

Case Study

Knowledge Transfer Partnership: Riding for the Disabled Association

Key Facts

- Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities, through the provision of opportunities for riding and carriage driving.
- Knowledge Transfer Partnerships is a government scheme to encourage the transfer of expertise between Higher Educational Institutes and research organisations, businesses, charities and other organisations.
- RDA needed to design, develop and deploy a complete IT infrastructure in accordance with its strategic vision to modernise, centralise and make more efficient its business processes and communication procedures between National HQ and Member Groups.
- Professor Rachel McCrindle, Professor of Human and Computer Interaction at the University of Reading, acted as the academic supervisor on the KTP and was supported by Professor Shirley Williams.
- The KTP increased RDA's efficiency and competitiveness; resulting in a higher quality service for its riders.
- The KTP won two national awards and was shortlisted for the highly prestigious Computing Awards for Excellence.

The Partner

Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities through the provision of opportunities for riding and carriage driving.

The RDA is a federation of over 500 local member groups. Governed by a small national body, RDA National, it supports, advises and trains over 18,000 dedicated volunteers who each year give 3.5 million hours of their time enabling more than 26,000 adults and children to improve their health and wellbeing, as well as increase their confidence and self worth through the activity of riding or carriage driving.

The Challenge

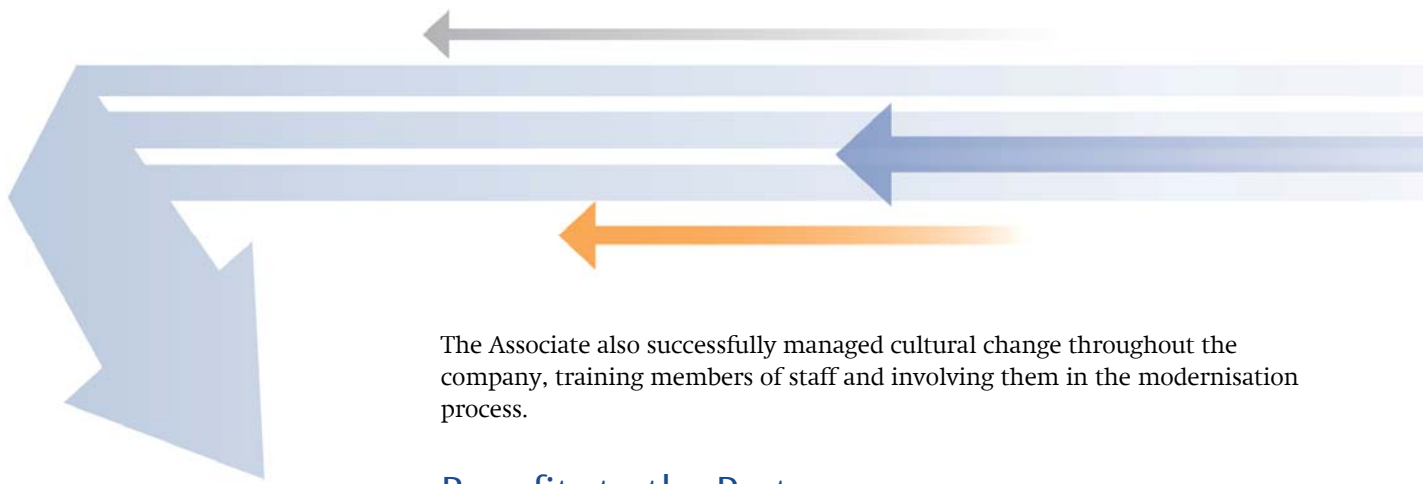
RDA had a low technology based culture and recognised that with highly dispersed regional groups they weren't engaging with local Member Groups efficiently.

Part of its strategic vision was to modernise, centralise and make more efficient its business processes and the communication procedures between National HQ and Member Groups. To enable this, the design, development and deployment of a completely new IT infrastructure was necessary. In addition, the need to sensitively manage the change of culture and working practices of users was identified.

Solution

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships is a government scheme to encourage the transfer of expertise between Higher Educational Institutions and research organisations and businesses, charities and other organisations through employing an Associate to work on a strategic business challenge under the guidance of University experts. KTP is funded by the Technology Strategy Board along with other government funding organisations.

The KTP Associate successfully carried out the research, development and deployment of a new website, database, customer relationship management system and range of online value added services that enabled much more widespread, timely and effective communication within the organisation.



The Associate also successfully managed cultural change throughout the company, training members of staff and involving them in the modernisation process.

Benefits to the Partner

Website, database and other infrastructure development by the KTP Associate has revolutionised how RDA operates, improving communication throughout the organisation as well as business performance and strategic planning, allowing for a higher quality service for its riders and drivers.

The KTP has been instrumental in transforming RDA from a largely manual organisation to a highly efficient e-enabled enterprise.

Since the KTP RDA is a much more aligned organisation; for the first time connecting with all its volunteers.

The redesign of the website has seen an increase from 50 registered members to 2,100; 9,000 new contacts within the database; 1,544,760 website page-views and 6,525,427 web site visitors.



'Being effective and efficient in our data management and communications was a key objective and the results of the KTP project have meant that we progressed even further than we had hoped. The support and input from the University of Reading was invaluable and above all the project was fun!'

Ed Bracher

Chief Executive
Riding for the Disabled

Benefits to the University

The KTP won the award for 'Best Project in the North West Region 2009' as well as the 'Best ESRC funded project exhibiting Application of Management or Social Science 2009'. The KTP was also shortlisted for the highly prestigious Computing Awards for Excellence.

The partnership provided an opportunity to integrate students' work in the KTP, for example, 60 students designed a website for different Member Groups, providing the students with the chance to engage in real world problems.

Benefits to the Associate

The KTP project opened up an entrepreneurial opportunity for the Associate to run his own business and he continues to work with RDA for one day a week as a Systems Developer.

University of Reading

The University of Reading is a world-class research-intensive university covering a broad spectrum of disciplines across the Life and Physical Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Henley Business School. Areas of particular strength include: Climate Systems Science, Preventative and Therapeutic Health Sciences, Sustainable Construction and Environments and Computational Science and Informatics.

The University works with businesses providing support for research and development, as well as access to expertise and equipment to solve business challenges. To find out how you can access the leading minds at the University of Reading please contact our Knowledge Transfer Centre.