# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCIES
## REDEFINED TO CREATE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

By Justin Arneson, William Rothwell, and Jennifer Naughton

**ASTD launches a revised competency model for the profession.**

The forthcoming publication of *The ASTD Competency Study: Training & Development Redefined*™—scheduled to be available for purchase in May—will continue ASTD's more than 30-year history of publishing groundbreaking competency models that have both defined and shaped the training and development profession.

This latest contribution to The ASTD Competency Model™ legacy is of particular value to training and development professionals who recognize the need to update their skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors to help lead their organizations into the future.

The 2013 ASTD Competency Model provides these practitioners with two sets of actionable paths forward. First, it offers a broad inventory of topics that training and development professionals need to know to be successful in today's rapidly changing business environment. Second, The Model provides key, specific actions these professionals must take—what they must do—to succeed.

Their managers can use The Model as a line of sight to missing or underdeveloped competencies that may be blocking career advancement for learning staff. It gives training and development managers objective criteria for recruiting, selecting, appraising, and developing their staff.

Further, it offers a well-researched benchmarking tool that training and development professionals can use to identify their own skills gaps. The Model can serve as a guide to those who wish to enter the field, become certified via the ASTD Certification Institute's Certified Professional in Learning and Performance (CPLP®) credential, or deepen their understanding of the field and align their career development plans with emerging trends.

## The wake-up call

A closer look at the landscape within organizations and in the training and development field shows transformational changes since 2004, when The ASTD Competency Model underwent its last major revision. Four now-familiar factors triggered the 2013 revisions:

- the recession and economic uncertainty
- digital, mobile, and social technology
- demographic shifts
- globalization.

As a result, concepts—such as integrated talent management; employee engagement; and crowdsourced, collaborative, mobile, and continuous learning—have disrupted conventional notions of the training and development function's role and changed the competencies required for success. Training and development practitioners can no longer ignore this wake-up call if they want to maintain their competitive advantage.

# The ASTD Competency Model

The value of demonstrating new and emerging competencies is now apparent. Some of these competencies include

- staying abreast of new and emerging technologies and matching the appropriate technology to a specific learning opportunity or challenge
- moving beyond the role of deliverer of training to a facilitator of learning, content curator, information manager, and builder of learning communities
- fostering a culture of connectivity and collaboration around learning via mobile and social technology
- designing and presenting learning not as a discrete event—a training course—but as a process that engages learners in a variety of ways over time through formal and informal channels
- leveraging the learning styles and preferences of new generations entering the workforce and capturing the knowledge of those leaving it
- playing a role in integrated talent management so that learning informs all the processes and systems that create organizational capability and understanding the role and contributions of the learning function
- anticipating and meeting the training and development needs of an increasingly global workforce and contributing to talent development where the organization most needs it
- demonstrating the value and impact of learning by using metrics that are meaningful to business and using data analysis to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and development
- continuing to be business partners who align their activities to the organization's business strategies and goals and can demonstrate their return on mission, especially during challenging times.

*The ASTD Competency Study* provides full details, including the data collection and analyses, that went into revising The 2013 Model.



The ASTD Competency Model

## How to use The ASTD Competency Model

Competencies are important for defining any profession. They provide a common language for describing performance and a guide for identifying the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that practitioners need to be successful performers.

*The ASTD Competency Study* guides the profession toward the goal of improving organizational performance through training and development activities. It emphasizes foundational competencies, or those that are important to everyone in the field, and specific areas of expertise (AOEs), which are the specialized knowledge and actions required by specific

roles (see image above).

The foundational competencies are the bedrock on which to build more specific competencies. They are critical regardless of the specific organization, industry, or AOE in which a person practices.

The AOEs are the variety of specialized knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that may be needed and performed by a training and development professional. (See Table 1 for detailed information about each.)

The 2013 ASTD Competency Model includes important changes to the AOEs. They reflect the growing influence of such factors as mobile and social

## Table 1. **Areas of Expertise for the Training and Development Profession**

| Area of Expertise | Description |
|---|---|
| Performance Improvement (PI) | Applying a systematic process of discovering and analyzing human performance gaps; planning for future improvements in human performance; designing and developing solutions to close performance gaps; partnering with the customer when identifying the opportunity and the solution; implementing the solution; monitoring the change; evaluating the results. |
| Instructional Design (ID) | Designing, creating, and developing informal and formal learning solutions to meet organizational needs; analyzing and selecting the most appropriate strategy, methodologies, and technologies to maximize the learning experience and impact. |
| Training Delivery (TD) | Delivering informal and formal learning solutions in a manner that both engages the learner and produces the desired outcomes; managing and responding to learner needs; ensuring that the learning is made available in appropriate platforms and delivered in a timely and effective manner. |
| Learning Technologies (LT) | Identifying, selecting, and applying a variety of learning technologies; adapting learning technologies; matching the appropriate technology to the specific learning opportunity or challenge at hand. |
| Evaluating Learning Impact (ELI) | Gathering, organizing, and analyzing information regarding the impact of learning solutions against key business drivers; presenting the information in a way that is meaningful to the organization; using learning metrics and analytics to inform organizational decision making. |
| Managing Learning Programs (MLP) | Providing leadership to execute the organization's strategy; planning, monitoring, and adjusting learning and development projects or activities. |
| Integrated Talent Management (ITM)[1] | Building an organization's culture, engagement, capability, and capacity through the implementation and integration of talent acquisition, employee development, retention, and deployment processes; ensuring that these processes are aligned to organizational goals. |
| Coaching (CG)[2] | Using an interactive process to help individuals develop rapidly and produce results; improving others' ability to set goals, take action, make better decisions, and make full use of their natural strengths. |
| Knowledge Management (KM) | Capturing, distributing, and archiving intellectual capital in a way that encourages knowledge-sharing and collaboration in the organization. |
| Change Management (CM) | Applying structured approaches to shift individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired state. |

[1] Definition was adapted from the ASTD Research Publication *Learning's Critical Role in Integrated Talent Management*.
[2] This information is based on the ICF (International Coach Federation) Code of Ethics and the ICF Core Coaching Competencies. Additional information can be found at ICF's website: www.coachfederation.org.

## Table 2. **Areas of Expertise: Changes Since The 2004 Competency Study**

| Original name | New name | Details |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Designing Learning | Instructional Design | Substantial updates covering such topics as mobile learning, social learning, and informal learning |
| Delivering Training | Training Delivery | Substantial updates covering learning delivery technologies |
| Human Performance Improvement | Performance Improvement | Minor updates |
| Measuring and Evaluating | Evaluating Learning Impact | Substantial updates, including a new focus on learning analytics |
| Managing the Learning Function | Managing Learning Programs | Minor updates |
| Managing Organizational Knowledge/Social Learning | Knowledge Management | Substantial updates, including a new focus on informal learning |
| Career Planning and Talent Management | Integrated Talent Management | Less focus on career planning; more on talent management as an integrated system and learning's role in it |
| Coaching | Coaching | Minor updates |
| Facilitating Organizational Change | Change Management | Minor updates |
| | Learning Technologies | New area; highlights the importance of technology |

# Creating Your Action Plan

If you are new to the training and development field, a key question is: What areas should I develop and how? ASTD offers the Career Navigator tool at www.astd.org/careernavigator to help you identify strengths and opportunities for development and create action plans based on The 2013 ASTD Competency Model. A free job aid is available at www.astd.org/model to help with this task. These are the main steps:

1. Review the list of foundational competencies shown in the model and rate their importance to your present job.
2. List your priorities for development of the competencies that are most important for your present job (those that will have the greatest impact).
3. Review the areas of expertise (AOEs) shown in the model and select those that are important to your present job and to future jobs you want to pursue.
4. List your priorities for development of your most important present and future AOEs.

5. Discuss your choices and priorities with your employer, mentor, coach, or supervisor and develop the beginning of an action plan.

What are some practical applications of this process to identify competencies and AOEs that need development? Let's say you work in a technical field and have been asked to develop a training initiative for that area. Or you have been delivering training in a classroom for a long time and you want to begin using technology and social media tools to supplement that role.

In each of these situations, completing a self-assessment based on the model can help you identify the competencies and expertise needed to achieve your career goals. Further, by involving your employer in the conversation, you can align your development in a way that will increase your value and relevance to the employer that you serve.

Then, using *The ASTD Competency Study*, you can learn about the specific

behaviors required for success in the roles that align to your career path. This information can be the basis of discussions with a mentor, coach, or boss about your professional development and career planning.

If you are a training manager or supervisor, you can apply the same process to members of your team. You could even use it to guide nontraining managers who are responsible for workforce development in their business units.

ASTD's 2013 Competency Model is a lens for viewing the training and development profession from many angles. Use it to guide your own development or that of your team members. Use it to get your bearings in a present job or to plan development for a future one. Use it as a benchmark for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the training and development capabilities of your organization.

technology, learning analytics, and integrated talent management. Table 2 on page 46 compares the 2004 and 2013 AOEs.

To stay relevant and effective in today's dynamic organizations, training and development professionals should ask themselves, "What competencies do I need to focus on, and how do I get started?" It is important to note that the model is both broad and deep. The extent to which each individual needs to master the various competencies depends on a person's current role and future aspirations.

For example, functional specialists may wish to focus their development energy on mastering one or two of the AOEs. Business managers or leaders may wish to spend more time mastering a broad array of foundational competencies and ensuring that they have exposure across all of the AOEs. All training professionals need to know a bit of everything in the model, but the extent to which they need to focus and dive deep will vary by individual and the relevance of the competencies to the business in which they find themselves.

As the training and development field continues to evolve, competency models will be revised to reflect emerging practices. Align your development plans to the current and future models and prepare for the future faster so you can stay agile and ahead of the curve.

For model-related content, including free job aids and practical tools, visit www.astd.org/model.

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## Tools and Resources

| To find | Go to | Link |
|---|---|---|
| An assessment to help you or your team to develop an employee or career development action plan | The Career Navigator | www.astd.org/careernavigator |
| The complete 2004 study, *Mapping the Future* | ASTD online store | www.store.astd.org Product Code: 110407 |
| The complete 2013 study, *The ASTD Competency Study* | ASTD online store (available in May) | www.store.astd.org |
| More information about how to use the model and supplemental job aids | ASTD website | www.astd.org/model |