



## Development Trends in Tough Times

*"The future is already here. It's just not very evenly distributed." – William Gibson, Science fiction novelist*

The business of learning and development is about always looking forward. Learning professionals must address the realities of the present and anticipate how to prepare for the organization of tomorrow.

A 2009 ASTD Research report revealed how learning functions have adapted to tough times. The key findings reported that 43% of survey respondents indicated that the learning budget was reduced at least to some degree. When asked how the current economy would shape the content and focus of the learning function within their own organizations, survey respondents indicated some shifting in priorities. "Emphasizing leadership development" ranked the highest, with 54 percent reporting an increased focus to a high or very high extent as a result of the economic downturn. – *By Andrew Paradise and Jennifer Mosley*

The Boise State Center for Professional Development has observed increasing demand by employers and employees for:

- Knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) for immediate use
- Programs that are short term with easily identifiable return on investment
- Team building on a custom basis to enhance organizational effectiveness
- Up-skilling credentials with certification in areas such as Human Resources and Project Management by employees who are worried about layoffs
- Adult friendly degree/degree completion programs

Considering the current and projected development needs of business, the Center suggests the following strategies:

- Don't ignore soft skills. With reduced and overstressed staff members, communication, leadership and team work skills will help staff to get along and maximize productivity.
- Prime your staff to relate to the clients and their businesses. With more competition, your staff needs to provide your customers "value" beyond the tangible, be knowledgeable technically, and communicate effectively.
- Prepare for the next upturn; get ready to scale up quickly. Does your existing staff have the skills to move up a step? If the "boomers" who delayed retirement, all leave at once, can your existing employees effectively train your new workers?
- Recognize that college graduates are in short supply. The February, 2009 unemployment rates in the Treasure Valley were 8.3%, but rates for college graduates were half that of high school graduates.
- Future jobs will require post secondary technical training. Where will you find a talent pool when you need it?

Final thought...The successful firms won't be the ones who just "survive" the downturn. They will be the survivors who are prepared for the next upturn.

### Boise State Center for Professional Development

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