

Mapping Your Putting New Compete

By William Rothwell and Rich Wellins

This third and final article on the landmark ASTD competency study details how you can use the competencies for professional development. The book *ASTD 2004 Competency Study: Mapping the Future*, released this month, presents the final and complete study.

How can you meet the challenges of the future? As a workplace learning and performance professional, you bear a major responsibility to set a positive example for continual learning for others in your organization. After all, if you can't lead the way, who can? But how do you go about serving as a role model?

The two previous articles in this series helped set the stage—as did a fourth article, by Pat Galagan, “The Future of the Profession Formerly Known as Training” (December 2003), which provided excellent insights on where our profession is going. “Eight Trends You Need to Know Now” (Jan-

Future: ncies to Work For You

uary) focused on trends in our profession and their implications. The second article, “New Roles and New Competencies for the Profession” (April), summarized the key findings from the ASTD 2004 competency study, “Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies.”

In this article, we address three important questions:

1. How should you, as an individual contributor in workforce learning and performance, use the competencies to guide your professional development?
2. How should organizations use these new competencies?

3. What are the applications for educators?

Our goal is to have every workplace learning and performance professional make the model his or her own and use it to keep ahead of change. For simplicity, in this article we will use the term “competencies” to reflect both the “foundational competencies” and “areas of expertise” in the new model.

Using the competency study to guide your professional development

A competency model can provide an important, and useful, tool to guide individual development. The ASTD 2004

competency study, “Mapping the Future,” is no different. It describes what it takes for you, as an individual contributor and as a workplace learning and performance professional, to achieve career success. It is a foundation on which you can build career plans and develop yourself in your chosen path.

The key to a successful career in the future is to align with the needs of organizations and their leaders to achieve business results. “Mapping the Future” provides the means to create a common language that you can use to discuss what it is your organization needs from workplace learning and performance. It also

Overview: ASTD 2004 Competency Study

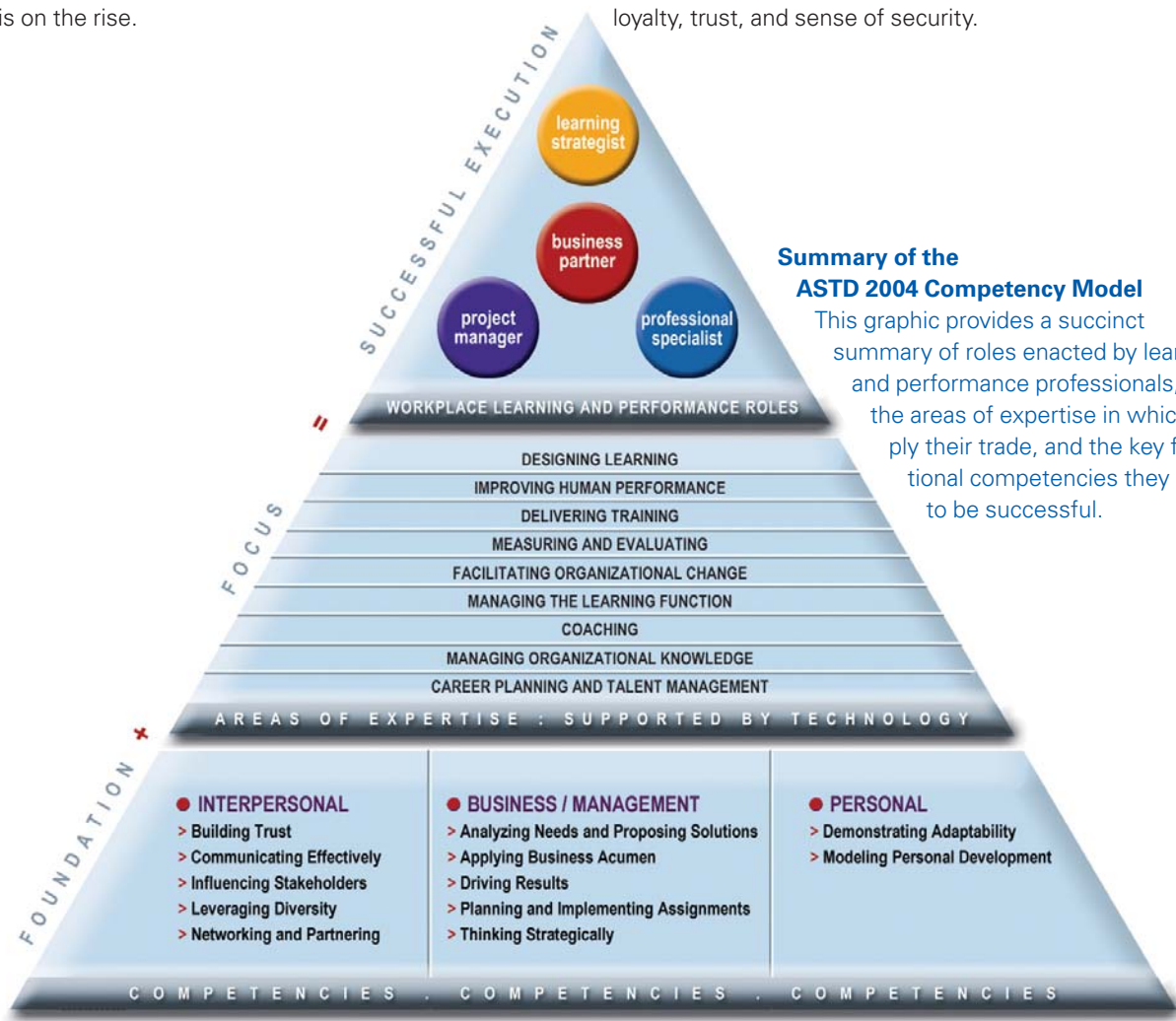
“Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies”

Two previous articles in this series focused on key trends affecting the learning and performance field and the competencies necessary for success as a learning and performance practitioner.

Eight Trends (in the January T+D)

1. **Drastic Times, Drastic Measures:** Uncertain economic conditions in the past several years are causing organizations to rethink how to grow and be profitable.
2. **Blurred Lines—Life or Work?** New organizational structures are altering the nature of work for employees and learning professionals.
3. **Small World and Shrinking:** Global communication technology is changing the way people connect.
4. **New Faces, New Expectations:** Diversity in the workplace is on the rise.

5. **Work Be Nimble, Work Be Quick:** The accelerated pace of change requires more adaptable workers and nimbler organizations.
6. **Security Alert!** Concerns about security and the effectiveness of governments to provide protection have increased people’s anxiety worldwide.
7. **Life and Work in the E-Lane:** Technology, especially the Internet, is transforming the way people work and live.
8. **A Higher Ethical Bar:** Ethical lapses at the highest levels in large, high-profile organizations have shaken employees’ loyalty, trust, and sense of security.



- **INTERPERSONAL**
 - > Building Trust
 - > Communicating Effectively
 - > Influencing Stakeholders
 - > Leveraging Diversity
 - > Networking and Partnering

- **BUSINESS / MANAGEMENT**
 - > Analyzing Needs and Proposing Solutions
 - > Applying Business Acumen
 - > Driving Results
 - > Planning and Implementing Assignments
 - > Thinking Strategically

- **PERSONAL**
 - > Demonstrating Adaptability
 - > Modeling Personal Development

COMPETENCIES . COMPETENCIES . COMPETENCIES

answers this question: What competencies should individuals possess to be successful in the field? It provides a clear picture of success so you can compare your performance against a set of valid descriptors.

You may, however, begin by some reflection on what it will take for you to be successful in the field and in your organization in the future. A good strategy for you to follow is to think about yourself in relation to the competencies outlined in the study and answer the following questions:

- Which competencies are likely to be most important to my current job?
- Which competencies will become more important in the future?
- How do I stack up against the competencies in terms of my performance?

There are many ways to carry out that assessment process, informally or formally. An informal method uses competencies as a foundation to prompt self-reflection and guide career conversations with your mentors or supervisors. A more formal method relies on such organized approaches to assessing individual competencies as 360-degree assessments, assessment centers, and work samples. The results of such assessments will indicate which strengths you should be leveraging and areas in which you need further professional development.

Strengths and development needs, once identified, can be documented and form the basis for an individual development plan. A well-prepared IDP can help you leverage your strengths and focus your developmental priorities. The plan can also facilitate accountability by clarifying what learning strategies you will use, when you will learn, what support you will need, and how your results can be measured. Your development needs can be met through many learning approaches, including training, education, rotational experiences, mentoring, coaching, organized work assignments, e-learning experiences, and many other learning-oriented interventions.

Individuals may also use a competency model as a foundation for documenting their own accomplishments. Increasingly, employers want to see evidence of achievement, such as work samples, and not just evidence of education or experience. To that end, a competency model provides a basis for organizing résumés, focusing discussions about past experience, and assembling relevant work samples.

The model can also be used as the basis for profes-

A Summary On Credentialing

Organizations, including associations, can use competency models as the foundation for credentialing. Certification, in particular, recognizes individuals who have met certain predetermined qualifications, such as acceptable performance on an exam or completion of some type of work experience.

ASTD will be basing its emerging competency-based certification program on the core knowledge, skills, actions, and behaviors judged most critical for successful performance in workplace learning and performance. As mentioned, this information was captured in the recent competency study "Mapping the Future." To date, ASTD has developed a design concept for its certification pilot, scheduled to launch in 2005. The certification process will assess individual readiness and will address a number of the foundational competencies and areas of expertise that comprise the field. The assessment will use a combination of traditional multiple-choice testing and practical application. More details will be made available in the upcoming months at the ASTD Website, in the competency study section, located under the Research menu.

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sional certification. Formal certification as a workplace learning and performance professional can help fuel personal development and career growth, as well as enhance the image of the profession. (ASTD's board of directors approved the development of such a process in November 2003, for pilot rollout in 2005; more information will be forthcoming. In the meantime, a basic orientation to credentialing can be seen above.)

In summary, a strong assessment and development process based on the new competencies can be used across a variety of professional scenarios. It can be valuable for those who are preparing to enter this occupation, those who are making the transition from another occupation into this one, those who wish to advance professionally, and those who just want to build their competencies to preserve their current status in light of dynamically changing conditions.

Answering the questions on page 98 will give you a head start in using the competencies to drive your professional success.

A Competency-Based Career Conversation Guide for Workplace Learning and Performance Professionals

Directions: Use the questions below to help you organize your thinking about your career goals and your professional development needs. For each question, refer to the 2004 ASTD competency model on page 96 for information about the roles and competencies leading to success in the WLP field.

Question 1 What are your career goals over the short-term (1-2 years) and long-term (3-5 years)?

Question 2 What competencies are already your strengths? How do you know?

Question 3 What competencies do you need to possess for future success in your current job and in your current organization? How do you know that they are important?

Question 4 What competencies will you need to acquire or build to achieve your short-term (1-2 year) career goals? What competencies will you need to acquire or build to achieve your long-term (3-5 year) career goals? How do you know they are important?

Question 5 How can you build these competencies?

Question 6 How can you measure your progress in building your competencies?

Question 7 What mentors or career sponsors might be helpful to you in your quest to build your competencies in WLP?

Organizations using the competencies

A competency model can serve as an integrative framework for an organization's entire HR system. It can help align the HR system vertically with the organization's strategic objectives, or horizontally with other HR functions, to ensure harmony and consistency across the many facets of HR activities that impact human performance, as written in *Competency-Based HRM*, by David Dubois and William Rothwell (2004).

In fact, ASTD was one of the first professional organizations in our field to recognize the role competencies could play as a way to increase integration and efficiency among disparate HR systems, by publishing a three-part series in *T+D* (then called *Training & Development Journal*) more than 23 years ago (Byham, 1981 and 1982). Today, many practitioners continue to advocate the use of competencies specifically for HR professionals. "Mapping the Future" can be useful to managers and leaders of our profession by providing them with a valuable tool for selection and promotion, training and development, career and succession planning, and performance management for the organization. A competency model brings structure, coherence, and consistency to talent selection, management, and development of learning staff.

Here are some ways an organization can use the new model, properly adapted to its unique corporate culture, to enhance the effectiveness of their workplace learning and performance experts.

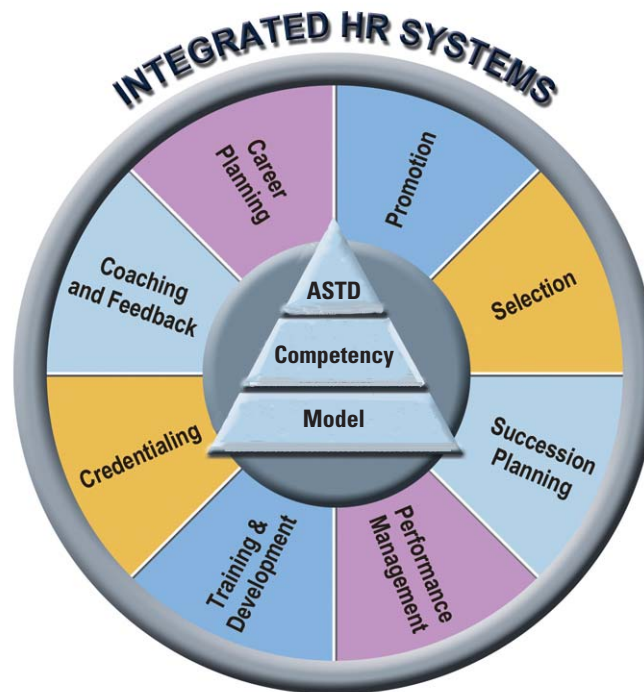
Plan for future talent requirements. Start by using the model to determine which roles, areas of expertise, and competencies are likely to be the most critical for the organization three to five years out. By comparing the collective capabilities of your current workplace learning and performance team against the competencies in the model, your organization can pinpoint the overall strengths and gaps. You can then plan to fill the gaps through professional development or future hiring or promotion decisions as needed. And it makes you well positioned to leverage existing strengths.

Identify (or clarify) work expectations. Both the competencies and areas of expertise can be used as the basis for job descriptions and setting behavioral expectations as part of a sound performance management process. The most effective performance management process uses both quantitative goals (addresses "what" and "how many") and behavioral competencies (addresses "how").

Provide a common language for discussing individual performance and providing feedback on that performance. The model can be useful for coaching workplace learning and performance professionals on a day-to-day basis and assessing their performance as part of a formal mid-year and year-end appraisal process. Behavioral data around each of the competencies can, and should, be collected on an ongoing basis to enhance the specificity and effectiveness of feedback.

A Competency-Based Integrated HR System

You can use the information in the ASTD 2004 competency study and the resulting model to support the development of a competency-based integrated HR system. It can help integrate all aspects of HR systems around the workplace learning and performance competencies and Areas of Expertise (AOEs). What appears below is a diagram that shows how the competencies and AOE are at the core to this construction.



Recruit and select new talent. The competencies and AOE can provide the basis of a selection or promotion system. Up front, they can be used to calibrate candidate expectations by providing a “realistic preview” of what skills are required for success. The competencies can be used, with customization, as a basis for generating interview guides, testing and assessment tools, and as the criteria for final hiring or promotion decisions in organizations.

Pinpoint professional development and career growth needs. Training and development experiences should target the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for successful job performance. The competencies can be used as the basic content for individual and group “needs analysis,” enabling organizations to target

appropriate interventions to individual or team needs. In addition, the model can be helpful as a career development tool, expanding the depth and breadth of your workplace learning and performance capabilities. The areas of expertise and roles components of the model can be particularly useful in deciding on stretch assignments and projects.

Calibrate expectations of your clients. A unique use of the model would be to provide a rich source of information for those who use workplace learning and performance services but are unclear on what to really expect in an engagement. It can not only “educate” clients, but also become the foundation on which to establish mutual expectations—and how performance is usually evaluated in the end.

In short, the competency model provides a supportive foundation for managing an array of effective learning and performance efforts in an organization. If you're a workplace learning and performance manager or CLO, take some time to think about the questions on page 98 to get you started.

Educators using the competencies

A first-rate academic program will base its curriculum on employer expectations for those in the occupation, and any good competency study is based on research about what employers expect of successful practitioners. Previous ASTD-sponsored competency studies and books have served as important blueprints to guide academic curriculum development. They've included Pinto and Walker's (1978) "A Study of Professional Training and Development Roles and Competencies," McLagan and McCullough's (1983) *Models for Excellence*, McLagan's (1989) *Models for HRD Practice*, Rothwell's (1996 and 2000) *ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement*, and Rothwell, Sander, and Soper's (1999) *ASTD Models for Workplace Learning and Performance*.

The ASTD 2004 study, "Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies," follows in the grand tradition of earlier ASTD-sponsored competency studies. It thus provides a framework to

- conduct academic program needs assessments that assess the demand of employers for graduates who can apply the most current principles of workplace learning and performance
- assess interest in academic coursework in workplace learning and performance among prospective students
- establish new courses, revise old courses, or build curriculum based on learning and performance roles, competencies, trends, and ethical issues
- assess prospective or current learners to measure their capabilities against the competencies listed in the study
- assess the differences between individual student competencies and the competencies required for present and future success in workplace learning and performance as a foundation for instructors to use in providing career counseling and guidance
- formulate and implement faculty research agenda, important for those faculty members who want to secure academic promotion and tenure in the field

- advise learners enrolled in academic programs on what courses to take or other learning activities to pursue, what career goals might be most promising, and what learning strategies to use to build the competencies they will need to achieve their career goals
- manage and develop faculty because faculty members teaching workplace learning and performance in academic programs must stay current with changes in the business world if they are to teach effectively and provide appropriate student guidance
- provide a basis for evaluating program processes and results and for program accreditation. Successful examples of academic accreditation already exist for schoolteachers and MBA programs. One effort is under way for similar program accreditation for the workplace learning and performance field.

If you're an educator specializing in learning and performance, take some time to organize your thinking by reflecting on the questions on page 101.

Competency modeling and its subsequent applications are often the foundation of the solutions we present to our clients. They are at the heart of performance consulting, organization development, and instructional design. At minimum, it behooves us to "practice what we preach." If we expect our clients to use competency models to select, develop, appraise, and manage the careers of others in our organizations, we should demand it of ourselves as well.

More critical are the benefits that the systematic use of this new competency model will bring to our careers and to the organizations we work with. Our profession is rapidly changing in terms of what it takes to be successful. "Mapping the Future" will serve as a valuable roadmap to help get us there. **TD**

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A Guide for Educators

“Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies”

Directions: Use this guide to help you, as an educator, to organize your thinking about how you may make best use of the ASTD 2004 competency study, “Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies.” For each question posed, check yes or no to indicate whether you think you should use “Mapping the Future” for this purpose in your educational institution. Then, make notes on how you could carry out that activity using “Mapping the Future.” There are no “right” or “wrong” answers in any absolute sense, but some answers may be better suited than others for you and your organization.

Question:

Would it be useful to use “Mapping the Future” in your educational institution to conduct the activities below?

Yes

No

Notes

1 Conduct academic program needs assessments that assess the demand of employers for graduates who can apply the most current principles of workplace learning and performance?

2 Assess interest in academic coursework in WLP among prospective students?

3 Build programs or program curricula in WLP?

4 Establish new courses or revise old courses based on WLP roles, competencies, trends, and ethical issues?

5 Assess prospective or current students to measure their capabilities against the competencies listed in the study?

6 Assess the differences between individual student competencies and the competencies required for present and future success in WLP as a foundation for faculty to use in providing career counseling and guidance?

7 Formulate and implement faculty research agenda, important for those faculty members who wish to secure securing academic promotion and tenure in the field?

8 Advise learners enrolled in academic programs on what courses to take or other learning activities to pursue, what career goals might be most promising, and what learning strategies to use to build the competencies they will need to achieve their career goals?

9 Manage and develop faculty, since faculty members teaching WLP in academic programs must stay current with changes in the business world if they are to teach effectively and provide appropriate student guidance?

10 Provide a basis for evaluating program processes and results?

11 Provide a planning tool for preparing an academic program for an accreditation process?

12 Apply “Mapping the Future” in other ways? (If so, please list and specify.)