

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships:

What they are and the benefits they provide

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

The commercial exploitation of new ideas is vital to the survival and prosperity of British firms. If they can get new products to the market faster than their rivals, UK industry becomes more competitive. Often new ideas arise from - or are enhanced by - academic research.

One way that businesses can develop new ideas is to form relationships with universities and other research institutions. Companies benefit commercially from research into processes and technologies relevant to their activities, whilst universities and colleges gain new sources of funding and researchers achieve a better understanding of industry needs.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) is Europe's leading programme helping businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within the UK knowledge base.

KTPs provides resources and expertise to thriving businesses and organisations throughout the UK, who wish to innovate, expand or improve their performance, competitiveness and productivity through the use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within academic institutions.

Partly funded by Government organisations led by the Technology Strategy Board, KTPs combine the knowledge and expertise from an academic institution along with the appointment of a recently qualified graduate (known as the KTP Associate) who works within the business or organisation on a strategic project, jointly supervised.

Projects can be undertaken in a wide range of areas including for example: product or process design, manufacturing, resource efficiency, technical innovation, business processes (including IT and social sciences) and commercial development.

This publication looks at the different ways your business can work with universities or colleges. It also looks at key government-

sponsored schemes supporting partnership projects.

What are the benefits?

KTPs provide resources and expertise to thriving organisations that wish to innovate, expand or improve their performance. KTPs can help your company:

- find an innovative solution to help your business grow;
- increase your competitive advantage;
- access qualified people to spearhead new projects;
- access experts who can help take your business forward.

A KTP involves the formation of a partnership between your business (the business partner) and an academic institute (knowledge base partner), enabling you to access skills and expertise to help your company develop. The partnership also involves one or more recently qualified persons (KTP Associates) to facilitate this transfer of knowledge. The Associate works within your company on a project central to your needs and is jointly supervised by company personnel and a senior academic.

How does a KTP work?

The KTP scheme¹ operates throughout the UK and aims to:

- make research organisations work more relevant to businesses;
- improve the competitiveness of participating companies;
- enhance the career prospects of graduates taking part in the scheme.

The KTP process works like this:

1. Identify an area where you need to make a strategic change to your business activities;
2. Find a higher education institution, further education college or research organisation with the right expertise with the help of a KTP adviser or KTP office;
3. Agree a project of between one and three years, during which time a recently qualified person is recruited to work in your business on the project.



Learn More

Knowledge transfer is the exchange of information through networks. According to the BIS (formerly known as BERR and before that the DTI) knowledge transfer is about "transferring good ideas, research results and skills between universities, other research organisations, business and the wider community to enable innovative new products and services to be developed". Knowledge transfer also takes place when existing information within a network is recombined in a new way. The role of knowledge transfer is central to the innovation process. One of the best examples of this is Silicon Valley.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (formerly known as the Teaching Company Scheme) are a UK government-funded scheme that enables organisations to take advantage of the wide range of expertise available in the University.

See a video on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships at: www.ktponline.org.uk/

Who can take part?

Businesses of all sizes in most industries and commercial sectors can take part, though some limitations apply. To find out if your business is eligible read about the KTP scheme on the KTP website- Opens in a new window.

With the help of a KTP Regional Adviser, a suitable knowledge base organisation is selected to work on a project that aims to have a positive impact on the business. Alternatively, you may wish to approach an academic organisation, such as your nearest University, directly. Typically, projects, once approved, may last between one and three years. Certain limitations do apply to types of projects and sectors.

A KTP is a UK-wide graduate placement programme. It helps businesses develop effective linkages with third-level education, and helps improve competitiveness by making use of the knowledge, technology and skill that resides within third-level education.

With the advice of a knowledge transfer consultant you will identify a university, college or research organisation that has the right expertise for your business. You then employ a high calibre graduate for up to three years in partnership with a third-level education body. Through the chosen project, knowledge from the third-level institution is 'transferred' to your business.

The benefits to the business side of the partnership include:

- New knowledge and expertise brought into your business;
- Increased profits;
- Increased skill and knowledge of existing employees;
- Long-term strategic relationships with third-level education sector;
- A culture of innovation embedded into your business.

Establishing a knowledge partnership is not an automatic process. Projects are assessed against key criteria including relevance to the strategic plans of the business and whether there is a clear need for the knowledge or the skills of the knowledge base.

KTPs enable eligible companies to employ talented graduates on business-critical projects and allows access to groundbreaking research and the latest thinking in

management and organisational practise that provides benefits for graduates, for businesses and for academics, as shown below:

Graduates

- Start a 'real' job related to your degree with prospects of further professional qualifications;
- Discover more benefits for graduates.

Businesses

- Access to qualified graduates to spearhead new projects;
- Access to university expertise;
- Findings from recent schemes have shown an average increase in sales of 62%, profitability of 42%, and net profits returns of £138,000 (over a five year period);
- Discover more benefits for businesses.

Academics

- Apply their expertise to real business situation;
- Participation increases postgraduate recruitment, enhances RAE rating, and contributes to external income generation and academic/secretarial costs;
- Apply their wealth of knowledge and expertise to important business problems;
- Develop business-relevant teaching materials;
- Gain a relevant and improved understanding of business requirements and operations.



What is a "Knowledge Economy"?

A knowledge economy is one in which the generation and the exploitation of knowledge has come to play the predominant part in the creation of wealth. The term "knowledge economy" highlights the shift from the industrial era to the information age.

Nowadays, central resources for competitive advantage and economic success are effective utilisation of intangible assets such as knowledge, skills, technical expertise and practical know-how.

The Technology Strategy Board

The role of the Technology Strategy Board is to stimulate technology-enabled innovation in the areas which offer the greatest scope for boosting UK growth and productivity:

- They promote, support and invest in technology research, development and commercialisation.
- We spread knowledge, bringing people together to solve problems or make new advances.
- They advise Government on how to remove barriers to innovation and accelerate the exploitation of new technologies. And we work in areas where there is a clear potential business benefit, helping today's emerging technologies become the growth sectors of tomorrow.

The Technology Strategy Board promotes innovation in many ways. Their approach is summed up in the words *connect* and *catalyse*.

Much of the work of the Technology Strategy Board is concerned with spreading knowledge, understanding policy, spotting opportunities and bringing people together to solve problems or make new advances. They also invest in and manage a range of delivery mechanisms and programmes to drive technology-enabled innovation.

To guide their work, they have identified technology areas and application areas where efforts are focused, with Innovation Platforms targeting specific areas of challenge:

Application areas

Application areas are broad fields where technological innovation has a major role to play and which represent major societal challenges or are associated with the challenge of maintaining a world-leading position.

Application areas currently include:

- Environmental sustainability.
- Energy generation and supply.
- Healthcare.
- Transport.
- Creative industries.
- High-value services.
- Built environment.
- High Value Services Interim Strategic Assessment.

In each of the above areas, the Technology Strategy Board will identify challenges, establish priorities and develop strategies which specify the key interventions.

Technology areas

It is vital that the UK maintains core expertise and leading edge technologies to underpin business growth, and maintains a pipeline of new advances to keep UK businesses at the leading edge. The Technology Strategy Board has defined several technology areas which allow them to focus initiatives and interventions on core technologies that are critical to the UK's success. These areas currently include:

- High value manufacturing;
- Advanced materials;
- Nanotechnology;

- Bioscience;
- Electronics, photonics and electrical systems;
- Information and communication technology.

The website for the Technology Strategy Board is at: <http://www.innovateuk.org/>

Knowledge Transfer Networks

Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs) are part of a UK-wide business support process, one of the Technology Strategy Board's business support solutions designed to stimulate innovation in the UK economy through higher levels of research and development and knowledge transfer. The overall aim of the KTN support is to improve and speed up the process of knowledge transfer into businesses. There are three main elements:

- managed networks - these aim to encourage the exchange of knowledge and information by way of outreach activities;
- information networks - these are designed to foster cross-sector and cross-border debate by way of signposting activities;
- issues networks - these seek to draw industry players together to carry out problem-solving activities.

Grants to allow networks to be set up between businesses, academic institutions and trade associations, as well as between other groups are available to intermediaries.

Competitions for proposals are announced by the Technology Strategy Board for networks to be established in key technology areas crucial to the growth of the UK economy.

There are no restrictions on the size or number of businesses or academic institutions that may join a network.

KTNs offer invaluable opportunities to make contacts and exchange information with other business, academic or research organisations working in similar fields or sectors through networking. The Technology Strategy Board also provides grants to support Collaborative Research and Development projects.



Useful Reading



- Applications of Knowledge Transfer to Small and Medium Sized Businesses: Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, by Jim Roach and Martyn Polkinghorne (Editors), Published by Bournemouth University, ISBN-10: 1858992532, ISBN-13: 978-1858992532
- The Role of Labour Mobility and Informal Networks for Knowledge Transfer (International Studies in Entrepreneurship), by Dirk Fornahl, Christian Zellner, David B. Audretsch (Editors), published by Springer, ISBN-10: 0387231412, ISBN-13: 978-0387231419
- Developing and Exploiting New Market Opportunities: A Knowledge Transfer Case Study, by Martyn Polkinghorne (Author), Michael Jones (Author), Andrew Main (Author), published by Bournemouth University, ISBN-10: 185899229X, ISBN-13: 978-1858992297
- Technological Knowledge Transfer, by Raphael Schneeberger (Author), published by VDM Verlag Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, ISBN-10: 3639069269, ISBN-13: 978-3639069266

Resources for KTP

The KTP scheme is led by the Technology Strategy Board (TSB), an executive non-departmental public body within the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), and funded by 15 government organisations. All applications must get final approval from the TSB before proceeding. Many UK universities participate in KTP and, in addition, resources are available from:

- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) is Europe's leading programme helping businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within the UK knowledge base. www.ktponline.org.uk/default.aspx
- KTP Online includes very useful case studies (250) of past KTP programmes. <http://ktp.aeasolutions.co.uk/casestudies>
- Interface offers a central point of access for industry to Scotland's research base. We provide a unique service designed to address the growing demand from businesses

wanting to engage with academia for knowledge and expertise. www.interface-online.org.uk/

- Electronics Knowledge Transfer Network has over 4000 members in the network, has announced a new service (MyKT) designed to enable members to connect, collaborate, share capabilities and scout for technologies. www.electronics-ktn.com

KTP Offices and Advisors

There are KTP Offices throughout the UK and almost all areas are covered. They can be the first point of contact for a Business Adviser and for any company wanting to benefit from a Knowledge Transfer Partnership and are able to identify relevant academics.

KTP Advisers have a broad range of industrial experience and are regionally-based. They are on hand to help with the preparation of proposals and then throughout the life cycle of each partnership to monitor progress and ensure that all the partners achieve their goals. <http://www.ktponline.org.uk/>

Research Councils UK

Research Councils UK (RCUK) is a strategic partnership between the seven UK Research Councils. It was established in 2002 to enable the Councils to work together more effectively to enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of their research, training and innovation activities, contributing to the delivery of the Government's objectives for science and innovation.

The RCUK Knowledge Transfer Portal is a "gateway" to Research Councils' activities and schemes in knowledge transfer. It offers a single point of access for those in, e.g., academia, business, public, private and/or third sectors, who want to find out about Research Council knowledge transfer schemes and activities, and how to get involved.

Further information is available at:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/xrcprogrammes/OtherProgs/larci/AboutLARCIFundedSchemes/ktps/Pages/home.aspx>

KTP Example: Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant



KTP opportunities are not limited by sector: the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) programme, for example, works with companies from across a broad range of sectors, from IT and publishing to construction and retail. Further, innovation projects can represent a range of business functions: far more than investment-led R&D, with which it is traditionally associated.

A partnership between The Seafood Restaurant and the University of Brighton for example, has assisted in Rick Stein's range of handmade preserves and chutneys being stocked in top-end department store Selfridges. Stein chose to draw on the expert knowledge offered by the University of Brighton's School of Service Management, on a two-year retail and merchandising project to strategically drive the retail offer forward.

Rick Stein is somewhat misleadingly labelled a 'Celebrity Chef': in fact he runs four restaurants, a delicatessen, a patisserie, a seafood cookery school and a 33 bedroom hotel.

Retail marketing graduate Filip Jicinsky, is swapping theory for practice having successfully fought off **competition for a coveted position at the Rick Stein's head office in Padstow, Cornwall.** He was first introduced to **Rick Stein through the University of Brighton's Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP)** which brings together successful partnerships between a company, university and a graduate. Filip hopes to use his knowledge of retail marketing to advise on the future strategic planning of the business. Since the project began in 2007, Filip has worked on re-launching the online shop, improving logistics, sourcing new products and packaging and working with the marketing manager on the re-design of own label products.

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues.

We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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Reference and Acknowledgement

¹ The KTP process and who can take part in it, is derived from Business Link and Crown copyright therein is duly acknowledged. Further information on KTP is available on the Business Link website at: www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?r.lc=en&type=RESOURCES&itemId=1074417359&r.s=sl