

Where's the Value in Certification?

To ASTD (formerly American Society for Training and Development), the certification process has critical value since it fulfills two of the five criteria necessary to elevate an "occupation" to a "profession" as established by the U.S. Department of Labor. These requirements state that in order to qualify as a profession, an occupation must have:

1. a national organization or "common voice;"
2. a code of ethics;
3. a practice of applied research;
4. a defined body of knowledge, and;
5. a credentialing organization.

ASTD is the national organization that provides the common voice. It also has a code of ethics for its members and members of affiliates; and, it promotes applied research in the field of Workplace Learning and Performance (WLP).

ASTD commissioned Development Dimensions International (DDI) to conduct a comprehensive study on WLP competencies completed in 2004. The results of the study were published by ASTD in a book titled, "Mapping the Future: Shaping New Workplace Learning and Performance Competencies" that clearly defines the body of knowledge for the WLP profession. And finally, the newly created ASTD Certification Institute (CI) built the Certified Professional in Learning and Performance™ (CPLP™) credential to establish and authenticate this defined body of knowledge essential to the profession. According to ASTD CI, the CPLP certification provides a way "for workplace learning and performance professionals to prove their value to employers and be confident about their knowledge of the field. If you have at least three years of industry-related experience and education, plus the desire to continue your professional development and prove your value, then consider the CPLP™ credential."

ASTD is not alone in recognizing the value of the CPLP. Corwynn Romberger, MSOD, CPLP, Learning and Development Manager at Black & Veatch Corporation, participated in the CPLP pilot program and indicates a number of ways that the certification adds value. "Working in a company where there are literally thousands of licensed professionals around the globe, the CPLP is highly recognized and valued; more so than other certifications because the requirements go beyond taking a test. Through the process of submitting a work product, I demonstrated a level of skill proficiency in addition to passing a knowledge test." The certification also provides Mr. Romberger with value in his work. "This proficiency is considered so valuable that the CPLP is now on all our training job descriptions as a preferred requirement."

Leanna Wilson, SPHR, CPLP, Johnson County Community College, also sat for the CPLP during the pilot and is a strong advocate of the certification. "ASTD spent quite a lot of time putting this certification program together and it shows in the quality of the process." When asked about what convinced her of the quality of the program she said that "the content included on the exam is very practical. Of

course theory is included, but the exam is really about what you actually do in your work if you are in WLP.” Ms. Wilson indicates that she sat for the exam for personal growth and development. “Having a certification in your field adds to your credibility and lets your employer know you are serious about your profession.” She hopes that more businesses take the steps similar to those at Black and Veatch, giving preference to those candidates who hold the CPLP certification.

Without the certification process, ASTD would not be able to establish the Workplace Learning and Performance functions as a profession. Having the WPL function meet those DOL criteria benefits ASTD and everyone in the WLP profession.

By Connie M Fox, MBA, SPHR, President of Symetrics