

ASTD Releases its 2004 State of the Industry Report

Alexandria, Va. -- Dec. 1

U.S. organizations continue to maintain their investment in employee learning and use technology-based delivery methods more than ever before, according to the American Society for Training & Development's (ASTD) "2004 State of the Industry Report."

"Investing in employee learning continues to be a priority for business leaders," said Brenda Sugrue, senior director of research for ASTD and author of the ASTD "2004 State of the Industry Report." "Organizations are linking learning to performance and the bottom line, and they understand the relationship between creating a skilled workforce and achieving enterprise-wide success," she said.

This year's report includes new features such as additional measures of efficiency and a new taxonomy for learning delivered by technology. Three hundred forty-four U.S. organizations of varying sizes from different industries submitted data to ASTD's Benchmarking Service detailing how they invested in and delivered learning to their employees in 2003. They also predicted how their learning expenditures and delivery methods may change in 2004. Highlights from the report include:

- Annual training expenditure per employee remained steady at about \$820 in 2003.
- Training delivery via learning technologies increased significantly to 23.6 percent in 2003, up from 15.4 in 2002.
- Managerial/supervisory training and processes/procedures/business practices were the top learning content areas (13 percent each) in 2003.
- Organizations provided 26 hours of formal learning per employee in 2003, which is consistent with prior years.
- The employee groups receiving the largest percentage of training expenditure in 2003 were those in management positions, including first-line supervisors, middle and senior managers, and executives (28 percent combined), followed by customer service employees (18 percent).

New this year, the ASTD "2004 State of the Industry Report" includes collective data from the 2003 and 2004 ASTD BEST Award winners. The BEST Awards recognize organizations that connect learning and organizational performance. Common characteristics of the BEST winning organizations include:

- High level of investment in learning.
- 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 learning opportunities.
- Chief-level (or C-level) involvement and support for learning.
- Combination of learning with other performance improvement solutions.

In addition to the release of the "2004 State of the Industry Report," ASTD celebrated Dec. 1 as "Employee Learning Day." Tony Bingham, ASTD's president and CEO, reminded business leaders to develop employees' skills so they can succeed at their jobs. "Workforce development is critical for organizational success, and business leaders must take stock of their employee learning programs and measure them against best practices in leading organizations," he states. "We hope that organizations will take Employee Learning Day -- and more days in the future -- to celebrate the growth of their employees' knowledge and skills as a prime contributor to competitive advantage."

For more information: <http://www.astd.org>