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# Chapter 1

# Exploring Training and Talent Development

**S**o you want to be a trainer. Or perhaps you're already in the field, and you've picked up this book to enhance your skills. In either case, this chapter helps you understand the profession and what's expected of those who develop others. This chapter gives you a brief overview of the training profession and why it's important. You're also introduced to talent development and the talent development (TD) professional. If you're wondering what the difference is between training and talent development, you're in the right place: I explore both in this chapter to help you make sense of the profession.

The timing for this book couldn't be better. Much has changed since March 2020. Organizations moved quickly to adjust operations and how to utilize a remote workforce. Likewise, training departments scrambled to determine how best to develop employees who were offsite. Some of this change has been difficult, but the results have been positive.

Employees needed training, and training departments had to rethink how to deliver their services in a matter of days, without a needs assessment or a plan to guide them. Many were completely unprepared for such an upheaval in terms of tools and competencies. Still, they rose to the challenge. It's what trainers do. Trainers switched to virtual, instructor-led training; they chunked learning into

short, specific lessons; and they made it interesting for those distracted by working from home. Even better, they got creative when new technology wasn't in the budget. And they managed these innovations in days instead of months. Although the situation was atypical, the profession's response was typical: Do what needs to be done for your customers.

This chapter starts with training and what it means to be a trainer because it is likely the more well-known term. Then I introduce talent development and compare the two.

## Introducing the Exciting Role of Training

Having a role in training and development is one of the most exciting careers anyone can have. Although a trainer's job has changed substantially over the past decade and is currently going through another transformation, many of the positive aspects always remain with the job. First, a trainer impacts the work of many people — not only the learners with whom you work but also supervisors, senior management, clients, vendors, and perhaps even your company's board of directors. As a trainer, you have access to many people and can develop a broader picture of your organization's needs. Trainers usually have excellent communication skills. People listen to you. Employees respect you. Leaders depend on you.

In addition, training is exciting because it serves as an integral step in an organization's efforts toward change and improvement. You may be a part of defining the organization of today, envisioning the organization of the future, and helping to incorporate the changes necessary to create the new organization. As a trainer, you have the opportunity to influence the direction your organization takes and how it gets there.



TIP

Change is here to stay. Therefore, you need to take a proactive stance in shaping your career. To be the most effective trainer, find out all you can about your organization. What are the primary issues and priorities it faces? Partner with those who lead your organization and find out how you can help them. Where are the pressure points that affect the bottom line? Identify how your work can positively impact the bottom line, given that you're in a unique position to impact others. At the same time, remember to also take the opportunity to impact your career.

Workplace changes affect how we all work, and training is about change. It's about transformation. It's all about continuous learning. Training is a process designed to assist an individual to learn new skills, knowledge, or attitudes. As a result, individuals make a change or transformation that improves or enhances

their performance. These improvements ensure that people and organizations can do things better, faster, easier, and with higher quality.

As an example, consider the huge change when a large portion of the workforce started working remotely as a result of the pandemic. Training departments had to rethink how to deliver training remotely and determine which content was needed the most. They needed to figure out how to engage employees to learn while competing with children, spouses, pets, and other distractions. They needed to address both their own and their learners' technical challenges. In some cases, they had to be cautious about physical health and mental well-being, all while ensuring that they were engaging the learners. Trainers had to fast-track learning to employees who needed it while working from home. Trainers are masters at change. After all, that's what learning is all about.

## Learning happens all the time

You, like everyone else, have been in training since the day you were born. You have been learning and changing into the knowledgeable, skilled adult you currently are. Everyone has both received training and developed others. If you ever demonstrated how to create a poll on Zoom to a new employee, advised your boss regarding changes in your department, or explained a shortcut for completing a task to a colleague, you were conducting training.

Learning is acquired in many forms. You may, for example, have experienced some of these situations: had a one-on-one session with your supervisor to learn the benefits of a new product that your company produces; attended a virtual class to learn new negotiating skills; or taken an asynchronous online course to learn how to use a new computer program. Or maybe you'll take a golf lesson to learn how to improve your use of long irons, or get coached by someone in your company to learn to be more politically savvy. You may register for a local university course to learn about artificial intelligence and future-proof your career. The key word in each of these examples is *learn*. Training is provided so that people learn something in order to make a change.

People use the words *training* and *development* as though there's a difference between the two words, and yet all professionals in the business seem to have their own definitions. This book doesn't arrive at a mutual definition that everyone can agree on, but both concepts are paths to learning and performance. In general, people view training as those learning options that include someone who facilitates the learning in a formal setting: classroom, workshop, seminar, virtual instructor-led, or synchronous online. Development, on the other hand, is viewed as more self-directed and informal: coaching, mentoring, reading, self-study, social learning, on-the-job learning, and asynchronous online learning.

Learning also occurs during water cooler discussions, in cubical conversations, during Zoom meetings, and at conferences. Trainers are involved in all these alternatives.



Read that last sentence again and remember it. It doesn't matter what your official title is or how you deliver learning. Trainers may be involved in *all* activities in which people acquire knowledge and develop skills. Yes, you may design or deliver training in a traditional or virtual classroom. But you may also coach supervisors about the best way to develop their employees, or advise leaders of corporate changes required to support desired performance — or even recommend budgets for social media to augment training.

Trainers, although that word may not always be their title, are necessary in every industry, from aardvark ranches to zipper manufacturers. Trainers have jobs in private industry, education, not-for-profit organizations, and government.

Trainers work with people in all positions and at all levels in an organization: executives, managers, supervisors, secretaries, production workers, scientists, artists, doctors, lawyers, security guards, salespeople, teachers, firefighters, authors, custodial workers, wait staff, and you. Even this book is a form of training — self-directed training as you learn your way through its pages.

## Understanding why training is necessary

Every year, organizations budget money for training — more than \$80 billion in the United States and \$360 billion worldwide. And it's growing by almost 7 percent each year. Why this explosive growth? All individuals, whether internal employees or external entrepreneurs, are engaged in upskilling themselves. Everyone is recognizing the explosive changes and the requirements for new skills and are girding themselves for growth and development required in the immediate future. According to recent research, the average company spends about \$1,500 on training per employee.

The volume of money and effort suggests that corporations believe training to be important. They know what justifies this much investment. For starters, training plays an important role in developing a productive workforce and finely tuning processes to increase profits. Training also helps people and organizations manage change. Prior to the pandemic, most organizations focused on training to increase efficiency, but the pandemic uncovered the dire need for companies and their employees to be resilient in the face of unpredictability. A Gartner study found that fewer than 20 percent of employees were able to make the changes required of their organizations. To alleviate this limitation, training departments need to prepare the workforce for the future focusing on resiliency, agility, digital skills, and analytics.

## The four critical needs of organizations

A coordinated, comprehensive training approach has four critical aspects. In the most efficient organizations, those four aspects align toward the same corporate needs:

- » **To meet a business requirement:** This is the starting point. Effective training starts with the clarification (or creation) of organizational goals. This clarity enables the Training & Development (T&D) department to provide a strategic approach to the services it offers the organization. Examples of business needs include increasing customer satisfaction, increasing market share, expanding innovation, and improving quality.
- » **To improve or change performance:** Performance is usually tied to a specific job and a task or set of tasks within that job. It is what the employee must do to achieve the organizational goal. For example, if improving quality is a business goal, each employee must know what process to use to ensure delivery of a quality product or service.
- » **To gain knowledge or to learn new skills:** To change performance, employees may need to learn something new. This learning may take many forms such as coaching, classroom training, asynchronous computer training, on-the-job training (OJT), or self-study.
- » **To change something in the environment or culture:** At times, employees may possess the skills and knowledge required to change their performance, but some aspect of the environment either prevents or discourages individuals from making the change. For example, if an organization's goal is to improve quality, there will be little change if the incentive system focuses on quantity, not quality.

Every one of these reasons indicates a need for training and developing people.



REMEMBER

Trainers are involved in providing services that address all these aspects. If you're a beginning trainer, you'll most likely start with interventions that deliver knowledge and new skills (the third bullet in the preceding list). This is the traditional "training" role. However, as you grow professionally, you will be required to provide learning or all the other needs that affect an organization. You will create and deliver formal and informal learning, instructor-led and self-directed learning, and synchronous and asynchronous training. You will do this in a classroom, online, on the job, or, in the case of a hybrid delivery, perhaps two or more at one time. For ease of reading, I identify all these roles using the traditional title *trainer*.

## What organizations expect training to achieve

Organizations expect to accomplish certain goals by investing in training efforts. They desire change in performance of employees in order to

- » Reduce employee turnover
- » Stay ahead of the competition
- » Use global expansion as an advantage
- » Leverage innovative technology
- » Maintain current customers
- » Generate new customers
- » Increase customer satisfaction
- » Reduce errors
- » Reduce expenses
- » Save time
- » Add dollars to the bottom line
- » Create an agile, capable workforce that is responsive to change
- » Promote a safe workplace

## Why people need training

There are many reasons people require training in the workplace. Some of these reasons are to

- » Orient new employees during onboarding
- » Provide long-term professional development
- » Upskill knowledge for a current job or reskill for a new job
- » Introduce new skills to experienced employees
- » Change career paths because of job elimination or to achieve future goals

But won't trainers run out of people to train? Not likely. Organizations are required to continually make changes. Technological advances continue to influence how trainers do their jobs. The skilled labor pool continues to shrink worldwide. Thousands of new employees enter the workforce or change jobs every week. All this shifting and changing keeps at least a few trainers busy.

The U.S. is in the midst of the so-called great resignation. Why? Yes, people care about benefits, but there is more to the story. Experts tell us that employees care about their careers, their personal growth, and how they can become better professionals. This means that organizations must care about developing their employees. Learning needs to be integrated with the organization's key performance indicators. It seems the best perk organizations can give their employees is the opportunity to learn and develop.

## Learning is essential to career advancement

Learning is vitally important for both employers and employees. The previous section lists what organizations accomplish by investing in development. Even more important is that development defines employees' roles, prepares them for promotions, gives meaning to their work identity, boosts income potential, and impacts their lives. Even though this chapter discusses training, employees can't depend on their organizations to develop them. Chapter 15 discusses how employees must be accountable for their own development.



What you need to know now is that your role as a trainer has changed, too. Yes, you may be providing training that helps employees learn, but you will also be expected to help guide them along their own career development path.

## Training isn't just for business

You experience training in other parts of your life in addition to the workplace. For example, you may decide that you want to play the piano or practice yoga. You may want to find out more about your ancestors or Italian artists. If so, you'll likely locate someone who teaches these subjects at your local college, community center, or online. In this way, individuals seek training for a variety of reasons outside the workplace to

- » Learn new skills (try a new hobby such as painting or growing bonsai)
- » Enhance skills you already have (take a tennis lesson to improve your game or a gourmet-cooking lesson to learn new techniques)
- » Acquire knowledge about a subject that intrigues you (attend a class about African history or investing in the stock market)
- » Gain information you require as a result of a life change (attend a class to learn to care for your elderly parent or learn how to prepare for retirement)

Training is available for all areas of your life.

# Discovering What Trainers Do

The trainers' roles, they are a-changing, and many new roles are currently being defined in training. This list provides just a sample of the trainer roles that are emerging. It also gives you a taste of what's to come in the talent development part of this book:

- » Career coach
- » Chief learning officer (CLO)
- » Competency expert
- » Continuous learning coach
- » Corporate trainer
- » Courseware designers
- » Curriculum development specialist
- » E-learning designer
- » Employee development specialist
- » Executive coach
- » Facilitator
- » Global T&D facilitator
- » Instructional designer
- » Instructional technologist
- » Instructor
- » Knowledge manager
- » L&D analytics strategist
- » L&D specialist
- » Leadership development trainer
- » Learning experience designer
- » Manager of strategic initiatives
- » Media designer
- » Multimedia engineer
- » OD consultant
- » Organizational effectiveness specialist
- » Performance analyst
- » Performance consultant
- » Performance technologist
- » Talent development professional
- » Technical trainer
- » Virtual facilitator
- » Workforce diversity director

Even though the preceding list uses wildly different words and appears to be quite diverse, all these roles play a part in ensuring that people gain knowledge or skills, or change attitudes. In the “Understanding why training is necessary” section, earlier in this chapter, I mention that beginning trainers usually start with interventions that design and deliver knowledge and new skills. This traditional “training” role remains the mainstay of the profession. For ease of reading, I refer most often to all roles as training.

Even with the pandemic in full swing in 2020, learners flocked to online virtual classrooms, and most trainers relied on the Association of Talent Development (ATD) to support them during that time. ATD is the world's largest talent development association, with more than 30,000 members in more than 100 countries. ATD provides guidance, professional development, and research for its members. For example, the 2021 *ATD State of the Industry Report* says that about 68 percent of learning involved a trainer, whether in person, in a virtual classroom, or through a combination hybrid model.

The two roles of trainers, design and delivery, can each be further subdivided into two main categories. All training professionals are involved with designing and/or implementing a learning experience. Whether you design, deliver, or do a bit of both, you have two aspects to master: content and process:

- » **Content:** Whether you're designing or delivering, you need to truly understand what others need to know about the topic. Get inside the topic and find out more than what's offered in your trainer's manual. Ask more questions of more people if you're designing. Talk to *subject matter experts*, often called *SMEs* in the profession. The content is based on your organization's needs.
- » **Process:** Both design and delivery have methods that you incorporate into your training task. Design methods incorporate skills such as designing participant materials, incorporating adult learning principles, and selecting methods for the perfect blended learning program. Delivery methods incorporate skills such as facilitating group process, presentation skills, and managing disruptive participants. This is true for both face-to-face and virtual learning.

Future chapters provide you with tips and techniques for both content and process.

## Assessing your training potential

Every career has its own set of characteristics that increase the chances that someone will enjoy the job and have a natural aptitude for the work that's done. The following list identifies a number of those characteristics for a trainer:

- » Approachable
- » Articulate
- » Assertive and influential
- » Both logical and creative
- » Confident and poised
- » Customer-focused
- » Enjoys helping others learn
- » Enthusiastic
- » Excellent communicator

- » Flexible, agile, and spontaneous
- » Good listener
- » Has a global mindset
- » Has a sense of humor
- » Has a strong business sense
- » Impartial and objective
- » Lifelong learner
- » Patient
- » Process-oriented
- » Resilient
- » Self-sufficient
- » Solution- and results-oriented
- » Team player and partners well
- » Technologically literate
- » Tolerant of ambiguity
- » Trust-builder
- » Well-organized

Examine the list of characteristics. Which of these are natural for you? Which do you need to improve to be a successful and satisfied trainer?

## Taking stock of your skills

In addition to natural aptitude, every job also requires a specific skill set. The skills required of a trainer are many and varied. The Talent Development Capability Model is a framework to communicate what practitioners need to know and do to develop themselves, others, and their organizations.



CERTIFICATION  
INFO

The Capability Model is structured in three domains:

- » Building personal capability
- » Developing professional capability
- » Impacting organizational capability

Within the three domains are 23 capabilities that span a broad spectrum of disciplines. When integrated and leveraged, they enable professionals to develop employees. Each of the 23 capabilities is broken down into 186 knowledge and skill statements. I tell you much more about the model and the certification process in Chapter 17.

The Knowledge and Skills Inventory in this section incorporates the skills discussed in this book. Although aligned, it is not the Capability Model. You can complete the Knowledge and Skills Inventory in Table 1-1 to identify your current strengths and the skills you need to improve to perform your job effectively. This activity assists you in setting specific objectives for your professional development as you read this book.

You complete this inventory by evaluating your ability to perform each skill using two rating scales. Evaluate each skill from two perspectives. In Column 1, rate your ability; in Column 2, rate the importance of the skill to your particular job.

Evaluate your ability by completing Column 1 using this rating scale:

- 5 Outstanding ability (one of my talents)
- 4 Above-average ability
- 3 Average or moderate ability
- 2 Minimal ability
- 1 No experience or training in this area

Describe the importance of each skill to the job you currently have:

- 5 One of the most important aspects of the job
- 4 Above-average importance
- 3 Average importance
- 2 Occasional importance
- 1 Minimal importance
- 0 No importance

## Scoring your self-assessment

*Whew!* The skills inventory in the next section contains a lot to assess! If you don't know what some of the skills mean, that's okay for now. Each is more clearly defined throughout the book. After you complete the inventory, review it using these suggestions. First, put a plus (+) next to the items for which you rated yourself at 5. These are the talents that form a foundation for your role as a trainer. Circle your three strongest in Table 1-1.

Next, total Column 1. The maximum score is 200. In general, a score of 150 or more indicates a well-rounded, proficient trainer. Not there? Not to worry. Getting you there is what this book is all about.

Next, subtract Column 2 from Column 1 for each of the 40 skills. Write the difference in Column 3. Note that you have a negative number if Column 2 has a larger number than Column 1. If the difference is negative, it means that the task is important in your job, and your skill level may not measure up. These areas clearly need improvement. Put squares around them in Table 1-1. If you have no negative numbers, identify those items that have the lowest numbers.

**TABLE 1-1**

**Training Knowledge and Skills Inventory**

Professional Foundation			
Skills	Column 1 Your Ability	Column 2 Importance on the Job	Column 3 Difference (Col 1-2=3)
Communicates effectively and demonstrates emotional intelligence			
Continuous learner, improving and updating professional skills and knowledge			
Establishes trust and professional credibility			
Promotes collaboration, partnerships, and teamwork throughout the organization			
Thinks strategically; is knowledgeable about the organization's vision, goals, business issues, and culture			
Designs a plan for assessing needs using appropriate methodologies			
Identifies customer expectations			
Conducts a needs assessment			
Analyzes needs to align with organizational priorities			
Has the ability to determine whether training or some other intervention is required			
Assesses learning and performance before and after to measure training effectiveness			
Establishes effective learning objectives			
Selects, adapts, or creates a design that is appropriate and results oriented			
Selects and sequences content and instructional methods appropriate for the project and learners' diversity			
Designs blended learning solutions that incorporate online, classroom, on-the-job, self-paced, and other options			
Incorporates media and technology options appropriately			

Professional Foundation			
Skills	Column 1 Your Ability	Column 2 Importance on the Job	Column 3 Difference (Col 1-2=3)
Aligns learning solutions with organizational and learner needs			
Applies adult learning theory and principles in developing a course			
Develops and evaluates instructional materials and media support			
Designs participant-oriented learning activities			
Builds in diversity and inclusion elements			
Uses various techniques to prepare for training delivery			
Establishes credibility appropriately			
Prepares the physical or online environment for optimal learning			
Creates a positive learning environment			
Aligns objectives and learning with business and participant needs			
Demonstrates effective presentation and facilitation skills			
Demonstrates effective questioning skills			
Uses a variety of learning methodologies			
Stimulates and sustains learner motivation and encourages participation			
Uses technology effectively			
Demonstrates understanding of group dynamics			
Manages difficult participants			
Manages unexpected events in the classroom and learning environment			
Promotes transfer of knowledge and skills to the workplace			

(continued)

**TABLE 1-1 (continued)**

Professional Foundation			
Skills	Column 1 Your Ability	Column 2 Importance on the Job	Column 3 Difference (Col 1-2=3)
Applies learning analytics to demonstrate results and impact			
Develops evaluation instruments such as questionnaires and tests			
Incorporates feedback and data for future recommendations			
Analyzes evaluation results against organizational goals			
Uses the four levels of evaluation appropriately			
Totals			

Your results provide you with a general direction for skills and knowledge that you may want to acquire.

All these skills are an important part of why training is such a fabulous job. You need to know a little about a lot and a lot about other things. This assessment focuses on the basics of training, which is an important place to start. Trainers must know lots more about technology, virtual training, and hybrid options; therefore, you find the Virtual Trainer Strengths Assessment in Chapter 7.

## How do you become a trainer?

There are as many paths to a career in training as there are types of training. Many trainers, like me, can tell you they “came in the back door.” I was a trainer for more than a year before I realized that training was a profession in its own right. Because training became a collateral duty to the “real” job I had, I didn’t consider that someone may have studied the training process to ensure effectiveness! It was only after I started messing around with the curriculum and experimenting with various training methodologies that my research led me to an entire body of knowledge. Until then, I thought I was inventing adult learning theory! I must admit, I was a bit disappointed when I first discovered Malcolm Knowles!

Many trainers work for organizations in other departments. They may drift over to the learning and development department or the human resources department and apply for a job. Sometimes they have taken a class and decide that they want to be at the training end of the classroom rather than the learner end. In other cases, they may have been tapped as a subject matter expert (SME) to conduct training on a new product, service, or procedure. Enjoying the experience, they followed up on how to do it full time. Some individuals enroll in adult learning degree programs.



CERTIFICATION  
INFO

The 2019 ATD Capability Study provides a more extensive discussion of the skills and an explanation of the different competencies required for other roles in the training and development profession. ATD offers classes and other learning opportunities for those new to the profession or others desiring to brush up on their skills. Find additional information on ATD's Capability Study at <https://www.td.org/books/capabilities-for-talent-development>.

No matter how you have come to this point in your career, and whether you're a part-time trainer, full-time trainer, or wannabe trainer, remember that a professional certification is available to you through ATD, providing you with the foundation for becoming a skilled professional. Read more about certification in Chapter 17.

I mention earlier in this chapter that this book addresses two parts of the learning profession: training and talent development. So far, I've spent the first part of this chapter on training. Next I explore talent development, why it's an important distinction, and how it differs from training.



NAMES  
TO KNOW

## THE TRAINING PROFESSION'S EVOLUTION

Training has been around since the Stone Age. It's not likely that train-the-trainer seminars existed in 2020 B.C. Yet without some natural way to transfer skills and knowledge, people would never have progressed from the first wheel on a muddy road to the computer chips that guide exploration of outer space. Probably the first documented training occurred in the 18th century, when artisans and craftsmen formed apprenticeships that utilized a demonstration-practice-feedback-practice-again process.

It wasn't until 1943 that training was organized under one banner, the American Society for Training Directors. The association later changed its name to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

Two influential professionals helped to shape the early years of the profession. In the 1960s, Malcolm Knowles advanced the idea of andragogy, a learning theory for adults,

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distinct from pedagogy for children. This tipped the scale toward a more learner-centered approach as opposed to a content-centered approach. Len Nadler coined the term Human Resource Development and added structure and organization to the field.

The 1990s reinforced the critical role trainers played in helping organizations achieve their business goals. In the “Understanding why training is necessary” section, earlier in this chapter, I mention the importance of aligning the four requirements of the organization when budgeting for training: business, performance, learning, and environmental needs. Trainers ensure that performance and results, not just learning, occur to support the bottom line. The field embraced a Workplace Learning and Performance perspective, encouraging some organizations to call their trainers “workplace learning and performance professionals.” Quite a mouthful! With the advent of workplace analytics, or “big data” as it is sometimes called, businesses are finding ways to measure the effects of training on the business.

But another role clarification was in the making. As we move well into the 21st century, it’s clear that training and development professionals continue to accept a greater role that impacts the total organization’s success. Today this broader role includes change management, coaching managers to develop their people, succession planning, engagement and retention efforts, consulting, change management, and implementing organizational assessments. This broader role deserved a more impactful name.

During this time, ASTD had become the world’s leading association for training and development. The name American Society for Training and Development no longer represented the expanded role of the profession, nor the global reach of the association. Therefore, in 2014 the professional group that represents training and development became the Association for Talent Development (ATD). Trainers adopted the title of Talent Development (TD) Professionals.

## Exploring the Terminology of Talent Development

Training is the first half of the story. Training will always be around, but there has been a change — and not in name only this time. This section compares the difference between facilitators, trainers, talent development (TD) professionals, teachers, and instructors along with numerous other distinguishing terms.

## Who's who?

Even though our profession has debated over the years about what to call ourselves, what you *do* is much more important than what you call yourself. I sometimes switch back and forth between the terms *trainer*, *facilitator*, and *TD professional*, depending on the context, but here's an explanation of the titles of people who deliver training:

- » **Trainer:** A TD professional who helps individuals improve performance by facilitating learning in a traditional or virtual classroom, one-on-one, or on the job in an organization. This title is used for those who are the learning catalysts so that other adults may learn new skills and knowledge, and it's interchangeable with *facilitator*. A good trainer *is* a facilitator.
- » **Facilitator:** The person or trainer who guides or makes learning easier, both in content and in application of the content to the job. The focus is on active learner participation, not dispensing knowledge. This title is often used to describe a person who conducts team-building or strategic-planning sessions.
- » **Talent Development (TD) Professional:** The person who fosters learning and employee development to drive organizational performance, productivity, and results. The term encompasses a broader range of capabilities and disciplines than the terms *trainer* or *facilitator*.
- » **Presenter:** An adult who delivers speeches at conferences or to larger groups, with minimal emphasis on two-way communication.
- » **Instructor:** A teacher in academia. This title may also refer to someone with specific skill sets, such as tennis instructor or flight instructor.
- » **Teacher:** Most often applies to someone who instructs children; it's pedagogical.

Here are terms used for those who are receiving the training:

- » **Learner:** A neutral term that can be used for anyone gaining information.
- » **Participant:** A general term used by facilitators, trainers, and TD professionals to refer to anyone in a learning or intervention session; a learner.
- » **Trainee:** This term is synonymous with *participant* but is rarely used; most recently, it has been replaced by *learner* or *participant*.
- » **Student:** Used for young children; it's pedagogical.



REMEMBER

To project respect for your learners, avoid using the word *student* when discussing them. *Learners* or *participants* best define the adults you're training.

## What's what?

The activity that occurs between the two *whos* in the preceding section may be called any of these:



PEARL OF  
WISDOM

- » **Facilitating:** May be interchanged with the term *training*. This term usually refers to taking less of a leading role and being more of a catalyst.
- » **Training:** The activity conducted by adults who are delivering new skills. Knowledge is generally put to immediate use. Hands-on practice is included.  

I was once given a great bit of advice that I pass on to you. To be the most successful trainer/facilitator, don't be a sage on stage, but be a guide on the side.
- » **Instructing:** Allows participants to generalize beyond what has been taught. Instructing involves minimal hands-on practice. (This sounds too much like a college class to me.)
- » **Educating:** Imparting knowledge, generally in a broader context with delayed implementation. It usually involves little hands-on practice.

The results of the activities in the preceding list may be called some of these:

- » **Learning:** Gaining knowledge and skills to make change
- » **Knowledge:** Gaining cognitive competence and information assimilation
- » **Skill development:** Gaining psychomotor competence
- » **Attitude:** Willingness to change based on new knowledge
- » **Performance:** Implementing the knowledge and skills that have been gained

You may find other labels for these roles and what occurs, and as the profession grows and changes, you're likely to find even more. What you call yourself is not nearly as important as the significant work you accomplish: helping adults learn so that they can improve their performance.



NAMES  
TO KNOW

Adults learn because they want to or need to. We are all trainers, all learners. Carl Rogers said, "The degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself."

# Experiencing the Advent of the Talent Development Role

If you read the first half of this chapter, you can see that training is narrowly focused. Today trainers — er, TD professionals — have a much broader and exciting mission.

## Merging training and talent development

For years, trainers pouted about not having a seat at the table, meaning that they knew the important role they could play if only they could have access to the C-suite where all the decisions were made. The merger of training and talent development creates a bridge between the trainers who have the skills and the work that needs to be completed. Trainers have seen our roles change dramatically in the past dozen years. Our employers', clients', and customers' expectations have escalated rapidly.

Many trainers did not keep up with what was expected of us as we moved from the proverbial order-takers to trusted advisors of the C-suite. Perhaps it was unexpected, or sometimes there was little trust in the metamorphosis. At any rate, the pandemic caught many trainers without a plan for what needed to happen. Fortunately, many rose to the occasion and transformed practically overnight. Now they no longer worry about a seat at the table. They are sitting there.

Trainers already have many of the skills required of the TD professional roles, and with a bit of role redefinition, they can be a valuable asset to their organizations.

As talent development trusted advisors, we can provide guidance to the C-suite and support to the entire organization. It's an exciting and a scary place to be. It may require a mind shift. Our talent development role requires us to take the lead to develop the workforce, ensuring that organizations achieve their strategic goals. TD professionals must therefore focus on the issues that matter to the business, do what they promise, communicate effectively, build relationships of trust and respect with line managers, and demonstrate a willingness to lead innovative development solutions that create value for the business.

As an example, before the pandemic, voluntary employee turnover cost U.S. businesses more than \$630 billion every year, so creating an engagement strategy that attracts and retains top talent isn't just to make employees happy. The savings go directly to the bottom line. TD professionals can resolve corporate issues like this.

Leaders face rapid change, environmental complexity, competitive global markets, and rapidly changing technology. In the midst of this turmoil, they must also focus on maintaining cultural alignment and meeting the growing expectations of customers and employees. TD professionals may serve as consultants and sounding boards to leaders. They can be confidants providing authentic communication and insight.



REMEMBER

TD professionals have an opportunity to foster cultures of lifelong learning that drive organizational performance, innovation, engagement, and opportunity.

## Realizing the many hats worn by a 21st century TD professional

The 21st century TD professional wears many hats, so every day is different. You're the focal point of the learning ecosystem, within which all learning is connected. The 70-20-10 framework discussed in Chapter 2 explains the ecosystem. It means that 70 percent of learning occurs on the job, 20 percent of learning occurs socially or from others, and 10 percent of learning occurs in a formal context that could be courses, reading, certifications, or classes.

Within the 70-20-10 framework, you need the skills to differentiate what you need to do, and when. When do you put your trainer hat on? When do you need your consulting hat? When do you need to coach?

TD professionals may find themselves facilitating a virtual or hybrid course, or evaluating the impact of a leadership development program. But with the broader calling, TD professionals might also find themselves

- » Leading a change-management effort
- » Coaching senior leaders
- » Developing an employee-engagement strategy
- » Delivering onboarding or orientation for new employees
- » Designing a mentoring program
- » Acting as an internal consultant
- » Making recommendations about the talent required for a new business rollout
- » Providing and interpreting people analytics, or the data-driven approach to managing people, as a trusted advisor to the C-suite

Not only have the tasks changed, but how, where, and with whom TD professionals complete them has changed as well. In this profession, you have a much broader scope than you did as a trainer, and with a new focus — meaning that you could be developing a new employee orientation one week from home and consulting with the manufacturing VP about a LEAN project on the factory floor the next week. You might then be building a functional team on Zoom the week after that.

The spinoffs from training are numerous, and many are mission critical to organizations. Organizations desperately need to reskill and redeploy their employees. The training department is responsible for this development. Whereas you may think of training in a classroom or online as the ultimate experience, the talent development role takes you to the next level. As a TD professional, you're expected to take learners to the next level, too.

As learners complete a virtual-instructor-led training, they need to find ways to take their knowledge and skills to the next level, to practice them, and to get feedback about their progress. Assisting learners in all these endeavors may be your job, too. You can help learners continue to learn socially (the 20 percent of the 70-20-10 framework) by

- » Organizing accountability relationships that extend beyond the virtual training
- » Encouraging mentors or coaches for the learners
- » Connecting learners through social media using discussion boards
- » Helping to establish an online professional community
- » Providing next-step guides to the learners' supervisors
- » Creating job aids

You can also help them learn on the job (the 70 percent) by

- » Finding rotational assignments to practice the new skills
- » Helping supervisors create a stretch assignment
- » Arranging a job-shadowing experience
- » Encouraging membership on a cross-functional team

Yes, TD professionals have all these skills. Now you can see why the profession changed its name in 2014.

## Determining whether you have what it takes

Although the TD profession may seem like a glamorous profession to an observer, it has, like any other profession, its hidden challenges. Having the skills to be a trainer is only one prerequisite. A much more difficult requirement for a successful trainer is to have strong mental and emotional composure. Talent development is a demanding profession; you're responsible for developing many others, and the profession requires constant energy output. If you tire quickly, become discouraged easily, or become frustrated if things don't go according to plan, this may not be the profession for you.

Consider the following questions, which reflect situations a trainer might run into:

- » **Are you willing to work longer than an 8-hour day?** Even though an instructor-led training (ILT) program may be scheduled from 9 to 5, you may find yourself going to the training room much earlier than 9:00 a.m. and staying much later than 5:00 p.m. A well-prepared training session takes thoughtful room and material setup. If you arrive at the training room at the same time as the trainees, you will feel disorganized and unprepared. You may even start late because of last-minute preparations. If you lead a virtual training program with participants halfway around the world, you may start your day at 9:00 p.m. After the training program has ended, it's usually the trainer's responsibility to ensure that all items you used for the training are replaced. If you have completed an online course, you may need to follow up with managers or send additional resources to participants as follow up.
- » **Can you go with the flow?** No amount of preparation can equip a trainer for everything that can happen in a training session. In a virtual classroom, participants may discover they have an incorrect link to join the session, or the audio connection may stop working. You may find that many online participants have not completed the foundational pre-work required to comprehend the module. In a traditional classroom, the trainer must be prepared to respond to unexpected questions and events. A trainer must be flexible. Sometimes, the planned agenda doesn't fit the needs of the audience. A good trainer adjusts the agenda and changes the material so that it meets the needs of the audience. An effective trainer also reads the audience and adjusts the level of the training to fit the level of the audience.
- » **Can you cope with multiple logistic and technology details?** In a virtual setting, this means ensuring that all participants have their own computer connections, getting links and passwords to everyone who needs them, helping participants troubleshoot technical problems prior to the class, and, of course, having a qualified producer available to troubleshoot when issues

arise. In a traditional classroom, it may be someone else's responsibility to make room and equipment arrangements; it becomes the trainer's problem if something isn't right. Are you prepared to deal with malfunctioning equipment, rooms that aren't set up, materials that don't arrive, materials that are incorrect, or any mess-up in general? Today's trainer is technologically astute and takes full accountability for ensuring that all logistics are in order.

- » **Can you perform even when you feel lousy?** Whether face-to-face or online, trainers don't often have the discretion to call in sick. A session is often scheduled long in advance, and learners may have traveled long distances to attend training. Therefore, trainers must be able to facilitate enthusiastically even when they are a little under the weather. The show must go on!
- » **Are you prepared to constantly give of yourself without expecting to receive anything in return?** Trainers are often viewed by others as "healers" — those people who always have the answers and who can perform "magic." Conversely, trainers are not often perceived as people who have their own needs. As a result, participants may use your sessions to get some bad feelings off their chests. Giving of yourself may extend to time as well, such as having time for breaks and lunch that may be used by participants who want to discuss their personal situations.
- » **Can you be the perfect role model all the time?** A trainer's job includes training the "right" way to do things. You must also be prepared to practice what you preach. Trainers run the risk of losing their credibility if they are not perceived to be a perfect example of what they teach. And because no one is perfect, trainers must also admit it when they make a mistake. Trainers can't allow participants to leave a learning session with incorrect information.
- » **Are you prepared to encourage your participants even when management commitment is lacking?** Sometimes people are sent to training because their managers think of it as "a good thing to do." Managers may have made little serious commitment to supporting and encouraging these employees when the training is completed. Can you provide support and understanding in the absence of managers' commitment? Can you follow up with the managers and help them see the importance to the organization as well as coach them to reinforce the new skills?
- » **Can you deliver hard feedback?** Your participants will not learn effectively if they are not given honest and candid feedback during the process. Are you able to give this feedback, even when it's not positive and even if it may impact an employee's job?
- » **Are you able to process failure, identify solutions, and make improvements?** Not every training program is a smashing success. In fact, some are downright bad. Successful trainers are those who analyze what went wrong in the bad sessions and then design changes in the program so that it improves the next time around.



PEARL OF  
WISDOM

Many of the preceding questions are certainly not meant to discourage you, but rather to introduce the reality of a sometimes glamorous-appearing job. It may be challenging. It usually requires a great deal of work. And it can be riddled with problems. However, you forget all the difficulties when former participants tell you that you changed their lives or inspired them. Of course, this doesn't happen on a weekly basis, but it does happen often enough to make it all worthwhile.

Yes, training is a demanding, sometimes hectic, often ambiguous job. There is never a dull moment. It is exciting. It is the catalyst for improvement. It is the process to the future. Training exists to facilitate change and to encourage transformation for a better future. The late Christa McAuliffe, teacher and NASA astronaut, summed it up this way: "I touch the future; I teach."