Review of the Use of Partners by KT Offices
Undertaken in partnership with the
Institute of Knowledge Transfer

INSTITUTE OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

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This publication is for the purpose of training, education and dissemination.

Executive Summary

This research was undertaken in partnership with the Institute of Knowledge Transfer

UK Universities undertaking Knowledge Transfer (KT) activities are said to be increasingly supported by both internal and external partners. The aim of this work was to identify the extent to which the KT Offices of UK universities are working in partnership with academics and administrators within their organizations and with external service providers

A questionnaire was developed using an on-line survey tool (www.surveymonkey.com) to explore this issue.

Responses received from the KT Offices at 29 UK Universities identified that:

- KT Offices were reported to provide a key role in a wide range of activity areas, with strong support from Senior Management.

- Major levels of academic involvement were a feature of only a minority of activities.

- There was little use of external organisations for undertaking supporting activities.

Introduction

The authors first began working in the field of Knowledge Transfer (KT) in the early 1990s when they started one of the early Teaching Company Scheme (now known as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships) offices at the University of Plymouth. At that time Knowledge Transfer was the preserve of a few enthusiasts, and many of their attempts to create wider internal and external partnerships were firmly rebutted. Twenty years on it was thought interesting to see how things had changed.

The aim of this work was to identify the extent to which the Knowledge Transfer Offices of UK universities are working in partnership with academics and administrators within their organizations, and with external service providers.

To explore the scope and variation in the use of partners to support the delivery of KT activities, a questionnaire was developed using an on-line survey tool (www.surveymonkey.com). The research was undertaken in partnership with the Institute of Knowledge Transfer.

The survey was developed during the spring/summer of 2010, and was distributed to all UK University and FE College contacts registered on the KTP Centre Managers electronic mailing list. It was delivered through the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) electronic discussion/mailing group for UK KTP Offices (KTP-Centre-Managers@JISCMAIL.AC.UK), and to organisations with membership (both personal and organisational) of the Institute of Knowledge Transfer.

Only one response per organisation was permitted. Responses were received from 29 Universities.

Analysis & Review of Results

The following questions and responses were obtained from the research:

Q. The activities in this question relate to the development of KT business. Please indicate who has a significant involvement in the activities listed below (tick more than one box if necessary).

	KT Office Staff	Senior University Management	University Admin Depts	Academic Staff	External Public Sector Orgs	External Private Sector Orgs
Market Research	**79%**	13%	10%	6%	6%	17%
Marketing	**93%**	10%	48%	13%	17%	27%
Business Networking	**96%**	41%	13%	51%	24%	31%
New Activity Development	**96%**	37%	13%	31%	17%	13%
Funding Proposals	**96%**	27%	27%	34%	13%	17%
Individual Business Needs Analysis	**89%**	10%	6%	17%	6%	10%
Encouraging Academic Involvement	**93%**	72%	10%	41%	10%	3%

The KTP Office takes the lead role in most business development activities (79% to 96%) and significant support was reported by the majority of supporting groups against all activity areas.

The level of senior management support for encouraging academic involvement was very noticeable (72%).

Academic input exceeded expectations in terms of business networking (51%), but was lower then anticipated in developing new activities (31%) and funding proposals (34%).

A prominent level of external private and public sector organisational involvement was apparent in the development of KT business. Of particular note was the level of involvement in marketing (private sector 27%) and business networking (public sector 24%; private sector 31%).

Q. The activities in this question relate to the leadership and senior management of the KT office. Please indicate who has a significant involvement in the activities listed below (tick more than one box if necessary).

	KT Office Staff	Senior University Management	University Admin Depts.	Academic Staff	External Public Sector Orgs	External Private Sector Orgs
Strategic Plans	75%	**82%**	10%	20%	13%	6%
Operational Plans	**89%**	48%	17%	3%	3%	3%
Funding Proposals	75%	**79%**	24%	6%	6%	0%
HR Management	44%	17%	**75%**	0%	0%	0%
Resource Management	**93%**	37%	27%	0%	0%	3%
Implementation of KT Office Systems	**93%**	6%	37%	0%	0%	3%
Performance & Quality Management	**89%**	48%	27%	3%	3%	3%
Evaluation of KT Office Systems	**86%**	55%	24%	17%	13%	13%
Membership of Advisory Boards	**82%**	51%	63%	17%	20%	20%

Clear engagement by Senior Management in terms of developing strategic plans regarding the delivery of KT activities was apparent (82%), whereas the operationalisation of those plans remains with the KT Office staff (89%).

Development of funding proposals was equally split between KT Office staff (75%) and University Senior Management (79%), with surprisingly little input from academic staff (6.9%). It was noted that there was no support for the development of funding proposals from external private sector organisations.

Considerable support was provided by HR departments (75%), but KT offices are largely responsible for their own resource management (93%) and also systems and processes (93%).

Performance/Quality (87%) and evaluation of systems (86%) and are both largely undertaken by KT Offices, but with strong support from Senior Management.

Membership of advisory boards was again undertaken mainly by the KT Office (82%), but with support also apparent from all other areas.

Q. The activities in this question relate to the operational aspects of the KT Office. Please indicate who has a significant involvement in the activities listed below (tick more than one box if necessary).

	KT Office Staff	Senior University Management	University Admin Depts	Academic Staff	External Public Sector Orgs	External Private Sector Orgs
Handling Client Enquiries	**96%**	3%	10%	24%	0%	3%
Account Management	**93%**	3%	27%	10%	0%	3%
Contract Project Management & Admin	**96%**	17%	41%	13%	0%	3%
Contract/Project Staffing	**89%**	31%	34%	31%	0%	6%
Contract/Project Financials	**86%**	20%	65%	17%	0%	3%
Contract/Project Performance/Quality	**89%**	31%	20%	24%	6.9%	3%
Contract/Project Evaluation	**86%**	31%	20%	31%	13.8%	3%

As before, the KTP Office takes the lead role in most case operational aspects of the KT Office (86% to 96%).

Senior university management has a strong input in the contract related aspects of KT support, and academic staff indicated an across the board input of varying degree (10% to 31%).

Finance, HR and Legal involvement were reported in the form of University Admin Departments support for financial, staffing and management aspects of KT activities (20 to 65%).

There was little use of external (public or private sector) organisations with the operational aspects of the KT Offices.

Q. The activities in this question relate to the services that the KT Office provides to your university. Please indicate who has a significant involvement in the activities listed below (tick more than one box if necessary).

	KT Office Staff	Senior University Management	University Admin Depts	Academic Staff	External Public Sector Orgs	External Private Sector Orgs
Enterprise/Entrepreneurship Support	**79%**	13%	20%	44%	13%	24%
Spin-out Formation	**62%**	24%	34%	24%	10%	17%
Spin-out Support	**58%**	17%	31%	13%	13%	24%
IP Protection	**62%**	20%	41%	17%	0%	17%
IP Commercialisation	**62%**	24%	31%	24.%	3%	24%
Alumni Development	6%	24%	**86%**	13%	0%	0%
Curriculum Development	13%	31%	41%	**75%**	6%	13%
CPD/Short Course Development	48%	27%	48%	**51%**	10%	6%
KT related to CPD for Academic Staff	**72%**	24%	41%	24%	3%	6%
Staff Secondments to Industry	**34%**	17%	31%	31%	10%	10%
Student Placements	41%	6%	**65%**	51%	13%	13%
Funding Proposals (non KT)	31%	31%	58%	**64%**	0%	6%

Although other University departments remain heavily involved in particularly Alumni/Curriculum Development, CPD/Short Course provision, Student Placements and the development of non-KT Funding Proposals, KT Offices take the lead for Enterprise/Entrepreneurship support, Spin-out formation/Spin-out support, IP Protection/Commercialization, KT related CPD and Staff Secondments to industry, and plays a major role in CPD/Short Course provision, Student Placements and the development of non-KT Funding Proposals.

Of particular note was the high level of academic engagement reported with Enterprise/Entrepreneurship support (44%), Curriculum Development (75%), CPD/Short Course provision (51%), Staff Secondments (31%), Student Placements (44%), and the development of non-KT Funding Proposals (64%).

With the exception of Student Placements (6%), there was Senior Management level support (13% to 31%) across all activity areas.

External organisations (both public and private) had only a minor role to play with 0% reported engagement from public sector organizations for IP Protection, Alumni Development and development of Funding Proposals. The highest level of external support was recorded by private sector organisations involved in Enterprise/Entrepreneurship Support (24%) and in IP protection (17%).

Q. The activities in this question relate to the services that the KT Office provides to external organisations. Please indicate who has a significant involvement in the activities listed below (tick more than one box if necessary).

	KT Office Staff	Senior University Management	University Admin Depts	Academic Staff	External Public Sector Orgs	External Private Sector Orgs
CPD Programmes	41%	17%	37%	**58%**	3%	10%
Consultancy	58%	17%	41%	**62%**	0%	13%
Informal Non-Commercial Advice	**65%**	13%	13%	41%	6%	0%
Contract Research	**55%**	20%	37%	51%	10%	13%
Collaborative Research	51%	31%	34%	**65%**	13%	17%
Student/Graduate Projects (inc KTP)	**72%**	3%	34%	**72%**	6%	13%
Business Incubation	**65%**	3%	24%	13%	10%	6%
Use of Facilities	37%	13%	48%	**62%**	3%	3%
Entrepreneurship Education	44%	6%	34%	**65%**	6%	13%
Conferences	34%	24%	**62%**	51%	6%	6%
Community Activities	20%	17%	**79%**	58%	10%	10%
Public/Industry Lectures	24%	34%	4%	**69%**	10%	6%
Support to Museums/Galleries	24%	6%	41%	**55%**	3%	0%
Publications	20%	31%	41%	**86%**	3%	6%

With respect to the services that the KT Office provides to external organizations, in most cases the main source of support was from academic staff: CPD Programmes (58%); Consultancy (62%); Collaborative Research (65%); Student/Graduate Projects (joint: 72%); Use of Facilities (62%); Entrepreneurship Education 65%); Public/Industry Lectures (69%); Support to Museums/Galleries (55%) and Publications (86%).

KT Office staff still take a lead role with Informal Non-Commercial Advice (65%), Contract Research (55%), Student/Graduate Projects (joint: 72%) and Business Incubation (65%). Other University departments are most significant for Conferencing (62%) and Community Activities (79%).

With the exception of Student/Graduate Projects (3%), Business Incubation (3%), Entrepreneurship Education (6%) and Support to Museums/Galleries (6%), Senior University Management again holds a strong underpinning role (13% to 34%).

The role of external organizations (both public and private) was minor across all activity areas.

Q. Please indicate what you think of the support that internal university staff and departments give to the activities of the KT Office (tick as many boxes as necessary).

	Understand the KT Objectives and timescales	Provide Valuable Support	Good Value	OK	Work with them because we have to	Hinder achievement of our objectives	They are not good value
Senior University Management	**41%**	31%	17%	24%	0%	3%	3%
Academic Staff	17%	**41%**	27%	24%	3%	3%	0%
University Finance Department	3%	20%	17%	**37%**	3%	10%	0%
University HR Department	6%	17%	10%	**24%**	20%	17%	0%
University Purchasing Department	0%	6%	13%	**37%**	0%	17%	0%

Senior University Management and academic staff were reported to provide good value support for KT Offices, but with only a reasonable understanding of KT objectives and timescales.

University Finance, HR and Purchasing departments were considered to have a very low understanding of KT objectives and timeframes, and whilst their service was valued and useful, they also proved to be a barrier that hindered achievement of objectives (10% to 17%).

Q. Please indicate what you think of the support given by the external organisations that you work with (tick as many boxes as necessary).

	Understand the KT Objectives and timescales	Provide Valuable Support	Good Value	OK	Work with them because we have to	Hinder achievement of our objectives	They are not good value	N/A
Regional Development Agencies	**24%**	**24%**	17%	34%	3.4%	0%	6%	0%
Regional University Associations	13%	10%	6%	**37%**	3.4%	3%	6%	3%
National KT Associations	31%	24%	10%	**34%**	0.0%	3%	3%	3%
Business Support Organizations	3%	10%	0%	**55%**	10.3%	3%	3%	0%
Accountants and Lawyers	0%	6%	6%	**34%**	13.8%	0%	0%	24%
Patent Agents	0%	17%	6%	20%	3.4%	6%	0%	**27%**
Marketing Organizations	0%	3%	6%	20%	0.0%	3%	10%	**34%**
Bid Writers	6%	3%	0%	6%	0.0%	3%	6%	**58%**
Trainers / mentors	3%	10%	17%	10%	0.0%	3%	0%	**34%**

It was considered that Regional Development Agencies understood both KT objectives and timescales, and provided valuable support.

Regional University Associations, Business Support Organisations and Accountants/Lawyers were considered to provide a reasonable level of service, although with a mixed level of understanding and appreciation of the issues involved.

Patent Agents, Marketing Organisations, Bid Writers and Trainer/Mentors were largely not considered to be relevant to the activities of KT Offices.

Conclusions

From the research undertaken it was evident that KTP Offices take the lead role in most business development activities, and significant support was reported in most activity areas. The level of Senior Management support for encouraging academic involvement was very noticeable and Academic input exceeded expectations in terms of business networking, but was lower then anticipated in developing new activities and funding proposals.

Clear engagement by Senior Management was apparent in terms of developing strategic plans regarding the delivery of KT activities is apparent, whereas the operationalization of those plans remained with the KT Office staff. Development of funding proposals was equally split between KT Office staff and University Senior Management with surprisingly little input from academic staff. Considerable support was provided by HR departments, but KT offices were largely responsible for their own resource management and also systems and processes. Performance/Quality and evaluation of systems and are both largely undertaken by KT Offices, but with strong support from Senior Management. Membership of advisory boards is again undertaken mainly by the KT Office, but with support also apparent from all other areas.

KTP Offices took the lead role in most of the operational aspects of the KT Office and senior university management had a strong input in contract related aspects of KT support. There was little use of external (public or private sector) organizations to support the operational aspects of the KT Offices.

The KT Offices remained key for Enterprise/Entrepreneurship support, Spin-out formation/Spin-out support, IP Protection/Commercialization, KT related CPD and Staff Secondments to industry, and played a major role in CPD/Short Course provision, Student Placements and the development of non-KT Funding Proposals. A high level of both Academic and Senior Management engagement was reported. External organisations (both public and private) had only a minor role.

With respect to the services that the KT Office provides to external organizations, in most cases the main source of support is from academic staff. KT Office staff still provided a lead role for Informal Non-Commercial Advice, Contract Research, Student/Graduate Projects and Business Incubation. Senior University Management provided a strong underpinning role.

Senior University Management and Academic Staff were reported to provide good value support for KT Offices. University Finance, HR and Purchasing departments were considered to have a very low understanding of KT objectives/timeframes, and sometimes proved to be a barrier that hindered achievement.

Regional Development Agencies understood KT objectives/timescales and provided valuable support. Regional University Associations, Business Support Organisations and Accountants/Lawyers were considered to provide a reasonable level of service but with a mixed level of understanding of the issues involved. Patent Agents, Marketing Organisations, Bid Writers and Trainer/Mentors were not considered to be relevant.

It's clear from the findings of this study that over the past twenty years, enormous progress has been made in the use of partners to support activities undertaken by KT Offices within UK universities. This use of partners has provided high quality support that has enabled KT Offices to expand their capacity for delivering KT during a period in which the need for high quality projects generating innovation, impact and challenge has never been higher.