



## Springtime Events!

**Executive Presence Under Pressure:  
How to Turn Speaking Confidence into Your Superpower  
May 13, 2026 | 6:00 – 7:15 PM | Virtual (Zoom)**

Public speaking isn't optional—it's a leadership superpower. Join us for a dynamic session designed to help leaders communicate with confidence, clarity, and composure under pressure. In this interactive session, you'll learn how to turn *nerves* into energy, master the critical first moments of any presentation, and apply a practical communication framework you can use immediately in high-stakes situations. Featuring Paul Geiger, Business Speech Buddha, who has helped top organizations transform communication effectiveness at the highest levels.

**Meeting/Event Information  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Webinar: What is AI Literacy?  
How HR and L&D Can Enable AI Productivity and Safety  
June 24, 2026 | 6:00 - 7:15 PM | Virtual (Zoom)**

Join this interactive regional webinar to learn how to build AI literacy, drive productivity, and ensure safety and governance within your organization. You'll learn how to: Define AI literacy and its impact on talent development; Apply AI tools effectively while managing risk; and Build an actionable plan to support AI adoption across your teams. Featuring John Rood, Founder of Proceptual and AI governance expert. Proceptual works with companies of all sizes to implement custom governance programs. John also teaches governance and AI literacy at Michigan State University and the University of Chicago.

**Check out our Meet  
The Board event  
pictures on p. 5**

## MENTORSHIP: THE POWER OF LEARNING TOGETHER



One of the greatest benefits of being part of the ATD community is the opportunity to grow through mentorship. As a mentor, especially within the Executive Learning Network, you have the chance to share your expertise, broaden your leadership impact, and inspire the next generation of talent development professionals.

As a mentee, you'll gain guidance, insights, and encouragement to accelerate your own career journey while building meaningful connections.

Whether you're looking to give back or to grow, mentorship through our local ATD chapter creates a win-win: a stronger network, deeper learning, and a thriving talent development community.

## Interested in a Power Membership?

**Check out the resources for a combined national and local membership!**

- Professional Development Resources
- Access to ATD Publications
- Learning and Certification Discounts
- Community & Networking
- Conferences & Events
- Thought Leadership and Industry Trends

[Click to Join!](#)

# NNJ ATD Member & President!

## Spotlight: Maria Rivera

### What inspired you to step into the role of President for NNJ/ATD?

I have been an active member of both the national and local ATD chapters, including the New York City and Northern New Jersey chapter, for many years. I've consistently valued the opportunity to collaborate with strong chapter leadership, and I previously served as Vice President of Marketing for NNJATD.

With a deep passion for the training and development field, I'm excited about the opportunity to help guide the chapter into its next phase of growth and impact.

### What do you see as the biggest opportunity for our chapter in 2026?

As the Director of Continuing Education and Professional Development at Berkeley College, my involvement with NNJATD and NYUSPS as an adjunct faculty member has gained notable visibility: over 40,000 LinkedIn impressions, and I am featured in various posts and publications. This exposure enhances our Chapter's visibility. I see it as a valuable opportunity to help grow membership. Another opportunity exists in the innovative work we're doing in AI and Education, and it's vital to lead the way and develop these skill sets.

### Why do you think local chapters still matter in a digital first world?

In a digital-first world, local chapters are more important than ever because they offer the human connection. As conversations about training and development increasingly focus on AI, the human element remains the key differentiator.

Local chapters foster meaningful connections, shared growth, mentorship, and leadership. They unite professionals in ways that promote trust, collaboration, and authentic dialogue—something AI cannot yet replicate.

I'm continually inspired by meeting fellow training and development professionals who are doing innovative work and implementing creative solutions. There's something powerful about hearing those stories firsthand, learning directly from peers, and building relationships. That energy and sense of community are what make local chapters invaluable—and it's not going away.

### How did you first get into the talent development?

I initially studied to become a high school teacher, but soon realized I wanted to apply my passion for education in a corporate setting through training and development. Over the years, I've had the opportunity to work across a variety of industries in training and development—including telecommunications, pharmaceutical, real estate, and financial services—which has broadened my perspective and deepened my experience. (cont. on p. 4)



### Get to Know Maria

**Coffee or Tea:** Tea! I love Earl Gray.

**Morning Person or Night Owl:** I'm an all around owl! I'm up at all hours. .

**Hidden Talent:** I love kayaking; just wonderful and so relaxing. A beautiful way to spend time.

**Go-To Productivity Habit:** I like making lists and setting things up in the calendar and being organized. I like to see how the day is laid out.

**One thing that brings you joy?** One thing that brings me joy is listening to a variety of music, especially classical guitar, salsa, and pop. Each brings a different energy—I find classical guitar calming and reflective, while salsa and pop are uplifting and energizing. Music helps me reduce stress, refocus my energy, and often sparks creativity.

**Final comments: I LOVE WHAT I DO!**



## **Interview continued with Maria Rivera**

I was there in the early days of eLearning training solutions, working hands-on with tools like Camtasia, Captivate, and video production software. I had a front-row seat as those technologies matured and changed the way training and education were delivered. Watching that evolution unfold – and being part of it – only deepened my passion for the work.

### **What professional accomplishment are you most proud of?**

One professional achievement I am proud of is the course I developed for NYU's School of Professional Studies.

At my core, I love teaching. I've had the opportunity to develop a course for NYU's School of Professional Studies on immersive media—a high-quality program designed to help professionals understand virtual and augmented reality. At that time, it was truly innovative, focused on immersive media and emerging technologies. The course not only covered concepts such as virtual and augmented reality but also included a module on key considerations for building a minimum viable product.

I also invited industry leaders and guest speakers to enhance the online learning experience, making it a dynamic and comprehensive program. I keep evolving and updating the course, now including AI and other emerging trends to ensure it stays relevant and effective.

### **What book or podcast have you read or listened to lately, even if for fun?**

I enjoy reading inspirational books, especially those that highlight resilience and authenticity. For example, I've always found the work of Michael J. Fox incredibly motivating—his ability to overcome challenges while achieving such meaningful success is truly inspiring.

I've also been listening to the Berkeley College iHeartMedia Podcast, "Teach Me Something." I had the opportunity to be featured on an episode discussing "Lifelong Learning in a Changing World," which was a great experience. It's a thoughtful podcast with engaging conversations—I'd recommend checking it out.

### **How do you see AI reshaping the role of Talent Development professionals?**

It is already reshaping the role of Talent Development professionals in profound ways. It's becoming ubiquitous, particularly as a tool for personalized support. For example, AI can serve as both a coach and an assistant, providing individualized guidance and learning experiences tailored to each employee's needs, pace, and goals.

It's also transforming how knowledge is accessed and shared. Many organizations are leveraging AI-powered chatbots to host and deliver internal knowledge resources, making it easier for employees to quickly find accurate, company-specific information when they need it.

I believe that AI is not replacing the role of Talent Development—it's elevating it, allowing professionals to focus more on strategy, creativity, and human-centered learning experiences.

**Thank you, Maria for the wonderful conversation!**

# Meet the Board Event!

Our March 31st Meet the Board event was an incredible success! Designed with a fun, speed-dating-style format, the evening created meaningful opportunities for members and guests to connect with each board member in a more intentional and engaging way.

Rather than quick introductions in passing, attendees were able to have real conversations, ask questions, and build relationships—bringing our community closer together in a dynamic and memorable way. The energy in the room was fantastic, and it was clear that both new and longtime members truly valued the experience.

A special thank you to Susan Mondano and Phalaside Porter for thoughtfully designing and executing such a creative and impactful event. We're grateful for your leadership in making this evening one to remember!



**It takes a wonderful group of volunteers to make it all happen at NNJ/ATD:**

**Join us! Our current volunteer opportunities are:**

**VP Membership; VP Communications; AVP Communications**

**AVP Administration; AVP, Leadership & Talent**

**Volunteer Excellence Awards Manager; Graphics Designer**

**Social Media Manager; AVP, Technology; AVP. Finance**

**AVP, Sponsorships; Program Manager**

**For more information, contact Pam Sammarco, VP of Leadership & Talent at [pam@greentrainingassociates.com](mailto:pam@greentrainingassociates.com)**