some Factors to Consider

1. **Have a strategy.**

   To make blended learning successful in your organization, consider where it fits into your overall performance improvement strategy. This may involve an organizational analysis to identify workplace performance opportunities and gaps.

2. **Consider where blended learning fits into your strategy.**

   Do you have an organizational culture that's conducive to blended learning delivery as well as the resources available to support it? Identify costs in terms of both hard dollars being spent and soft dollars related to staff salaries and expertise needed to develop course material for a blended learning format.

3. **Set some performance goals, plans and measures.**

   Develop goals to address performance opportunities and gaps. As you consider potential ways in which blended learning can support these goals, identify target audiences, content, and resources required.

4. **Start small**

   Select an audience and performance gap to address with a blended learning approach. Start slowly and gain experience. Like most things, it's never as easy as it seems.

5. **Expand**

   Once you have built some successes, look for opportunities to expand. Be sure to market and communicate the results and impact of the courses to the organization.

Balance Your Budget and Your Options

E-learning and blended learning are not panaceas or magic bullets. But they do provide opportunities to leverage your learning and development resources beyond classroom training. They also have the potential to improve the application of learning-to-performance above the fifteen percent typically gained from classroom training only. Can your organization afford not to offer blended learning as part of your workplace learning and performance strategy?

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1 Building a Business Case for E-Learning. GeoLearning.
2 ASTD 2007 State of the Industry Report, 19.
3 Ibid., 15.
4 Ibid., 5.
5 Pete E. Weaver, "Avoiding e-Learning Failure," White paper, 2004.

ASTD Nebraska members can submit articles for publication in the ASTD Nebraska Connections newsletter. Contact VPMarketing@ ASTDNebraska.org.