

Looking After Learning

By JOHN CRUMPTON, BECTU Northern Learning Organiser



Members are sometimes surprised when they discover that education is a central tenet of BECTU's work and has been for a long time. In fact, the trade union movement has been a staunch supporter of lifelong learning for over 150 years and it's a tradition we are rightly proud of. However, we don't just 'talk the talk' and verbally advocate better training but we 'walk the walk' and deliver courses for our members, working where possible with industry partners including employers, sector skills councils and training providers to broker courses that support the development and employability of our members.

We do this through the BECTU website; via Stage, Screen & Radio – our union journal; by targeted e-mails and increasingly we are using social media to pass on this information. These channels let members know about affordable training courses that help them find and keep in work.

ULRs – Unlocking Our Members' Potential

Another method, with a more personal and individual touch, comes courtesy of our ever growing network of Union Learning Representatives.

Working with the TUC Education Department at Stockport College, BECTU has developed a bespoke 'blended learning' course featuring online and traditional classroom study. This course provides the skills necessary for members who want to help their co-workers tackle their learning needs. Once trained, ULRs are able to offer advice, information and guidance about learning and skills as well as signposting work colleagues to additional resources and opportunities.



Tutor Alec McPhedran (standing) discusses mentoring roles to members at a ULR training day.



Peer-to-Peer session with the Canon C300 camera.

P2P – New Ways of Learning Together

We have a lot to learn from one another and the recent success of the Peer-to-Peer programme has proved precisely that. Held once a quarter, the regional learning organiser acts as the facilitator between BECTU's North West Freelance Branch and 24-7 Drama to deliver practical equipment familiarisation sessions at the WFA in Manchester. Here, in a supportive and co-operative atmosphere, informal learning takes place around new technology – generally camera based.

It's also a networking event for crew members to get to know one another and discuss matters of common concern whilst sharing their digital knowledge and understanding. It has provided fruitful mentoring/mentee opportunities for members which have on occasion led to the formation of small teams of like-minded 'creatives'. In 2013 it is hoped that we will expand this model to include other craft areas where possible.



Matt Turnbull from 24-7 Drama (right) shares a laugh with members before demonstrating the Arri Alexa camera.

Creative Industries Safety Passport

Nonetheless we believe that learning is more than a means of progressing individuals' careers. There are also collective benefits because learning can empower individuals, groups and communities. With this in mind BECTU has developed and delivers the Creative Industries Safety Passport (CRISP) so that members who successfully take part in the scheme have the knowledge and training to play an active H&S role wherever they work. Accredited by IOSH (The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health) the Passport remains valid for three years and it is hoped that it will quickly become recognised as a primary health and safety training standard to attain within our industries.

We believe that the development of the skills, knowledge and confidence of learners, reps and activists is the basis for building effective local Branch organisations. We call this the 'organising approach', which means that we support people to act knowledgeably and confidently on their own behalf with the union playing a supporting role.



Attendees at a recent CRISP Safety Passport training day.

BECTU and MediaCityUK

Now that MediaCityUK has become a reality, it provides an ideal location for all kinds of skills development and learning opportunities to happen. In autumn 2012 BECTU offered CPD courses (Continuing Professional Development) on a variety of topics including finance for freelancers, business planning, using social media successfully and the craft skills involved in hair and make up for stage and HD screens. Without the advantages of a permanent learning space at Salford Quays we have had to think laterally and creatively. As a result we will be creating a series of 'pop up' training venues where learning can take place in the coming year.

Making Connections

BECTU continues to represent its members' interests by contributing to industrial and technological deliberations in as many fields as possible. This involves working closely with key industry partners and participation in events arranged by BBC Fast Train, Move on Up, PLASA and BVE North.

As many case studies show, the best performing organisations nurture a 'learning culture' in the workplace where mutual support becomes second nature to all.

Such learning cultures are not created by accident: they occur where managers talk to their workers about training issues and listen to their views on what is needed, ensuring at the same time that workforce diversity is taken into account.

In other words, employers have much to gain by listening to staff, freelance and contracted employees.

BECTU continues to help set the pace and the agenda for 'best practice' in learning and skills and we are here to help and support all our members' lifelong learning aspirations.

John Crumpton
BECTU Northern Learning Organiser
jcrumpton@bectu.org.uk