

TTC: The Transputer Consortium

by Raymond Fawcett

A new organisation of transputer users and suppliers was launched at the closing symposium of the RAL-based SERC/DTI Transputer Initiative in Reading on 30 and 31 March 1992.

TTC (The Transputer Consortium) describes itself as "the international community of transputer users and suppliers cooperating to increase their effectiveness through joint action, mutual support and sharing knowledge". Its initial funding is from participating supplier companies and it has the additional non-financial support of user groups. Representatives of the first sponsor companies (Inmos, 3L, Parsys, Parsytec and Transtech) and of WoTUG (the World Occam and Transputer User Group) were present at the launch. TTC will be run by a secretariat based at RAL and overseen by an executive board representing the sponsors and affiliated user groups.

TTC's objectives include:

- influencing the development of transputer products by ensuring suppliers have a complete picture of users needs.
- developing and promoting standards within the transputer user community.
- providing a forum for sharing knowledge and experience and
- promoting standards of technical and professional excellence amongst its members.

In order to meet these objectives TTC will publish a quarterly journal, organise an annual international conference and exhibition, promote transputer education, organise a standards forum, compile and manage consultancy and product directories, foster links with professional bodies and promote local and national meetings.

The TTC journal will absorb the current SERC/DTI Transputer Initiative Mailshot

and the WoTUG Newsletter. Each issue will be about 250 pages long and will include refereed technical papers, technical articles from sponsors, an editorial, user group news, hints and tips, diary and letters sections.

The TTC conference and exhibition will be the World Transputer Congress: the merger of the highly successful Transputer Applications and Transputing series. The first World Transputer Congress will be held in Aachen in September 1993. Membership of TTC is open to any individual or organisation with a legitimate interest in the use, development and promotion of transputers.

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Quality in Software: Breaking the Wall

by Antonia Bertolino, Piero De Risi, Mario Fusani

QUALITAL is a University Consortium in Quality Engineering founded in 1989 as an initiative of the University of Pisa. It consists of the major Italian industries and universities and its main objective is the spreading of a quality culture.

When in 1990 the QUALITAL Consortium decided to include software technology as one of its targets, successfully organising the International Conference "Achieving Quality in Software" (Pisa, 22 -24 April 1991), the executive board did not fully realise that hard times were about to begin for this new task. As the data and experience acquired by the experts of the Consortium in a number of companies (both associated and external), willing to make their products more attractive, was collected and analysed, it became increasingly clear that quality could not just be stuck on to a project software where previously it was

lacking. This confirmed the state-of-the-art in software engineering: considerable commitment is necessary, at all levels, in any organisation which intends to increase the quality of its products and services. Consequently, the software production activity must be transformed by the establishment of a controlled and improvable process.

This situation is no different from what has happened for decades with other technologies. QUALITAL reports tell us that software is still somewhat difficult to manage: a solid "wall" of self-confidence seems to protect the behaviour of many software teams, and top managers often fail to understand the inner reasons which determine the quality, cost and duration of a project. It turns out that most producers are reluctant to approve expenses to renew their software process, for these would be charged to current projects, and this is unacceptable in an industrial economy looking for short-term returns on their investments.

To carry out its arduous mission, QUALITAL has joined the Software Quality Group of IEI-CNR, which works with Independent Verification and Validation (see ERCIM News 7, September 1991). The first task is to persuade some QUALITAL companies to have their software process assessed and possibly changed. Costs would be reduced by centralising the efforts in the Consortium. The action would then be extended, with enhanced experience, to the wider industrial community.

Getting the "mature" members of QUALITAL to cooperate in the job does not seem an easy task (another wall?). If they cannot be convinced of the common benefits, another basic method of persuasion could be exploited to its full power to break the wall against interventions for quality: if products and services are not aligned with some defined soon-to-arrive standard, for instance EC standards, then, in the mid-term, the company will no longer be there for further commercial efforts.

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