

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PARTNERSHIPS CASE STUDY:

Anthony Simpson | Fleetdrive / Crowd Charge



About Me:

I graduated university with a degree in business and then worked in IT for fifteen years, but around twelve years ago I became quite concerned about climate change. As a result, I attended seminars on the subject and got involved in some voluntary organisations. It soon became apparent to me that we were facing a very real global issue so I decided I wanted to get involved full time so did a masters in renewable energy at the University of Reading where I aided development of solar projects.

Project duration: 2 years

End date: 24/07/2018

How did you initially hear about the opportunity of becoming a KTP Associate?

Through my time at Reading because I made lots of contacts and kept in touch with various groups, I kept a keen eye out for opportunities that may be of interest to me. When the KTP was advertised, the timing and the project were both perfect for me so I decided to apply.

Please could you give a short description of the project from your perspective?

With the evolution of electric cars and the positive impact they have on reducing carbon emissions, there will be a substantial effect on the electricity grid and a complete change in the way in which domestic electricity systems work. The purpose of this project is to determine not only if it's viable to remotely and intelligently charge electric cars, but also if it is commercially feasible to do so.

How did you find the support once the partnership began?

It was excellent; there's such knowledge available to me, and different types of knowledge within the industry. Fleetdrive have such a passion for what they are doing, and at the University there's tremendous knowledge surrounding electricity systems and services, so there's an advanced complimentary set of experience which has been openly available to me. There has been an extremely steep learning curve, but the support has helped me stay on top of it.

How has the triangular relationship between the business, the University, and yourself resulted in being a key factor in your development?

We meet face to face regularly, probably twice a month with both Fleetdrive and the University, so that ensures a fluid synergy on what we're trying to achieve as a collective. Everyone is working hard to move forward and each party are transparent in how they are looking to achieve results.

Are there any other factors that have aided your successful undertaking of this Associate position?

The support from the KTC office itself has been really strong; there is a range of staff there who are happy to help me explore different courses which would be beneficial to both my own personal development and the development of the project. A definitive focus on my own personal development really is a key part of the KTP programme and has really encouraged me to progress as effectively as I have.

What do you see as being the key successes to the project?

Initially, a key part of the project has been ascertaining a ground knowledge of the industry and the technology. Again,

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CASE STUDY:

understanding the technology to a level necessitated of me is a very steep learning curve, but everyone involved has played an important part in helping me raise that standard of expertise.

You have been given £2k each year to spend on your own personal career development; how have you utilised this so far and do you have any further plans on how this can benefit you?

I have booked in for a Prince2 (project management) qualification which is due to commence in a couple of months. I'm also in process of completing an application for the Energy Institute which gives you access to a whole range of valuable resources. Beyond that I have some technical skills expansion courses I would like to enrol in which will really aid my development, and these will likely be cemented in the coming months.

Please could you describe the other benefits of becoming an Associate?

It's a tremendous learning opportunity; when you get a great business partner such as Fleetdrive who are so ahead in terms of innovation, there's huge learning to be gained. The University staff have such an extensive level of knowledge to be capitalised on, so every day really is a learning day. At times it is daunting as there is so much to learn, but the reason you're here is to take on that knowledge and develop yourself. Getting to regularly spend time with the academic supervisor is a huge benefit.

How do you think being employed under the partnership would differ from a standard post-graduate employment?

Through KTP you get a completely different dimension of support; if I was trying to complete this project with just Fleetdrive, or trying to complete it with just the University, there would be gap left by the missing party, so the potential to learn and get a much broader understanding of the product from all angles is enhanced with a KTP. Additionally, you come in with a specific role to do which has been carefully considered so you immediately begin to aid a new merchant to the business and you're instantly valued for the work you're doing.

Have you faced any challenges as an Associate so far? And if so what have you, the company, or UoR done to help you overcome these to ensure continued success within the KTP project?

The biggest challenges for me have been the amount I need to learn and the rapidity of pace in how things are changing; trying to develop the product in a market that doesn't provisionally allow it because the technology doesn't exist yet is a huge challenge – essentially everything you're doing is new. The technology doesn't stop evolving, but I have to stay disciplined and move with the growth, using it to my advantage, helping create documentation for future users, innovators and developers. That's what makes this really exciting; participating in something really important that has the ability to make a significant difference.

Would you recommend KTP to other graduates? If so, why?

I would massively recommend it. What's important is that you're really interested in the project and it's an area that you're genuinely interested in and passionate about. If you're looking for an opportunity to learn and develop, then it's a hugely valuable way to transfer your skillset and move forward with some trajectory in your career.

What one piece of advice would you give to a graduate considering KTP?

Use the resources available to you; to become an Associate you will have a supervisor at the company, you'll have an academic supervisor, you'll be surrounded with such a high calibre of available knowledge, so take advantage of that. Also, there are times where it is overwhelming, but take a step back and focus on what it is you're there to deliver, how it's going to help you develop, and go in with your eyes open and be passionate about the concept.