



TransformATIVE
TRIBES

TransforMATive Tribe Strategies for CFO's

A TransforMATive Roundtable Networking Dinner
10.10.24, The Ivy Asia, Leeds

Executive Summary

The inaugural TransforMATive Tribe for CFOs of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) brought together CFOs and finance leaders from across the education sector to address shared financial and operational challenges. The event, held at The Ivy Asia in Leeds, was designed to foster collaboration and develop actionable strategies for financial sustainability, cost savings, and revenue generation. Key themes discussed included leveraging technology and AI, diversifying income streams, improving procurement processes, and streamlining staffing structures.



Key Learning Themes



Cash Savings and Efficiency

- ✓ Attendees discussed strategies for reducing non-essential costs, including a focus on shared services, procurement efficiencies, and centralized staffing models.
- ✓ The use of AI to automate routine processes like reporting and attendance tracking was seen as a potential area for savings.
- ✓ Several trusts have begun using AI-driven systems for specific administrative tasks such as writing board reports or monitoring staffing.



Revenue Generation

- ✓ Discussions emphasized the importance of diversifying revenue streams beyond government funding. Examples included leveraging partnerships with local businesses, monetizing school facilities, and creating external service offerings.
- ✓ MATs are increasingly exploring commercial opportunities like selling school-based services (e.g., HR, procurement) to external organizations.
- ✓ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives were highlighted as potential untapped resources, with businesses eager to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships.



Staffing and Curriculum Management

- ✓ Aligning staffing structures with financial realities was a major topic. Some trusts are adopting flexible staffing models to reduce costs while maintaining educational quality. This includes restructuring support staff and exploring teaching assistant apprenticeships.
- ✓ Curriculum alignment across schools was also discussed as a cost-saving strategy, with MATs sharing teaching resources to reduce workload duplication and enhance staff efficiency.



Technology and Automation

- ✓ The group acknowledged the growing role of AI and technology in education, with examples of AI being used to automate report generation, financial modelling, and even support staff tasks.
- ✓ The potential for AI to reduce workload and improve efficiency in areas like cleaning and grounds maintenance was also explored.

Future Research and Recommendations



AI and Automation Best Practices

- ✓ Further research into the integration of AI and automation in education finance and administration is needed. Best practices should be documented and shared among MATs to ensure effective implementation without compromising job roles.



Commercialization Strategies

- ✓ MATs should explore commercialization opportunities more aggressively. This includes expanding existing services (e.g., catering, sports facilities) and exploring new markets, such as offering consultancy or outsourced services to smaller trusts.
- ✓ MATs need guidance on balancing risks and rewards when developing commercial ventures, especially around staffing and service quality.



Collaboration on Revenue Generation

- ✓ Encouraging cross-MAT collaboration to maximize income generation from shared resources could be beneficial. Developing joint ventures in areas like facility rental, curriculum development, or tech integration might enhance profitability.



Strengthening Corporate Relationships

- ✓ MATs should proactively engage with local businesses to leverage CSR funding and other partnership opportunities. Formalizing these relationships can bring in additional resources and expertise to enhance school service.



Conclusion

The TransforMATive Tribe meeting highlighted the importance of collaboration, innovation, and strategic thinking among MAT CFOs. With shared challenges around financial sustainability, the role of AI, and commercialization, the group is well-positioned to collectively implement new strategies that can benefit both individual trusts and the sector at large. Ongoing dialogue and follow-up actions, particularly through the creation of a shared “recipe for success,” will ensure that the ideas generated during this session lead to tangible improvements.