

A COMPETENCY EVALUATION STUDY FOR THE MASTER'S OF
SCIENCE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN STOUT

By

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this Master's program in Training and Development is to provide students with the required skills and competencies in order to be effective in the workplace. This skills assessment will determine how the University of Wisconsin Stout can be more effective in meeting the needs of students in the Training and Human Resource Development Master's Program.

The researcher will perform a skills assessment to evaluate the skill level of graduates on the basic competencies of the Master's of Science in Training and Human Resource Development Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

The following encompass the objectives, which will be achieved as a result of this study at the University of Wisconsin Stout. The researcher will determine to what degree

the program is successful in conveying trainer competencies to students of the Training and Development Program. At the same time, the study will discover skill level deficits concerning these competencies, if they exist. Finally, the study will evaluate whether the goal competencies of the Training and Development program are indeed important for professionals in businesses and industries.

The significance of the study can be expressed in that the information gathered will help the University of Wisconsin Stout evaluate whether revisions of this program are needed to meet workforce demands. The researcher will base the study on the results of a survey. This model will be administered to all graduates of the Master's of Science in Training and Development Program since its beginning in 1995. Additionally, all students that have completed their coursework, but have not finished their field problem will be surveyed. The survey will be administered via United States Mail. The researcher has planned to share all results for this study with the University of Wisconsin Stout.

The participants will answer survey questions that will assess competency skills currently emphasized in business and industry, as viewed by the American Society for Training and Development. Additionally, they will evaluate the importance of these competencies in business and industry today.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
LIST OF APPENDICES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ix
<i>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</i>	
Background	1
Purpose of Study	2
Statement of Problem	3
Research Objectives	3
Significance of Study	4
Model/Methodology	4
Limitations	5
Assumptions	6
Key Terms/Definitions	6
Summary of Chapter One	7
<i>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</i>	
Human Resources Development	8
History of Human Resource Development	9
Purpose for Competency Evaluation	10
Competencies: What is expected of a trainer	11
Top Ranked Competencies/Future Competencies	15
Current Competencies of Trainers	15

Potential Problems for Trainers	16
Training Function: How it has changed	18
Trends for Future	20
<i>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</i>	
Introduction	21
Research Design	21
Population	21
Instrument	22
Summary	23
<i>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS</i>	
Purpose of Study	24
Respondent Profile	25
<i>CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	
Introduction	37
Purpose of Study	37
Summary of Procedures and Instrumentation	38
Data Collection	38
Survey Response Rate	39
Conclusions and Recommendations	39
<i>REFERENCES</i>	42

APPENDICES

<i>APPENDIX A: Cover Letter</i>	44
<i>APPENDIX B: Confidentiality Statement</i>	46
<i>APPENDIX C: Survey Questionnaire</i>	48
<i>APPENDIX D: Description of Competencies</i>	51
<i>APPENDIX E: Follow-up Letter</i>	54
<i>APPENDIX F: Listing of Occupations</i>	56
<i>APPENDIX G: Listing of Organization's Primary Business</i>	58
<i>APPENDIX H: Comments on Survey</i>	60

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Progression of Trainer Competencies	13
Table 2. Current Competencies of Trainers	14
Table 3. Top Ranked Competencies/Future Competencies	15
Table 4. Response Rates	24
Table 5. Survey Participants	25
Table 6. Question #1	26
Table 7. Question #2	26
Table 8. Question #3	27
Table 9. Question #4	27
Table 10. Question #5	28
Table 11. Question #6	30
Table 12. Question #7	30
Table 13. Question #8	31
Table 14. Question #9	31
Table 15. Question #10	32
Table 16. All Survey Results	34
Table 17. Comparison Table	36

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background

Human Resource Development practitioners face the challenge of strengthening the return on investment with improved human performance and productivity in the workplace. They must be aware of interventions in training, and methods other than training to facilitate human improvement. Considering this, it is crucial to identify competencies or skills needed of those who partake in human performance improvement work. The purpose in identifying these is to ensure that the skill sets or competencies identified are effectively instructed in educational programs.

The demands of the workplace force business and industry to become more skilled at managing challenges. The field of Training and Human Resource Development responds to these demands, as global competition and technological advances create bigger challenges for the workplace (Benkowski, 2002).

The University of Wisconsin Stout is an institution whose goal is to prepare students for the workforce. Specifically, the purpose of the Master's Program in Training and Human Resource Development is to prepare students to meet the needs of industrial and educational training needs. Upon completion of the program, students should be able to:

- manage and coordinate training needs,
- design, deliver and evaluate training programs, and
- develop training competencies in managers and supervisory personnel, according to the Graduate Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin Stout (2002).

Consistent evaluation of the program ensures that graduating students are prepared to meet and exceed the expectations of future and current employers. This study is focused on evaluating the skill level that graduates have in competencies expected of entry-level trainers. In addition, participants will rate the importance of these competencies as they see fit in their experience in the workplace.

Since seventy-five percent of students in the program are currently working full time in business and industry, a competency-based assessment is appropriate. The majority of students are able to directly apply skills and competencies learned in the program to the work environment. Due to the immediacy of this relationship, the feedback graduates can offer regarding skills acquired in the program is an appropriate evaluation technique.

Purpose of Study

In order for the Master's of Science Training and Development graduates to meet or exceed the expectations of current and future employers, curriculum must be evaluated via skill sets and competencies of the program (Gene, 2000). The purpose of the Master's Program in Training and Development is to provide students with the skills required in business and industry. This skills assessment intends to determine whether the University of Wisconsin Stout can be more effective in meeting the needs of students in the Training and Human Resource Development Master's Program. The assessment will achieve this by determining the skill level graduates have upon completion of coursework of the skill sets desired of Human Performance Improvement Professionals.

Statement of Problem

To determine if the present curriculum in the Master's of Science in Training and Development Program at UW-Stout provides students with the necessary competencies to be successful in the business environment.

Research Objectives

A study of this nature for this program has never been executed at UW-Stout. The following encompass the objectives, which will be achieved as a result of this study at the University of Wisconsin Stout:

1. Determine the skill level students have in competencies required of Human Resource Development Practitioners upon completion of coursework in the M.S. Training and Development Program at the University of Wisconsin Stout.
2. Assess whether these competencies are meeting the demands of Human Resource Development Professionals.
3. Determine the importance of skills/competencies for Human Resource Development Professionals, as seen by professionals in the industry.

Significance of Study

1. The University of Wisconsin Stout will find this information useful for revising the program, if necessary to meet industry needs.
2. Organizations can use the information for revision of or creation of competency-based evaluations in the workplace.
3. Organizations can use the information for writing job descriptions for Training and Development Professionals.

Model/Methodology

The researcher intends to base the study on the results of a skills assessment survey. The skills that will be assessed have been obtained from the “American Society of Training and Development Models for Human Performance Improvement: Roles, Competencies, and Outputs,” which identifies skills essential for trainers. This survey will be used on all students who have completed required coursework in the Master’s of Science in Training and Development Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. All graduates and students who have finished required coursework (who have not completed the field problem) from the Training and Development Master’s program since its beginning in 1995, will be surveyed. The survey will be administered via United States mail. The researcher will share the results of this study with the University of Wisconsin Stout.

A follow-up mailing will be issued to increase the response rate. Analysis will be performed on the data, regarding the skill level students acquired upon completion of coursework in competencies of Human Resource Development Professionals.

Additionally, the students will evaluate the importance of these competencies in current business and industry.

Limitations

1. Each student who has completed required coursework will receive a survey; however, there is no guarantee that each individual will return the questionnaire, thus the rate of response is unknown.
2. This study does not intend to include the input or perspective of employers of Training and Human Resource Development professionals.
3. The study will only be inclusive of the Master's program in Training and Development at the University of Wisconsin Stout and no other program of this nature is to be evaluated in the study.
4. The need to keep the survey model concise may limit the amount and type of information received.
5. The survey instrument was produced by the researcher. Validation of the survey was not performed.
6. Not all individuals surveyed work strictly as Human Resource Development professionals, thus the importance they place on skills may not be typical or representative of the needs for human resource development professionals.
7. Respondents have a variety of previous education and work experience, which make them similar to or different from the norm.

Assumptions

1. All individuals surveyed will have sufficient knowledge and background to make an accurate assessment of competency-based questions.
2. Individuals surveyed will see the importance and benefit of partaking in the study for the benefit of making a more effective program for future students.
3. The information acquired in this study will be used to benefit the program at the University of Wisconsin Stout in improving the program to better fit the needs of students and workforce demands.
4. The individuals surveyed will be truthful in their responses.
5. The researcher will successfully evaluate the information received and produce meaningful data.

Key Terms/Definitions

Competency: Underlying characteristics of an employee that lead to successful performance (Stone, 1995).

Competency Assessment: “process of identifying the competencies—the underlying characteristics that lead to successful performance—among a group of employees, typically by department, job category or hierarchical level” (McNerney, 1995).

Summary of Chapter One

Instructors in the Master's of Science Training and Development Program need to focus on delivering instruction that prepares Human Resource Development Professionals with the skills and competencies demanded in the industry. In order to do this, an assessment of the skill level obtained by those who have completed coursework, and an evaluation of these skills is necessary to maintain effectiveness.

The next chapters contain a review of literature, methods used in research, results of the study, and recommendations based on the research.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

An organization's willingness to make investments in Human Resources greatly impacts the degree of success that organization experiences. This chapter addresses the field of Training and Human Resource Development, the development of the field, and competencies desired of trainers. .

Training has been defined by Leonard Nadler as, "learning provided by employers to employees that is related to their present jobs" (Nadler, 1989). It has also been viewed as a "change in skills" (Lawrie, 1990). William Rothwell, a consistent literary contributor to the field, explains that training has been described more specifically in recent years as "a short-term learning intervention intended to build upon individual knowledge, skills and attitudes in an effort to meet present or future work requirements" (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000). On a basic level, training should help employees meet job requirements, or improve their current performance. Moreover, workers should immediately be able to apply it to the job (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000).

Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development was defined in 1968 by Nadler as "an organized learning experience within a given period with the objective of producing the possibility of performance improvement" (1980). He later redefined it to be "organized learning experiences provided by employers within a specified period of time to bring about the possibility of performance improvement and/or personal growth" (Nadler, 1989). Often experts refer to Human Resource Development as "the integrated use of training and

development, organizational development and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness” (McLagan, 1989).

History of Human Resource Development

The evolution of Human Resource Development is closely linked to job training, organizational development, career development, and government-sponsored work programs. In the early part of the Industrial Revolution, employers were coping with an unskilled workforce. At this time, training was performed by oral instruction, demonstration, and trial and error. There were no standardized methods as the industry developed in the United States and Europe.

World War II (WWII) awakened interest in training, as “J Programs” (Job Instruction Training), the Engineering, Science, and Management War Training Program (training of technical workers), and the GI Bill (a development of educational funds for veterans), were developed. Following WWII, organizational development grew from three elements: unstructured small group sessions, survey-guided development, and action research. Eventually, career development was added. This began the United States Job service in 1930, which was formed to facilitate career progress of labor groups and improve the groups of skilled labor organizations (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992). The forerunners of the Human Resource Development field were economics, psychology, management, communications, sociology, political science, education, and the humanities (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992), each of which met specific needs of the field prior to its development.

Human Performance Improvement (HPI) and Workplace Learning Performance (WLP) are terms that have stemmed from Human Resource Development. Workplace Learning Performance, the most recent terminology in the field, describes a shift in paradigm that was created to more accurately portray that workplace learning is a means for achieving the improved Human Performance in the workplace (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000).

Purpose for Competency Evaluation

Since the beginning of the Human Resource Development field, competency methods for evaluation have been used by trainers. Moreover, a competency study serves as a prescriptive model for the future of the field. In the 1970's, when the field was developing, a study team was assigned to produce a detailed and updateable definition of excellence in the field. This definition would exist in a form that would be useful, and used as a standard by the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), organizations, educational instructors, Training and Development departments, and individuals practicing or expected to practice in the Training and Development field (McLagan, 1989). The results of this study are found in Table 1.

Competency studies for Workplace Learning Performance (WLP) are essential for meeting the challenges of the world market in the future. WLP is a critical component for meeting future challenges, as Rothwell and Sredl write, "WLP professionals and managers must identify appropriate roles to place, sharpen their competencies to enact those roles, and devote increasing attention to achieving results (outputs)" (2000). Essentially, a competency study is critical for clarifying the roles to be played, and competencies and outputs that enhance success (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000).

Competencies: What is expected of a trainer.

Terrance Keys pinpoints several tasks and abilities of trainers in his book, “How to be a Successful Technical Trainer: Core Skills for Instructor Certification”:

- Analyze Course Materials and Learner Information
- Assure Preparation of Instructional Site
- Establish and Maintain Instructor Credibility
- Manage the Learning Environment
- Demonstrate effective Communication Skills
- Demonstrate Effective Presentation Skills
- Demonstrate Effective Questioning Skills and Techniques
- Respond Appropriately to Learners’ Needs for Clarification and Feedback
- Provide Positive Reinforcement and Motivational Incentives
- Using Instructional Methods Appropriately
- Using Media Effectively
- Evaluating Learner Performance
- Report Evaluation Information

(Keys & Zeff, 2000).

Similarly, Tom Goad identifies eight steps to effective training in his recent publication “The First-Time Trainer: A Step-By-Step Quick Guide For Managers, Supervisors, and New Training Professionals:”

- Facilitate Learning
- Focus on Performance
- Focus on Learning
- Be Prepared
- Deliver Effectively
- Get Learners Involved
- Get Feedback
- Improve Continuously (1997).

In a comprehensive look at competencies expected of a trainer, Tom Goad points out the following abilities:

- Managerial Ability: manage time, resources, funds, and staff members.
- Communication Skills: ability to motivate and use electronic methods effectively.
- Analytical and Problem Solving Skills: analysis is ongoing requirement in field.
- Information Literacy: workers need to find information and implement solutions to problems.
- Computer Literacy: communications rely on automation and digital technology; computers deliver a lot of training (1997).

By becoming well-versed in these abilities, the trainer has an opportunity to establish himself/herself as a change agent. As discussed in *Management Review*, the goal of the trainer is: “to become the eyes and ears of senior management by identifying critical gaps in business leadership and technical competencies and to fill those gaps with training,” (“Trainers rewrite their job descriptions,” 1995). According to this vision, training must become more intimately involved with every aspect of the organization” (“Trainers rewrite their job description,” 1995).

The following table presents the first progressions of the competencies of trainers from 1948-1978:

Table 1: Progression of Trainer Competencies (Eaves, 1985).

Hallenbeck '48	Houle '56	Robinson et al. '60's	Nadler and Lippitt '67	Pinto & Walker '78
Instructional methodology and materials	Philosophical conceptions of adult education	Knowledge of adult psychology and learning	Ability to develop and supervise programs	Program design and development
Adult psychology	Knowledge of sociological & psychological concepts of adult education	Skill in teaching; knowledge of group dynamics	Knowledge of educational principles	Managing external resources
Sociology of adulthood	Knowledge of various agencies of adult education	Knowledge of organization and administration	Ability to communicate	Job/performance-related training
History and philosophy of adult education	Ability to plan, develop, implement and evaluate educational activities	Skill in program planning and evaluation	Knowledge of business principles	Individual development planning and counseling
Administration; community organization	Ability to train leaders	Skill in marketing and promotion	Ability to conduct classes	Training research
Programming functions	Ability to counsel and guide learners	Skill in communications	Policy implementation	Group and organizational development
Knowledge in particular subject	Ability to develop and promote programs		Developing and supervising programs	Development of material resources
	Ability to coordinate and supervise programs and personnel		Determining training needs	Maintaining working relationships with managers
	Ability to evaluate		Conducting training	Conducting training and development needs analysis
	Personal effectiveness and group leadership		Maintaining Human Relations	Conducting training programs

The following represent current competencies of trainers, as they are reaffirmed in several studies and publications, including Rothwell and Sredl's recent book "The ASTD Reference Guide to Workplace Learning and Performance: Present and Future Roles and Competencies."

Table 2: Current Competencies of Trainers

<u>Technical Competencies</u>	<u>Business Competencies</u>	<u>Interpersonal Competencies</u>	<u>Intellectual Competencies</u>
Adult-Learning Understanding	Business Understanding	Coaching Skill	Data Reduction Skill
Understanding of Career Development Theories and Techniques	Cost-Benefit Analysis Skill	Feedback Skill	Information Search Skill
Competency-Identification Skill	Delegation Skill	Group-Process Skill	Intellectual Versatility
Computer Competence	Industry Understanding	Negotiation Skill	Model Building Skill
Electronic Systems Skill	Organization-Behavior Understanding	Presentation Skill	Observing Skill
Facilities Skill	Understanding of Organization Development	Questioning Skill	Self-Knowledge
Objectives-Preparation Skill	Organization Understanding	Relationship-Building Skill	Visioning Skill
Performance Observation Skill	Project-Management Skill	Writing Skill	
Subject Matter Understanding	Records-Management Skill		
Understanding of Training and Development			
Research Skill			

McLagan, (1989).

Table 3: Top Ranked Competencies/Future Competencies

Practitioners Current: Top-Ranked Competencies	Practitioners Future: Top-Ranked Competencies
1. Communication	1. Competency Identification
2. Competency Identification	2. Technological Literacy
3. Leadership	3. Leadership
4. Analytical Thinking	*4. Communication
5. Interpersonal Relationship-Building	*5. Intervention Selection
*6. Feedback	6. Analytical Thinking
*7. Intervention Selection	*7. Industry Awareness
*8. Industry Awareness	*8. Performance Gap Analysis
9. Adult Learning	9. Ability to See the “Big Picture”
10. Performance Gap Analysis	*10. Evaluation of Results against Organizational Goals
	*11. Knowledge Management

* Indicates a tie. Either competency could be in the higher or lower ranking.

(Rothwell, Sanders, and Soper, 1999).

Current Competencies of Trainers

A recent article in *Training and Development*, which focused on thirty-three world class competencies, divided today’s required competencies of trainers into three categories, namely “Understanding Adult Learners,” “Developing Instructional Competencies,” and “Personal Competencies.” (Weinstein, 2000).

Within the category of “Understanding Adult Learners,” Weinstein points out that when training adults, a trainer must present practical knowledge, not theory. Additionally, a trainer must realize adults have preferred learning styles, are diverse, motivated and curious, and have previous knowledge and experience. Finally, adult learners need to develop problem-solving skills.

In order to develop instructional competencies, trainers must have expert knowledge and experience, know about participants’ workplace, and organize learning

methods carefully. Additionally, keeping ideas simple, establishing an appropriate climate, and maintaining variety in instructional methods are important. Weinstein emphasizes importance on developing questioning, research and writing skills, and encouraging group participation for solving problems. Also, trainers must work on their presentation and group skills. Finally, focusing on feedback, developing competence in new technologies, exhibiting flexibility, and being an effective evaluator were mentioned. (Weinstein, 2000).

Personal competencies that trainers need include: the love of learning, showing respect for learners, motivating learners, effective communication, using humor, being a leader and working on problem-solving abilities. In addition, improving critical thinking skills, working on the trainer's network, reflecting and not neglecting personal development were mentioned (Weinstein, 2000).

Other articles have suggested that one competency becoming crucial for trainers is a greater mentality of what the business of training is (Bacheler, 1997). Because there is this gap and the overall convenience of having training done in-house, the workforce is witnessing the big push toward departmental managers than company-wide professionals. In addition, having a good understanding of the dynamics of adult learning is stressed. Effective usage of technology was also stressed (Bacheler, 1997).

Potential Problems for Trainers

There have been few studies regarding how trainers go about developing their influence and contribution to the organization. Knowledge regarding trainers' approaches to their roles stems mainly from work conducted in the 1980's. One

difficulty trainers face in their quest for the change-agent role is the compelling history of adverse attitudes from managers about employee training” (Hallier, 2000). In a study performed by Pettigrew et al. (1982), a typology was developed for describing the various roles played by trainers:

- 1) “Passive provider
- 2) Provider whose roles range from course administration to running senior management development workshops
- 3) The training manager who is in charge of a well-established training function with several reporting specialist trainers
- 4) A transition role where the organization recognizes the need for training to act as an agent of change
- 5) Established change agent” (Pettigrew, Jones, and Reason, 1982).

The purpose behind these roles for the study is to provide for more trainers, the preparation and skills needed to make the transition from “passive provider” to “established change agent.”

Yet, there is still little evidence that many employers actually accept the importance of training for organizational success. Unfortunately, few trainers are believed by managers to be successful change agents (Hallier, 2000). Since training professionals would like to see this awareness and success increase, a study of this nature is beneficial.

Among the most valued competencies for trainers are skills involving interaction and communication, and skills used for acquiring and using information. In a study of five European countries (based on large expert interviews conducted in the U.S.A.)

Valklavaara writes, “The common core [of competencies] seems to consist of skills and knowledge pertaining to the interaction and information processes, to the organization’s operation and also to learning processes” (1998). Additionally, the value placed on feedback is significant on an international level (Valklavaara, 1998).

Training Function: How it has changed

Importantly, there are many more specific types of training used in the workplace. The types have been revised and made to be useful. Rothwell and Sredl describe the various purposes training can serve:

- 1) Remedial Training or Basic Skill Training: provides entry-level knowledge, skills and abilities, for example, reading writing, and computing.
- 2) Orientation Training: gives information about an organization, work group, or job, for example, rules, benefits, or facilities.
- 3) Qualifying Training: designed to assist in the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and abilities required to meet job responsibilities and complete tasks.
The purpose of this training is to cut the unproductive period that new employees experience.
- 4) Second-Chance Training: used to correct or improve performance deficiencies.
This training should only be used when problem is in lack of knowledge, skill or ability, and is used for employees that have received qualifying training but do not meet job requirements.
- 5) Cross-Training: used to prepare fill-in workers to perform activities in the absence of another employee.

- 6) Retraining or Upgrading Training: used to update workers in order to keep knowledge, skills and abilities current.
- 7) Outplacement Training: needed as a result of downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions. The purpose of it is to help displaced workers through transition into new jobs (Rothwell & Sredl, 2000).

Other major transitions regarding training include that training is no longer viewed as training, and is instead more focused on learning. Additionally, trainers often report to line functions and not solely to Human Resources. Less emphasis is placed on training as a program and more focus is directed toward lifelong learning. Moreover, more comprehensive offerings are made that use multiple delivery methods. Finally, trainers are viewed as strategic partners to core functions of organizations (Zahn, 2001).

These ideas are supported in a book review of Tony Pont's book, "Developing Effective Training Skills." The author, Peter Glenton writes, "Training is not just presenting; it requires the successful execution of a number of roles, both in and out of the classroom" (2001). Moreover, Glenton states that the most important of these roles are "facilitation of the learning process, competencies in subject-matter, learning processes and group management skills" (2001). Zahn supports this point in his article, "Training: A Function, Profession, Calling, What?" when stating, "Training is now the responsibility of chief learning officers, VP-level people, and people who report to senior line management" (2001).

When researchers look at trends for the future, we note an increasing need for trainers. Skill shortages at all levels in the workforce will be exacerbated unless companies start to retain their workers and retrain them. Organizations need to accept the

need to employ and retain older workers and establish programs that train workers (“Needed: Experienced Workers,” 2001).

Trends for the Future

The following future trends for Workplace Learning Performance have been selected from a study by Bassi, Buchanan, and Cheney (1997).

1. Increasing skill requirements in response to rapid technological change
2. Increasing education and diversity in the U.S. workforce
3. Continuing corporate restructuring
4. Changing size and composition of training departments
5. Revolutionizing training through changes in delivery methods.
6. Finding new ways to deliver services
7. Increasing focus on performance improvement
8. Proliferating and integrated high-performance work systems
9. Transforming into learning organizations
10. Accelerating organizational emphasis on human performance management

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research methodology used. The research method and procedures were chosen in correlation with the objectives of the study. This chapter consists of the research design, model, and instrumentation.

Research Design

This study intends to determine to what degree the Master's of Science in Training and Development Program at the University of Wisconsin Stout is preparing students for training positions in business and industry. The intent is to discover whether students are acquiring the necessary skills to be effective in their work environments. The fifteen competencies used in the survey were chosen from William Rothwell's publication, "ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement: Roles, Competencies, and Outputs" (Rothwell, 1996). Participants were to indicate the skill level they received upon completing the coursework, and then rate the importance of that skill in their work experience.

Population

The researcher sent out 241 surveys. The population included all students that have graduated from the program. Additionally, since there was a large pool of students who have completed all of the coursework, but have not completed the Field Problem, the researcher included these individuals in the study.

Instrument

The instrument consisted of a cover letter (Appendix A), which stated the purpose of the study and importance of the study, a confidentiality statement (Appendix B), a copy of the survey questionnaire (Appendix C), and a description of the competencies used in the survey (Appendix D). An addressed, postage-paid envelope was enclosed to cover mailing fees for the participants.

The initial surveys were sent via United States Mail on April 22, 2002, to all participants. The initial due date was May 10, 2002. Due to a low response rate, the survey was redistributed to all participants on May 8, 2002, with a return date of May 20, 2002, in order to obtain more accurate results. The follow-up cover letter is included in Appendix E. The first mailing yielded 73 surveys. The second mailing resulted in 32 surveys, for a total of 105 surveys. Sixty-five surveys never reached the intended participants, and were returned to the researcher, due to incorrect addresses.

A five point likert scale was used to indicate skill level obtained. That likert scale consisted of the following choices: None, Basic, Intermediate, Intermediate Advanced, and Advanced. Likewise, a likert scale was used to indicate importance of the skill. This scale consisted of the following choices: Not Important, Moderately Important, Important, Very Important, and Essential.

The first section of the instrument contained demographic information that could be selected by circling or checking the appropriate choice, or writing in an alternate choice, if applicable. The second section of the instrument contained the evaluation of competency level and importance.

Summary

This chapter explained the procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data. The information received will provide data that will help the University of Wisconsin Stout evaluate its success in preparing training and development students with the competencies desired of trainers in business and industry.

Chapter 4

Results

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how well the Master's Program in Training and Development is preparing students with the training skills required in business and industry. This competency assessment intends to determine whether the University of Wisconsin Stout can be more effective in meeting the needs of students in the Training and Human Resource Development Master's Program. The assessment achieves this by determining the skill level graduates have upon completion of coursework of the competencies desired of Human Performance Improvement Professionals.

This chapter presents the results of the survey instrument. Information found in the research was analyzed according to research objectives, as discussed in Chapter One. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the statistical data contained in this chapter. The mean, median, and standard deviation were used to represent the data. The overall response information is indicated below. The total number of respondents was 105. The first mailing yielded the majority (69%) of returned surveys.

Table 4: Response Rates

Population Number	241
Total Responses	105
1 st Mailing Responses	73
2 nd Mailing Responses	32
Overall Response Rate (105/241)	43.5%

Respondent Profile

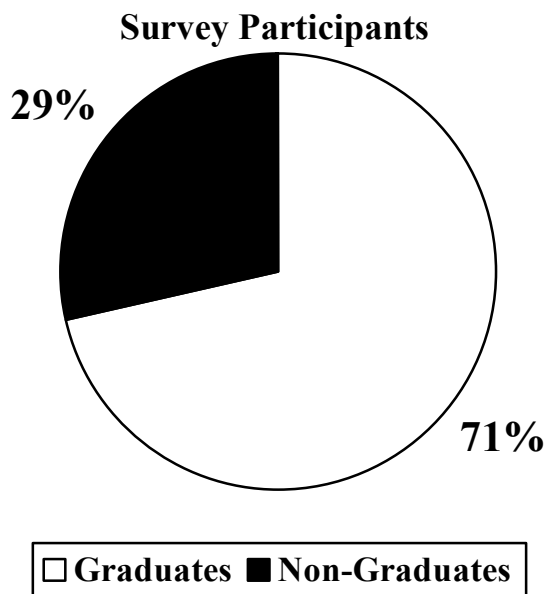
The first section of the survey contains questions relating to demographics.

Demographics of the study included, but were not limited to:

- Graduation date
- Type of work
- Position title
- Organization's primary business

The researcher indicated that the first two questions in the survey were to be answered by graduates of the program. The representation of graduate and non-graduate participants is demonstrated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Survey Participants



Graduated Students

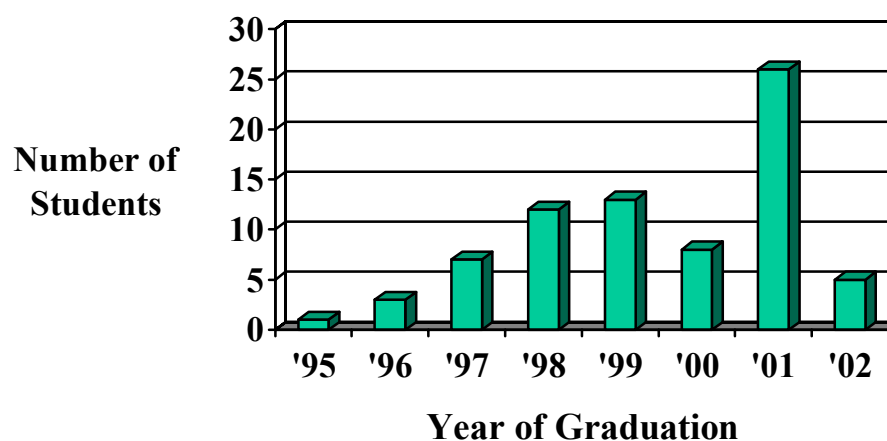


Table 6: Question 1 Graduation Statistics (graduates only)

Question 1: What year did you graduate from the program?

The table above shows the results of this question. Many students, as shown by the table have graduated in 2001. One contributing factor to this is the fact that 75% of students are working while attending the program; consequently, most students are not attending the program on a full-time basis.

Table 7: Question 2 Options for Completion (graduates only)

Should there be other options for completing the degree other than the field problem?	# of respondents	%
Yes	30	40
No	45	60
Total Population	75	100

The table above indicates that 40% of graduates feel that there should be another option for completing the program aside from the Field Problem, while 60% feel this process is valuable enough for it to be a graduation requirement.

The following three questions were answered by students who have not graduated from the program.

Table 8: Question 3 Qualifying Statement (non-graduates only)

If you did not graduate from the program, did you complete all coursework except for the field problem?	# of respondents	%
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total Population	30	100

This was a qualifying question for the research. Any answers of “no” would have been withdrawn from the study. These participants would have been disqualified since their coursework wasn’t complete and their skillset from the program would be incomplete, therefore invalid for the study.

Table 9: Question 4 Completing Field Problem (non-graduates only)

If you have the field problem remaining, would you be willing to complete it if a window of time was open?	# of respondents	%
Yes	30	100
No	0	0
Total Population	30	100

The purpose of this question was to confirm a perception that students have often commented on to the Program Director. Students have frequently commented on a difficulty in finding time to complete the research problem. This could be partially attributed to the fact that 75% of students are currently employed while in the program.

Table 10: Question 5 Options for Degree Completion (non-graduates only)

Do you think there should be other options for completing the degree other than the field problem, such as additional required courses?		%
Yes	26	87
No	4	13
Total Population	30	100

When evaluating this data, the researcher took into consideration that these responses were from students who have not graduated. Considering this factor, the researcher was not surprised to discover that the majority of non-graduates felt there should be other options for the field problem, such as offering another course or project that could be taken in place of it. When these results were compared with the results from graduates of the program, the researcher notes a significant difference in opinion. Sixty percent of those who have completed the field problem felt it was a useful process to go through, while only thirteen percent of non-graduate students felt this way.

However, forty percent of the graduated participants still felt there should be other options. When this data from the questions are combined, the overall result is that forty-seven percent feel there shouldn't be another option for completing the program, and fifty-three percent feel there should be other options.

Several comments from the participants supported the field problem. One participant stated, "I believe this type of project is important to develop writing and research skills, which I personally believe is expected of individuals with a Master's. Not having it 'waters down' the degree." Another respondent commented, "Completing the field problem was a valuable learning experience!" A final comment regarding the field

problem was, “Doing the thesis field type problem is a significant instructional, learning point for a Master’s Program.”

Other suggestions made by the participants regarding the options for completing the degree included:

- 1) “Consider doing a project for an organization—chose/combination
 - Develop a training program/framework
 - Conduct a training course (design, develop, conduct, evaluate, improve).”
- 2) “If people are having problems completing the program, maybe a ‘certification’ program would be the answer where they complete the coursework but not the field study.”

Table 11: Question 6 Working in the Field

Are you presently working in the field of Training and Human Resource Development?	# of respondents	%
Yes	48	46
No	56	54
No Reply	1	1
Total Population	105	100

These results were worthy of note, as fifty percent are working in the field and the other half are not. This can be partially attributed to the fact that 48% of respondents were working in their current jobs upon initiating the program. There were also two participants that by choice were currently not working outside of the home.

Table 12: Question 7 Title of Current Position

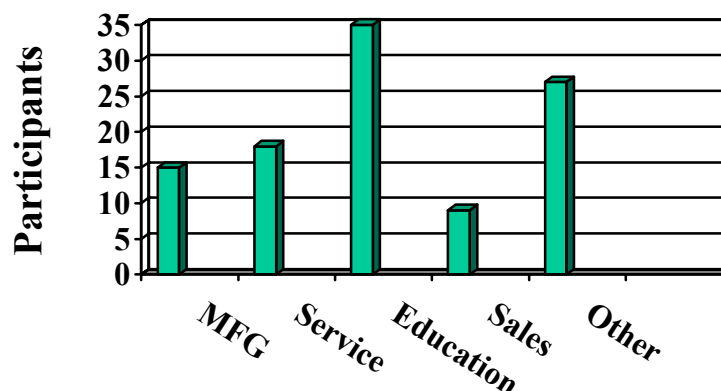
If so, what position title best describes your work?	# of respondents	%
Recruiting/Staffing	4	4
Human Resource Development (General)	6	6
Organizational Development	8	8
Human Resource Generalist	4	4
Trainer/Technical Trainer	32	30
Other	50	48
No Reply	1	1
Total Population	105	100

A listing of occupations listed as “other” are found in Appendix F. Due to the diversity in job titles in the field, a majority of the participants wrote in specific job titles.

Table 13: Question 8 Organization's Primary Business

The chart below represents the data for this question.

Organization's Primary Business



A noteworthy point about the chart above is the number of participants working in the education arena. Additionally, five participants identified that they were working in a government-affiliated business. A listing of occupations that were written in under “other” can be found in Appendix G. Again, the researcher points out that due to diverse uses of this degree, many participants chose “other” and wrote in the primary business of the organization.

Table 14: Question 9 Current Employment

Were you employed in your present job while attending the program?	# of respondents	%
Yes	50	48
No	54	51
No Reply	1	1
Total Population	105	100

This question intended to decipher how many participants are working in the training field, and conversely, how many have used the degree in a current job or for specialized tasks of their occupation. This can be compared to the results of Question 9, which discovered that almost half of the participants were working in their current positions when starting the program. The results are reasonable when considering this factor. Since almost half of the participants were working in their current positions when starting the program, then these individuals could likely stay in current jobs upon completion of the program.

Table 15: Question 10 Importance of Degree in Current Job

If not, did the Master's Program help you get into the field or position you desired?	# of	%
	respondents	
Yes	40	69
No	17	29
No Reply	1	1
Total Population	58	100

Note: only participants that answered “no” to the previous question could answer this, totaling 58 people. Importantly, 69% of participants were able to get the job of their choosing due to the education provided from the program.

Results of Table 16 (page 32)

The following table contains results from the competency survey. In the first set of data, “Skill Level,” respondents indicated the skill level they had upon completion of the coursework. The second column represents the importance of the competency according to the participants’ work experiences. The mean, median, and standard deviation are used to represent the data.

The standard deviations are within an acceptable range, which indicates agreement among participants. According to the mean and median numbers, the students seem prepared. Some key strengths of the program lie within the “Interpersonal Relationship Skills,” which had a mean score of “4,” and median score of “4.” The succeeding highest rankings were in “Leadership” and “Problem-Solving,” with mean scores of 3.78 and 3.77 respectively.

Conversely, the lowest skill level obtained, on average, is in the “Negotiating/Contracting” skills category. Interestingly, the importance of this skill was also rated the lowest, on average, meaning that the skill level was low, but the participants didn’t feel the skill was very valuable to trainers. Importantly, this category tied for the largest standard deviation, which signified less agreement among the respondents.

For a definition of each skill set, see Appendix D.

Table 16: All Survey Results

Competency	Skill Level			Importance		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.
Industry Awareness	3.43	3	.89	3.87	4	.98
Leadership Skills	3.78	4	.97	4.23	4	.78
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	4	4	.92	4.53	5	.7
Technological Awareness and Understanding	3.35	3	.9	3.8	4	.83
Problem-Solving Skills	3.77	4	.81	4.33	4	.69
Systems Thinking and Understanding	3.58	4	.94	4.01	4	.88
Performance Understanding	3.6	4	.95	4.02	4	.86
Knowledge of Interventions	3.22	3	.96	3.82	4	.9
Business Understanding	3.45	3.5	.99	3.95	4	.86
Organizational Understanding	3.55	4	.94	3.98	4	.85
Negotiating/Contracting Skills	2.73	3	.99	3.54	4	.98
Buy-In/Advocacy Skills	3.19	3	1.07	3.87	4	.94
Coping Skills	3.48	4	1.06	3.85	4	.87
Ability to See the “Big Picture”	3.75	4	.93	4.3	4	.77
Consulting Skills	3.23	3	1.07	3.76	4	1.01

Note: Response scale for skill: 1=None 2=Basic 3=Intermediate 4=Intermediate 5=Advanced
Advanced

Response scale for importance: 1=Not Important 2=Moderately Important 3=Important 4=Very Important 5=Essential Important

Results of Table 17

The tables on the following page are used to represent the data variation between first and second mailing respondents. What can be pointed out here is the low amount of variation between number sets, which further convinces the researcher that there is agreement among participants.

Additional comments made by the respondents are found in Appendix H.

Table 17: Comparison of 1st and 2nd Mailing Responses

Competency	1 st Mailing Responses (73)			2 nd Mailing Responses (32)		
	<u>Skill Level</u>			<u>Skill Level</u>		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St.Dev.
Industry Awareness	3.44	4	.94	3.4	3	.77
Leadership Skills	3.73	4	1	3.90	4	.90
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	4.04	4	.95	3.9	4	.84
Technological Awareness and Understanding	3.35	3.5	.91	3.36	3	.91
Problem-Solving Skills	3.79	4	.87	3.73	4	.64
Systems Thinking and Understanding	3.56	4	1.01	3.62	4	.76
Performance Understanding	3.73	4	.93	3.31	3	.93
Knowledge of Interventions	3.28	3	1	3.07	3	.83
Business Understanding	3.47	3.5	1.01	3.4	3.5	.97
Organizational Understanding	3.6	4	.99	3.43	3.5	.82
Negotiating/Contracting Skills	2.77	3	.97	2.63	3	1.03
Buy-In/Advocacy Skills	3.18	3	1.11	3.21	3	.98
Coping Skills	3.46	4	1.12	3.5	4	.94
Ability to See the “Big Picture”	3.76	4	.92	3.73	4	.98
Consulting Skills	3.24	3	1.12	3.2	3	.96

Competency	1 st Mailing (73)			2 nd Mailing (32)		
	<u>Importance</u>			<u>Importance</u>		
	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Mean	Median	St. Dev.
Industry Awareness	3.85	4	.95	3.9	4	1.06
Leadership Skills	4.18	4	.83	4.34	4	.61
Interpersonal Relationship Skills	4.49	5	.73	4.63	5	.61
Technological Awareness and Understanding	3.87	4	.83	3.61	4	.83
Problem-Solving Skills	4.37	4	.7	4.23	4	.68
Systems Thinking and Understanding	4.07	4	.86	3.86	4	.92
Performance Understanding	4.16	4	.79	3.69	4	.93
Knowledge of Interventions	3.93	4	.86	3.57	4	.97
Business Understanding	3.89	4	.9	4.1	4	.76
Organizational Understanding	4.01	4	.85	3.9	4	.84
Negotiating/Contracting Skills	3.61	4	.91	3.37	3	1.13
Buy-In/Advocacy Skills	3.93	4	.87	3.72	4	1.1
Coping Skills	3.87	4	.92	3.8	4	.76
Ability to See the “Big Picture”	4.41	5	.71	4.03	4	.85
Consulting Skills	3.86	4	1.02	3.53	4	.97

Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

To strengthen the return on investment, Trainers and Human Performance Improvement practitioners need to study the changes in the field. Since the field of Training and Development is constantly growing and adjusting, it is important to remain current with competencies and emphasis shifts in the future.

For the University of Wisconsin Stout to be effective in providing the best education and preparation possible for aspiring trainers, consistent evaluations should be performed, and objectives should be aligned with the demands of business and industry.

Purpose of Study

In order for the Master's of Science Training and Development graduates to meet the expectations of current and future employers, curriculum should be evaluated regarding competencies of the program. This skills assessment intended to discover whether the University of Wisconsin Stout could be more effective in meeting the needs of business and industry for Training and Human Resource Development students. This assessment accomplished this by determining the skill level graduates have of competencies desired of Human Performance Improvement Professionals.

Summary of Procedures and Instrumentation

This study involved 241 students from the University of Wisconsin Stout that have completed coursework in the Master's of Science Training and Development Program. The survey consisted of competencies considered most important of Human Performance Improvement Professionals. The participants evaluated their skill level and the importance of the competencies in their coursework through the use of a five point likert scale. The instrument was administered via United States Mail. The competency list was obtained from William Rothwell's book, "American Society for Training and Development Models for Human Performance Improvement: Roles, Competencies, and Outputs." The mean, median, and standard deviation were used to represent the data.

Data Collection

The study was designed to evaluate what the University of Wisconsin Stout can do to improve upon the Master's of Science in Training and Development Program to better meet the needs of business and industry, regarding core training competencies.

The survey contained questions with the following objectives in mind:

- 1) Determine the skill level students have in competencies required of Human Resource Development practitioners upon completion of coursework in the Master's of Science in Training and Development Program at the University of Wisconsin Stout.
- 2) Assess whether these competencies are meeting the demands in positions of Training and Development Professionals.

- 3) Determine the importance of skills, and competencies for Human Resource Development Professionals, as seen by professionals in the industry.

Section one of the survey included questions concerning demographics. Section two contained a likert scale rating for skill level obtained by participants and the importance rating of the competency.

Survey Response Rate

The responses gathered from the participants equaled a total of 105 surveys out of the population of 241. This represents a 43.5% return rate, a respectable rate for a mailed survey.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A study of this nature should be performed every two or three years. It is important that the Program Director and Advisory Committee stay in touch with the American Society for Training and Development expectations and competency studies in order to keep in balance with industry demands.

The results indicate that the University of Wisconsin Stout has a solid program that generally is successful in meeting the needs of trainers. There is little deviation from the mean scores, representing an agreement among participants. There are no areas that seem to be noticeably lacking; however, certain areas that scored slightly lower can be looked at for possible course additions to the program. Additionally, existing objectives for courses currently offered can be looked at in order to better align program objectives with industry needs.

Looking at the importance of skills, continuing to offer courses that focus on “Interpersonal Relationship Skills,” which had a mean skill-level of 4.53, with a low standard deviation, and was rated at 4.53 in importance would be appropriate. This category reflected a high skill and importance level. Additionally, offering courses that develop students’ problem solving abilities is important, considering the mean score for this category was 4.33, low standard deviation, and importance rating of 4.33.

Fortunately, the three highest-ranking competencies in “importance” were also the top rankings under “skill level.” This indicates that in general, the program is on target with competencies expected of trainers. Please refer to Appendix E for a description of the skill categories.

Conversely, the skill level indicated for “Negotiating/Contracting” skills is the lowest at a 2.73, and also has the lowest rating of importance. This data points out again that the program is on target with demands of business and industry. These factors are quite significant and serve as solid evidence that the program is meeting aspiring trainers’ needs.

The second lowest rating for skill level is in “Buy-In/Advocacy” skills. This has a mean score of 3.19. However, the importance of this skill leans toward the higher end, with a 3.87 rating. Consequently, the researcher would advise the university to consider another course that would be projected toward aligning this need with objectives of program. Additionally, the data indicates a need for additional focus on “Ability to see the ‘Big Picture,’” since this had a mean of 4.3 for “importance.” The skill level for this category was not low, at 3.75, but the importance level is quite high. This category also had a lower standard deviation, signifying agreement.

There were suggestions from the participants of additional courses that Stout should offer that indeed should be considered by the faculty. One participant suggested, “There should definitely be a course specifically focusing on facilitating/delivery skills, opportunities to work with REAL facilitators and trainers within industry, as well as a strong focus on facilitating the many team processes and problem solving.” Another suggestion involved a course for Project Planning. This respondent suggested, “Much more attention needs to be paid to laying out the project with dates for the client—not only for the trainer.”

In conclusion, the results of the assessment of the University of Wisconsin Stout’s Training and Development Program were conclusive in stating these main points:

The majority of participants:

- 1) Are satisfied with the competency levels acquired in the program,
- 2) Feel the program is meeting the needs of the workforce, and
- 3) See an opportunity for improvement in skill areas of “Ability to see the Big Picture,” and “Buy-In/Advocacy.”

By knowing this information, the University of Wisconsin Stout can maintain and improve upon its special mission: “to prepare students for professional careers that relate to the demands of today’s technological workplace and society” (Benkowski, 2002).

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**Appendix A:
Cover Letter**

April 22, 2002

Dear Sir or Madam:

The training and human resource development arenas are continually changing. With new technology and training methods, it is a challenge to ensure that the Master's Program in Training and Development at Stout continues to meet the needs of professionals in the program. For this reason, I am asking for your input concerning the skills sets which you developed from the program. This information will be used to revise the program, if necessary, to better meet the needs of students and businesses.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you will be guaranteed complete confidentiality. A summary of the data will be used in my research paper, but no reference to you will be made in any part of my study. The results of this research will be available to the Program Director and Advisory Committee for the Program.

Please fill out and return the questionnaire by May 10, 2002 and return it in the addressed, stamped envelope. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me, or Joe Benkowski at (715) 232-5266.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Greta Schaller
Dr. Joseph A. Benkowski,
Program Director

Enclosures: survey, envelope, and consent form

**Appendix B:
Confidentiality Statement**

Consent Form

I understand that by returning this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary and so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about the research study should be addressed to Greta Schaller, the researcher at (715) 552-5805, or Joseph Benkowski, the research advisor at (715) 232-5266. Questions about the rights of the research subjects can be addressed to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-1126.

**Appendix C:
Survey Questionnaire**

We appreciate your input and value your opinions. The information will be kept confidential and will be used for improving the Master's Program in Training and Development at UW-Stout.

Instructions: Listed below are questions pertaining to your work experience. You may circle the letter for the selected answer.

If you have graduated from the program, please answer questions 1-2, if you did not graduate, skip to question 3.

1. What year did you graduate from the program?

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| a. 1995 | d. 1998 | g. 2001 |
| b. 1996 | e. 1999 | |
| c. 1997 | f. 2000 | |

2. Do you think there should be other options for completing the degree other than the field problem, such as additional required courses?

- a. Yes b. No

*Skip to Question #6.

3. If you did not graduate from the program, did you complete all coursework except for the field problem?

- a. Yes b. No

4. If you have the field problem remaining, would you be willing to complete it if a window of time was open?

- a. Yes b. No

5. Do you think there should be other options for completing the degree other than the field problem, such as additional required courses?

- a. Yes b. No

6. Are you presently working in the field of Training and Human Resource Development?

- a. Yes b. No

7. If so, what position title best describes your work?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting/Staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resource Generalist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resource Development (General) | <input type="checkbox"/> Trainer/Technical Trainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

8. What is your organization's primary business?

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales | |

9. Were you employed in your present job while attending the program?

- a. Yes b. No

10. If not, did the Master's Program help you get into the field or position you desired?

- a. Yes b. No

**Appendix D:
Description of Competencies**

Competency Definitions: taken from “ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement: Roles, Competencies, and Outputs” by William J. Rothwell)

Industry Awareness: understanding the vision, strategy, goals and culture of an industry; linking human performance improvement interventions to organizational goals

Leadership Skills: knowing how to lead or influence others positively to achieve desired work results

Interpersonal Relationship Skills: working effectively with others to achieve common goals and exercising effective interpersonal influence

Technological Awareness and Understanding: using existing or new technology and different types of software and hardware; understanding performance support systems and applying them as appropriate

Problem-Solving Skills: detecting performance gaps and helping other people discover ways to close the performance gaps in the present and future; closing performance gaps between actual and ideal performance

Systems Thinking and Understanding: identifying inputs, throughputs, and outputs of a subsystem, system, or supersystem and applying that information to improve human performance; realizing the implications of interventions on many parts of an organization, process, or individual.

Performance Understanding: distinguishing between activities and results; recognizing implications, outcomes, and consequences.

Knowledge of Interventions: demonstrating an understanding of the many ways that human performance can be improved in organizational settings; showing how to apply specific human performance improvement interventions to close existing or anticipated performance gaps

Business Understanding: demonstrating awareness of the inner workings of business functions and how business decisions affect financial or nonfinancial work results (McLagan, 1989)

Organization Understanding: setting organizations as dynamic, political, economic, and social systems that have multiple goals; using this larger perspective as a framework for understanding and influencing events and change (McLagan, 1989)

Negotiating/Contracting Skills: organizing, preparing, overseeing, and evaluating work performed by vendors, contingent workers, or outsourcing agents

Buy-in/Advocacy Skills: building ownership or support for change among affected individuals, groups, and other stakeholders

Coping Skills: knowing how to deal with ambiguity and how to handle stress resulting from change and from multiple meanings or possibilities

Ability to See “Big Picture”: looking beyond details to see overarching goals and results

Consulting Skills: understanding the results that stakeholders desire from a process and providing insight into how efficiently and effectively those results can be achieved

**Appendix E:
Follow-up Letter**

May 8, 2002

Dear Sir or Madam:

This is a follow-up to the survey I've sent out. If you haven't had time to complete it, enclosed is a second copy. It only takes five minutes to complete and it will be very helpful for enhancing the Training and Development Program at UW-Stout.

With new technology and training methods, it is a challenge to ensure that the program continues to meet the needs of professionals in the program. For this reason, I am asking for your input concerning the skills sets that you developed from the program.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you will be guaranteed complete confidentiality. No reference to you will be made in any part of my study. The results of this research will be available to the Program Director and Advisory Committee for the Program.

Please fill out and return the questionnaire by **May 20, 2002** and return it in the Business Reply envelope. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (715) 552-5805 or Joe Benkowski at (715) 232-5266.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Greta M. Schaller
Dr. Joseph A. Benkowski,
Program Director

Enclosures: survey, envelope, and consent form

**Appendix F:
Listing of Occupations**

Job Title

OJT Trainer	1
Education	1
Technical support	1
Consultant	1
Employment law	1
Customer service related	1
Technical College Instructor	1
Technical Writer	1
Research	1
Grant Manager	1
Training Evaluation	1
University continuing educator	1
Training Manager	3
Unemployed	1
Information Technology Director	1
Curriculum Development and Design	1
Purchasing/Administrative	1
Vice President of Human Resources	1
Instructional Designer/Trainer	1
Career Development/Corporate University	1
Training Supervisor	1
Software QA	1
Administrator	1
Self-employed	1
Employee Development Specialist	1
Sales	1

**Appendix G:
Listing of Organization's Primary Business**

Organization's Primary Business

Media	1
Management and Technology Consulting	1
Printing	1
Newspaper	1
Research	1
Grants	1
Insurance	1
Government	4
Computer Contracting	1
Claims Processing for Medicare and Medicaid (27 States)	1
Super Computer Manager	1
Home/Mom	1
Retails	1
Non-Profit	1
Blood Banking/Transfusion Services	1
Educational Loan Servicing	1
Casino	1
Military	1
Software Development	1

**Appendix H:
Comments on Survey**

“I believe this type of project is important to develop writing and research skills – which I personally believe is expected of individuals with a Master. Not having it ‘Waters down’ the degree.”

“Completing the field problem was a valuable learning experience!”

“One area that is lacking in the training arena as a whole is Project Planning. Much more attention needs to be paid to laying out the project with dates for the client – not only for trainer...”

“I felt the program did a good job preparing me for the field. It gave me a good foundation of skills to expand upon when as I gained experience. If people are having problems completing the program, maybe a “certification” program would be the answer where they complete the coursework but not the field study.”

“It was the reason I enrolled in the Master’s Program for a career change. I had no experience in claims processing. Stout Training and Development Program played a major role!”

“Consider doing a project for an organization – choose/combo

- Develop a training program/framework
- Conduct a training course (design-develop-conduct-evaluate-improve)”

“Doing the thesis – field type problem is a significant instructional, learning point for a Master’s program.”

“There should definitely be a course specifically focusing on facilitating/delivery skills, opportunities to work with REAL facilitators & trainers within industry, as well as a strong focus on facilitating the many team processes and problem solving, ie. Affinity diagram, 10/4 voting, Nominal Group Technique, etc. These processes should be learned inside and out by every student in the program, including the demonstration of each process by each student to a participating group. We need more practice in the actual application. I can’t believe we never had to “train” anything in order to get a degree in TRAINING! (Just my observation).”