



Center for Industrial Services
Human Performance Technology program
(615-532-4910) <http://www.cis.utk.edu/hpt>

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UT's Human Performance Technology Program Selected as Leading Innovator (821)

Program Recognized for Exemplary Workforce Development Efforts

NASHVILLE -- The University of Tennessee's Human Performance Technology (HPT) program has been awarded Innovator status by the Southern Growth Policies Board -- a public, nonprofit organization devoted to strengthening the Southern economy and creating the highest possible quality of life.

Formed by Southern governors in 1971, Southern Growth is now supported by the governments of 13 Southern states and Puerto Rico. Last fall, governors of member states were asked to nominate exemplary workforce development programs. Southern Growth judged the entries in terms of quality, originality, and sustainability.

Thirty-nine programs were awarded Innovator status, including two from Tennessee. Innovators will be featured during the Southern Growth Policies Board 2002 conference, taking place June 9-11 in Hilton Head, South Carolina. The topic for this year's conference is "Human Capital Strategies for the Next Economy."

"Achieving this recognition is very exciting to us -- especially because our program is so new," says Bill Stetar, program leader. "We are gratified that our efforts to improve Tennessee's workforce have proved so successful."

Launched by Stetar two years ago, the HPT program is part of the UT Center for Industrial Services, an agency within the University's Institute of Public Service. The HPT program is an engineering approach designed to help Tennessee companies institute improvements that measurably advance workforce performance. The program uses scientific-based, systematic approaches to assist employers in their quest to develop competent and productive workforces.

In just over two years, the HPT program has generated nearly \$6 million in economic impact and assisted more than thirty Tennessee companies that employ an aggregate total of more than 6,000 people. In addition, the program has helped secure \$1.5 million in Tennessee JobSkills grants for Tennessee companies to upgrade internal workforce skills.

The HPT program operates statewide, and its services are available to companies in all 95 Tennessee counties. The program has become a key revenue-generating component for the Center's NIST-affiliated Manufacturing Extension Program, bringing in over half-million dollars in cost-recovery fees to help offset program operation costs.

Stetar sees the HPT program being a valuable resource to Tennessee employers for a long time. "Many economic analysts predict that people will be the key competitive difference in the 21st century," notes Stetar, "and that includes the methods used to develop a capable, competent, and high-performing workforce. Human performance

technology will play a major role now and in the future to help companies and communities succeed in the 'next' economy."

For example, finding, attracting, and retaining qualified workers is a critical concern to Tennessee employers. US Department of Labor studies indicate that the situation, compounded by the burgeoning aging workforce, will remain serious for decades.

"Experts in human performance technology can help improve workforce development efforts in all areas," explains Stetar. "We are able to take on a diverse number of projects, from skill upgrades to technology transfer to strategic planning. HPT is an adaptive, scientific approach geared to ensure that human capital investments made by employers and communities are efficient and effective. HPT helps makes it possible for businesses to attain sustainable improvements and tangible bottom-line results - outcomes that produce substantial economic impact for Tennessee communities."

Stetar also explains that HPT can help spur economic growth. "The people side of the equation is acutely important," he says. "New or expanding industries need ways to get products to market faster and shorten the learning curve. HPT looks at the whole issue of how to improve work processes and help workers perform better."

Stetar notes that training is not the only thing that affects worker performance or productivity. He points out that sometimes training can be counterproductive. "Companies and communities can and do misallocate resources by putting all the focus on training. When that happens, they frequently end up with inconclusive or unsatisfactory results," he says.

Those disappointing results occur, says Stetar, because "the wrong training is given at the right time, the right training is given at the wrong time, or simply the training is unnecessary and adds no value whatsoever. In too many instances companies and communities give training the benefit of the doubt and never measure its effectiveness. One study conducted by Rutgers University even suggests that as much as \$15 billion is wasted each year in this country on ineffective and needless training."

Stetar explains that HPT examines human performance as elements of a system. According to Stetar, HPT scrutinizes both training and non-training solutions in a systematic manner. "HPT helps companies realize that one-dimensional solutions fall short of producing the workforce improvements they seek," says Stetar. "And, whatever does get done, gets measured -- training included."

A nationally recognized expert in HPT, Stetar has been providing his trademark brand of human performance technology to companies worldwide for nearly twenty years. His experience includes more than fifteen years at the helm of his own company, Performance Technology Group. Stetar joined UT CIS in 1999 and works out of the UT CIS central office in Nashville.

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