

# Becoming an expert

Richard Russell, [richard@rsrconsultants.com](mailto:richard@rsrconsultants.com)



RSR CONSULTANTS LTD

© RSR Consultants Ltd

# Becoming an expert

- Approach to the session
- Mobile Phones
- Fire Alarms (if face to face) / IT considerations (if Zooming)
- Feedback



# Why do it?

- Variety
- Money
- Pride
- Ego
- More interesting work



# Don't go too far

- T shaped
- Broad understanding (top part of the T)
- Focussed expertise (vertical part of the T)
- Means you can put your expert knowledge into context and can pivot (within reason) as your area morphs over time
- Being an I comes with more risk and little extra reward



# How to start

- Attend training
- Read up on the topic (and around it)
- Be curious – ask questions of those that write the guidance, other experts
- Don't accept an answer until you can explain why that is the answer
- Be receptive to challenge, welcome it as a chance to learn, embrace it like a new love at the start of a blossoming relationship



# Take the first step

- Help others around you
- Generally this is informal, so not technically part of your role
- If you don't know the answer, express an interest and offer to find out the answer for them ... it is an excellent learning opportunity
- Be pro-active in offering to help. Generally people are grateful of help that costs them nothing.
- Be nosy – “I heard/read you talking/writing about XYZ, what was the outcome/did you get an answer/can I help”



## Then take the second step

- Encourage others to come to you
- Start being recognised as the “go to person”, in the office / online etc.
- Volunteer to take on pieces of work that are related to your area of growing expertise. Yes – I actually said volunteer to take on more work!
- Essentially, if you like watching dragons den, you are building brand awareness



# Brand awareness

- Have a hook
- I have seen experts side-lined because
  - people lost the will to live when they spoke
  - no one could ever remember their name
- So have a hook – the person with a bow tie, waist coat, 30 piercings, purple hair, that never shuts up, magic tricks
- [NB not all of them, just the one hook]





## This leads to the third step

- This is the tricky step as not really in control of it
- Start being given work to do in your area of expertise
- The subtle distinction from before is that you move from seeking others out to others now seeking you out.



# The threshold to expertise

- Deliver training
- The person stood at the front is perceived/assumed to know what they are doing
- You no longer have to demonstrate/prove you are an expert, you now have to not get it wrong
- Do a good job, be open to attendee engagement / participation and they will come to you for help



# Give your expertise depth

- Never stop learning
- Continue to seek out pieces of work that push you to your boundaries
- Make any training / query support “real”, so make it relevant to them, link it to work they might be doing, bring in your own practical examples.
- You want technical and practical expertise



## Other thoughts (1)

- Be the first to read the guidance, engage in consultations etc.
- Be willing to admit when wrong
  - (although have a solution/correction already in mind and be prepared that will have to demonstrate why not wrong the second time)
- Recognise that only human, you have your limits
  - It is ok to say not sure but I will look into it
- Keep that T-shape going – read round your expert area as well



## Other thoughts (2)

- Develop a sounding board of people you can test things out on for when you are not sure
- Be persistent – until you understand why the answer is the answer then keep going.
  - You want to understand the mechanisms/principles behind the answer
- Get good with document storage, labelling as guidance is never in one place



And importantly

- **Never, ever, compromise your independence**
  - You always have to take a principle based approach grounded in guidance
- **Never stop learning.... ever**



# Over to you...

- Any final Q&A, thoughts, reflections?



RSR CONSULTANTS LTD

© RSR Consultants Ltd