

We've come such a long way - now let's go the extra mile...

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Andrew Corcoran, FInstKT, outlines his aspirations for KT professionals.

The KT profession has come a long way and has yet to see many of its greatest achievements.

Attitudes have come a long way too. As I travel around the country, working for a wide range of institutions that includes research-intensive, teaching-intensive and the specialist institutions, I have noticed how mainstream KT is becoming.

One of my greatest frustrations with the HE sector was the separateness with which it saw its activities. Whilst other industries see their income streams as offshoots of their core competences, HE insisted on a choice between, rather than embracing, its activities of teaching, research and knowledge transfer.

But this is no more.

The more dynamic KT-aware institutions see that KT underpins teaching and research, making a giant impact upon the quality of inputs and outputs from those activities. Hurrah!

Is our greatest challenge behind us? No way. Our new challenge is to sustain this success embedding the principles of KT good practice throughout the HE system if we are to make a significant contribution to the sector, the economy, and society as a whole. After all, what is the purpose of pursuing higher learning if you are unable to communicate it? This provides the springboard for my manifesto for CPD within the KT profession and in particular, the IKT's unique opportunity to galvanise this effort.

Knowledge Transfer should play a part in every Research Methods programme.

We follow a noble tradition by asking questions that cast light on pernicious problems. Are we not then culpable if we do not show how researchers how the solution can be applied to remedy the problem? I'm not suggesting for one moment that all research students should study business alongside their discipline. I am suggesting that if we are to professionalise research we should not ignore the professionalism of its application.

All research students to automatically gain Student membership of the IKT.

We learn best when knowledge is contextualised. The richly experienced and generous KT community are eager to share their knowledge. The IKT has seen

this directly from the success of its mentoring scheme and the recent initiatives to foster regional groups in direct response to calls from members for more opportunities to improve communication, share knowledge and further integrate the innovation ecosystem. By supporting early career researchers we can help them to achieve their goal of benefiting society as a whole.

Practitioners need a rounded set of skills.

The profession caused problems for itself in the early days by focusing solely upon leadership and management skills. Whilst these skills are important to help you fit within an organisation they can often make for ineffective innovators. There are a wide range of tools at our disposal and we should have experience of using all of them. How many of us have real hands-on experience of selling, finance, operations, KTPs, consulting, training, licensing and start-up?

The ultimate recognition of achievement should be the title of Chartered Innovator.

As one of the first Chartered Marketers, as bestowed by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, I have seen how well-respected the title has become in a profession that had previously suffered from a shadowy image. The CIM worked hard to professionalise its members and that improvement is paying dividends as senior marketers are emerging to head large organisations, taking over from a generation of accountants. Chartered status should be attainable by the individual within 10 years of entering the profession as Student, progressing through Associate, Member and Fellow as their skills and experience develop.

We should look to include other industries, e.g. aerospace, pharmaceuticals, and energy.

HE is a strong and unique community but as you already know, the failure to integrate with neighbouring communities can lead to isolation and decline. And so our profession must integrate by complementing the professional standards and goals of new sectors and assisting them to share knowledge for the greater good.

We should all do more.

The true measure of a professional is to see areas for improvement in the professional body and take active and positive steps to do something about it. A great number of individuals already contribute to the IKT. We could always do with more if you want it to benefit you and those who come after you.



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