



For Immediate Release

Contact: Jennifer Homer  
ASTD  
703.683.8123  
[jhomer@astd.org](mailto:jhomer@astd.org)

Contact: Amy Hermes  
IBM Learning Solutions  
818.539.3117  
[amybach@us.ibm.com](mailto:amybach@us.ibm.com)

**New ASTD/IBM Study Examines Executives' Perceptions of the Value of Learning**  
*First Known Study of its Kind Interviews Business and Learning Executives*

**Armonk, NY and Alexandria, VA** -- October 4, 2005 -- Learning is becoming an increasingly important function for companies to develop and maintain individual and organizational skills needed to sustain a competitive advantage, increase efficiencies, and improve business results. CEOs recognize that employee development is critical to meeting business goals, and chief learning officers (CLOs) are called upon to play a more strategic role in organizations. But, are C-level and CLO perceptions of the value of learning in sync?

A new study conducted by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) and IBM examines the alignment of C-level perceptions around the strategic value of learning. Study highlights can be found in the article, "The C-Level and the Value of Learning," in the October 2005 issue of *Training + Development (T+D)* magazine published by ASTD.

The ASTD/IBM Strategic Value of Learning Study 2005 included in-depth interviews with C-level executives and CLOs at 26 organizations across 11 industry sectors. At each organization, a C-level executive and CLO were interviewed separately and asked the same questions focusing on the learning function's response to business needs and its performance relative to that response. The questions were based on the assumptions—from IBM's 2004 Global CEO Study—that learning needs to accelerate growth, enable transformation, and increase productivity.

"This is the first study of its kind to examine whether chief learning officers' strategies for maximizing the impact of learning align with what C-level business executives perceive as valuable," said Brenda Sugrue, senior director of research for ASTD. "The study findings suggest that there are significant opportunities for CLOs to align more closely with C-level expectations and aspirations, and for learning to become more strategic and central to the ongoing success of the enterprise," Sugrue noted.

"Results of this groundbreaking study demonstrate that learning can help enable overall business success," said Tony O'Driscoll, research learning strategist at IBM Almaden Services Research. "For example, according to our findings, learning is seen by senior executives to have a significant impact on a number of business outcomes, including revenue, productivity, turnover, and innovation. Both C-level executives and CLOs discussed the challenges involved in measuring learning's value contribution and return-on-investment (ROI). Survey results suggest that CLOs should balance metrics and ROI data with anecdotal evidence, particularly stakeholder perceptions."

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Additional Key Outcomes of the Study:

- Learning governance is seen by C-level executives and CLOs to be the primary mechanism for aligning learning with strategic business needs. While both groups discussed the importance of aligning learning investment planning with business process planning, there was disagreement among the CLOs interviewed regarding the best mix of centralized and decentralized management. One solution involves hybrid management models that incorporate both.
- C-level executives and CLOs see the integration of learning goals with business goals as a critical indicator of alignment, and want to increase the transparency of the learning function. Both groups look to stakeholder and customer perceptions as alignment indicators.
- When looking at measuring learning's value contribution to the organization, both groups placed greater emphasis on perceptions as measures. C-level executives indicated that they rely on the perceptions of their business unit or line leaders. One executive said, "My colleagues in the line do not invest anything unless they get a return. They justify their own investments in learning."
- In the area of efficiency, C-level executives and CLOs emphasized similar indicators: learning access and usage, technology/automation, cost per unit, strategic alignment, and benchmarking. C-level executives view learning like any other function, requiring that it deliver productivity gains on a year-to-year basis.

More information about the ASTD/IBM Strategic Value of Learning Study 2005 may be found in the October *T+D* magazine article, "The C-Level and the Value of Learning," at <http://tdmagazine.astd.org>.

#### About ASTD

ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) is the world's largest association dedicated to workplace learning and performance professionals. ASTD's 70,000 members and associates come from more than 100 countries and thousands of organizations - multinational corporations, medium-sized and small businesses, government, academia, consulting firms, and product and service suppliers.

ASTD marks its beginning in 1944 when the organization held its first annual conference. In recent years, ASTD has widened the industry's focus to connect learning and performance to measurable results, and is a sought-after voice on critical public policy issues. For more information, visit [www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org).

#### About IBM

IBM is the leading provider of learning solutions and IT training helping businesses improve workforce performance. IBM attends to the learning requirements of corporations, governments and educational institutions with an integrated portfolio of services, software, hardware, research and alliances with strategic business partners. IBM helps customers address their specific learning needs, ranging from learning infrastructure to broader transformation initiatives. With its global presence and extensive expertise, IBM draws on its world-class portfolio of e-learning software, hardware, custom content development capabilities, education and information technology services, research and award-winning experience to help customers realize the full potential of e-learning. For more information, visit [www.ibm.com/learning](http://www.ibm.com/learning).