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ASTD REPORT: TOUGH ECONOMY CREATES STRONG NEED FOR LEARNING

Analysis indicates correlation between gutted learning budgets and lower market performance.

(Alexandria, VA)- August 11, 2009 – A new report released by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) shows an overall commitment to the learning function exists in the current tough economy and learning budgets are not being reduced as drastically as in previous economic downturns. Analysis of the report's data also indicates that a substantial reduction in learning resources was correlated with lower market performance and lower learning effectiveness.

The ASTD/i4cp report, "Learning in Tough Economic Times: How Corporate Learning is Meeting the Challenges," found that while four in ten respondents said the economy had forced them to reduce learning resources to a high or very high degree, extensive cuts to learning programs or content was the exception not the rule. The majority of survey respondents (67.2 percent) indicated they are looking for ways to be more efficient and effective on tighter budgets, while 37.9 percent said their firms emphasized learning to a greater extent in this economic downturn.

The new report also shows that only slightly more than one-quarter of survey respondents said the learning function's ability to meet organizational learning needs has suffered in the current economic downturn to a high or very high degree.

Other key findings include:

- 52.8 percent have restricted travel to a high or very high degree
- 52.3 percent cut investments in conferences, seminars, and workshops to a high or very high degree.
- Newer, less expensive methods to deliver learning such as e-learning and other online options, are gaining popularity in the down economy
- Learning departments will cut "nice to haves" and use less classroom training to accomplish their goals.

The report also notes best practices being used for learning in a down economy, with three themes emerging: involving subject matter experts in the learning process; leveraging technology better; and raising awareness of cost issues. Two specific best practices include crafting learning around smaller chunks of content by honing focus and presentation times, and staying the course realizing learning will bring benefits in employee engagement, retention, and overall organizational strength.

To read the executive summary of “Learning in Tough Economic Times” go to www.astd.org. To schedule an interview to discuss the report’s findings in more detail, call 703.683.8192.

About ASTD

ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) is the world’s largest association dedicated to workplace learning and performance professionals. ASTD’s members come from more than 100 countries and connect locally in more than 130 U.S. chapters and with more than 30 international partners. Members work in thousands of organizations of all sizes, in government, as independent consultants, and suppliers.

ASTD started in 1943. In recent years, ASTD has widened the profession’s focus to link learning and performance to individual and organizational results, and is a sought-after voice on critical public policy issues. For more information, visit www.astd.org.

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