

Developing a TT Professional

UK Perspective and experience.

Dr Jeff Skinner RTTP

A strange profession

- Few in university hierarchy know how to judge our performance.
- Wide responsibility (for projects that have received substantial research ‘investment’).
- Universities unwilling to pay commercial salaries
- Role has huge scope (‘cradle to grave’) need expertise in each ‘phase’
- Very different context from business (e.g. academic culture, priorities)

Learning how to do it.

- Like any other ‘trade’, Tech Transfer is learned:
 - By doing (& making mistakes)
 - By apprenticeship, observing colleagues, managers.
 - By formal training
- At the outset there were no managers or training. We made a pile of mistakes!
- Some courses in various ‘traditional’ elements (largely legal)
- Then came...

Members Association (UNICO)

- Largely self-organising.
- Driven by hunger to learn from (and share experiences, experiments with) each other.
- Very informal, cheap, 'lean'.
- Run by & for practitioners.
- Built a cohort of people who knew, like, trusted, respected each other.
- Pre-cursor of advocacy (common opinion) and training (codified body of knowledge)
- Then...

Training Association (Praxis)

- Pioneering practitioners devised & delivered three day courses.
- More effective, efficient way to train recruits.
- All volunteer, all practitioner (huge fun).
- Needed seed investment (government) & HQ.
- Learned to teach by doing.
- Hungry for great feedback (competition emerges!)
- Gradually more (advanced) courses emerged.
- Built speaker base - now a major asset

Funding

- Very little direct funding for Praxis + Unico (PrU).
- But huge government support for ‘Knowledge Transfer.’
- TTO pioneers (now Directors) trust & value training given by peers – so use courses.
- PrU is now self-sustaining.
- Retains ‘culture of excellence’.
- ‘Monopoly’ on TT training – but links with ‘like-minded’ associations in US, Europe, Asia....

And then came RTTP

- The 'young' wanted 'recognition'
- RTTP born of idea that people become professionals by:
 - Formal training (body of knowledge)
 - Proof that they can apply this knowledge successfully to a 'complex' case
 - Time in the role (surviving!)

Conclusion

- It took us 25 years!
- It needn't take that long (we're here to help & to be imitated).
- But the ingredients & genesis is the same:
 - Practitioners learning (in a curious environment)
 - Form a member, volunteer run Association
 - Come together to develop excellent training
 - Member focused, volunteer-practitioner-run
 - Seed from government, thereafter demand-led with volunteers 'donated' by university.
- Apprenticeship shortens as more is taught.