

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Acknowledgements	2
Data Sources.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Interpretation	5
BENCHMARKING SURVEY, BENCHMARKING FORUM, AND BEST	
Key Indicators.....	6
Investment	7
Expenditure Distribution	8
Learning Outsourcing	9
Efficiency.....	10
Content Distribution.....	12
Delivery Methods.....	14
Evaluation Methods.....	15
BEST AWARD WINNERS	
Characteristics of the BEST Learning Organizations	16
Valuing and Positioning Learning	17
Linking Learning and Performance	17
Effectiveness.....	18
Efficiency.....	19
Learning Opportunities	20
Non-Learning Solutions	21
Survey Questions	22
Definitions	23
BEST Questions	24

TABLE 1: DATA SOURCES

Data Source	Samples	Average Number of Employees	Average Payroll \$M
BMS = Benchmarking Survey	BMS		
Samples for 1999 to 2002 came from ASTD's Benchmarking Service, which was used by a broad cross section of organizations. Data for 2003 and 2004 came from special benchmarking surveys.	2004 (n = 281)	8,213	403
	2003 (n = 344)	6,866	290
	2002 (n = 276)	6,661	451
	2001 (n = 270)	4,961	222
	2000 (n = 367)	3,859	161
	1999 (n = 365)	2,672	98
BMF = Benchmarking Forum Organizations	BMF		
ASTD's Benchmarking Forum is a group of large Fortune 500 companies and public sector organizations that share data and best practices with one another. These organizations submit detailed data on their learning investments and practices each year.	2004 (n = 24)	57,868	3,568
	2003 (n = 26)	100,168	4,930
	2002 (n = 17)	66,823	6,175
	2001 (n = 25)	63,259	4,213
	2000 (n = 26)	122,302	3,015
	1999 (n = 27)	71,008	3,207
BEST = BEST Award Winners	BEST		
Organizations that were honored for their exceptional efforts to foster, support, and leverage enterprise-wide learning for business results.	2005 (n = 29)	45,870	
	2004 (n = 24)	40,883	
	2003 (n = 23)	18,572	

- Data are presented from three samples against which WLP professionals can benchmark learning investments and practices in their organizations. The Benchmarking Survey (BMS) sample is the largest of the three. Because the BMS sample includes the broadest range of U.S. organizations in terms of size and industry, it should be interpreted as the U.S. norm. The Benchmarking Forum (BMF) sample represents very large global organizations, most which are based in the U.S. In any given year, between one and three BMF organizations are based outside the U.S.
- The third sample is the group of organizations that won ASTD BEST Awards. Established in 2003, the BEST Awards program recognizes organizations that demonstrate a clear link between learning and performance. Winners are selected through a rigorous blind review process. In 2005, 20 of the winners were U.S.-based organizations; five were organizations based in India; the remaining four were based in Australia, Canada, Israel, and the United Kingdom. As in previous years, the winners were selected based on the following criteria:
 - evidence that learning has value in the culture
 - evidence of a link between learning and performance
 - evidence that the organization has leveraged technology in learning
 - evidence of innovative learning initiatives.
- In 2005, BEST Award applicants completed the same quantitative survey as the BMS and BMF samples, permitting direct comparison of the same indicators across the samples. We have expanded our qualitative analysis of the best practices of BEST Award winners this year.

- The average annual *expenditure per employee* in ASTD's broadest sample of organizations (BMS) increased to \$955 per employee in 2004, after two previous years of remaining steady at about \$820. Average expenditure per employee in our sample of large organizations (BMF) was consistently higher than for the BMS sample, and increased from \$1,299 in 2003 to \$1,368 in 2004. The average expenditure per employee in organizations that won ASTD BEST Awards in 2005 was the greatest of the three sample groups at \$1,554.
- For BMS organizations in 2004, average *expenditure as a percentage of payroll* did not change from the previous year, remaining at 2.34 percent, but increased from 2.05 in 2003 to 2.20 in 2004 in BMF organizations. The average expenditure as a percentage of payroll in 2005 BEST Award winners was higher than BMS and BMF organizations at 3.2 percent.
- The *percentage of expenditure for external services* has risen steadily since 2002, with the average now being 27 percent in BMS and BEST organizations. However, BMF organizations decreased their expenditures for external services from 38 percent in 2003 to 30 percent in 2004. The services that were most frequently purchased externally were technology infrastructure and content design, development, and delivery.
- The average *number of hours of formal learning per employee* in BMS organizations increased in 2004, from 26 hours per employee in 2003 to 32 hours per employee in 2004. In BMF organizations, the average number of learning hours per employee remained unchanged at 35. In 2005, BEST organizations had an average of 36 hours per employee.
- The average *number of employees per WLP staff member* in 2004 was 216 in BMS organizations, an increase from the previous year's figure of 173, but similar to the 2002 figure of 217. The average number of employees per WLP staff member decreased in BMF organizations from 287 in 2003 to 221 in 2004. BEST organizations had an average of 206 employees per WLP staff member. The average number of hours of content provided per WLP staff member was 365 in BMS organizations and 459 in BMF organizations in 2004. BEST organizations provided an average of 342 hours of learning content per WLP staff.
- In 2004, the average *cost per learning hour provided* was \$642 per hour in the BMS sample and \$1,113 per hour in BMF organizations, representing a one-year increase from \$595 in the former, and a one-year decrease from \$1,430 in the latter. In 2004, the average *cost per learning hour received* decreased from \$56 to \$50 in BMS organizations, but remained steady at \$55 dollars in BMF organizations. At \$58 per hour, BEST winners had the highest average cost per learning hour received of all three sample groups.
- In all three groups of organizations, profession or industry specific content was allocated the most *learning content* in 2004. The areas with the second and third greatest content allocation were managerial/supervisory and business processes in BMS organizations; information technology and business processes in BMF organizations; and compliance-related and managerial/supervisory in BEST organizations. If we combined executive education and managerial/supervisory training into one management category, it would have the greatest allocation of content in BMS and BEST organizations.
- *Use of technology* for delivering learning continued to increase, from 24 percent in 2003 to 27 percent in 2004 in BMS organizations, and from 35 percent to 38 percent in 2004 in BMF organizations. BEST organizations delivered 32 percent of all their learning content using technology. Approximately 75 percent of technology-based learning was online in 2004, and about 75 percent of online learning was self-paced.
- In BMF and BEST organizations in 2004, *measurement* in the learning function shifted from a focus on program-level evaluation to aggregation of data from across the organization to report on learning investment, operations, and value indicators. Most BMF and BEST organizations either had or were in the process of developing dashboards and scorecards to monitor the enterprise learning function.
- Common characteristics of learning functions in organizations that won ASTD BEST Awards were
 - high level of investment in learning, and sophistication in determining and evaluating investment
 - measurement and demonstration of efficiency and effectiveness of the learning function
 - alignment of learning with business needs and individual employee competency needs
 - provision of a broad range of internal and external formal and informal learning opportunities
 - C-level involvement and support for learning
 - significant allocation of resources for non-learning performance improvement activities.