

MTI – A contradictory organization!

MTI ought not to exist. It was founded by creative mavericks who were passionate about holistic massage. I well remember Sara Thomas approaching me in the early 1988 along these lines:

“some of us who teach massage feel we could do differently from ITECyou're starting to teach massage in Bristol would you like to join us?”

Now creative mavericks shouldn't form organisations. That's an oxymoron. And yet somehow MTI has continued for over 26 years and in many ways is now in ruder and more robust health than it has ever been.

MTI has had many ups and downs. I could tell many stories, but a few dramas I have been involved in, spring to mind. Usually they arose precisely because of the passion and strength of personality of the people involved:

- The initial break from Spectrum - a psychotherapy centre in London – in 1991 when the Association of Massage Practitioners Training Executive morphed its way into being MTI.
- Moving the Practitioner Register (now Practitioner Association) from London to Bristol in 1995. Yes, it nearly fizzled out. Without the Register, there would be no PA these days and MTI would have no representation at national level.
- The financial crisis of 2008 when we had to raise examination fees and cut costs. Mind you this also led to the creation of the Annual Conference and the new system for accrediting a wider range of MTI courses.
- The shock of Richard Leadbeater's death in 2011; the same year as our admin stalwarts, Chris Wing and Janet Yallop, retired.

Somehow, we have managed to pull together and find creative ways through. The unity of purpose and our ability to disagree yet also be creative have been impressive.

There have also been many achievements:

- Developing a robust syllabus and assessment process for holistic massage, allowing for diversity and creativity between training centres and practitioners.
- The incredible commitment, and heart-based energy of so many tutors over the years. I could mention many names: some that immediately spring to mind include Sara Thomas, Darien Prichard, Su Fox, Anne Whall, Vicky Gaughan, Anja Saunders and of course Richard Leadbeater.
- The strengthening of the PA, developing the annual conference from 2009 onwards and the growth of the practitioner regional network.
- Our highly professional and organised admin team: Alistair on finance, Diana on exams and Anna for practitioners.
- We have punched above our weight at national level including GCMT and CNHC. For instance, large parts of the GCMT national curriculum are highly influenced by MTI's philosophy and approach.

So, what of the future?

- MTI has a unique ethos and approach. There is an extraordinary commitment and heart-

based passion and energy which remains undimmed over the last 26 years. Indeed, I am consistently impressed by the way new students embrace our approach here in BCMB. There is something special even archetypal about our approach. People get it.

- We have a fantastic admin team and are financially stable, for the first time ever!
- There is new generation of practitioners, administrators and emerging tutors who can pick up the flame and move MTI forwards.

What are the challenges?

- How do we maintain our unique approach in the face of the juggernaut of regulation and standardisation that seems to be the norm these days;
- There is a danger that we might become overtaken/swamped by larger massage organisations. When I was Chair and also as a Director, I had to keep resisting approaches from the FHT to “merge” i.e. be taken over;
- There is the perennial issue of how we grow and what that will look like.

MTI, whilst more robust than it has ever been, is vulnerable. Yet I also trust and hope that there is enough good sense and heart-based energy within this paradoxical organisation to ensure that our unique ethos and approach will continue from many years to come.

Andy Fagg
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Andy Fagg has been involved with MTI since it founded in 1988. Initially he was involved in the teaching committee and then was Chair from 1998 to 2006. He was a Director of MTI from 2008 to 2014. Andy is also the Director of the Bristol College of Massage and Bodywork.

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