

THE ATP STORY

The story of ATP really has two beginnings. And if we were to give a title to each of those beginnings -- one would be The Breakfast Club and the other would be Three Small Test Publishers and a Telephone...

THE BREAKFAST CLUB

The Breakfast Club began a number of years prior to 1992. Ira Manson, President of Western Psychological Services (WPS) had begun a tradition of bringing clinical test publishers together for an informal breakfast meeting which would take place each year during the annual convention of the American Psychological Association (APA). The individuals that would attend the breakfast came from companies that were exhibiting at APA. In the beginning, they were mostly clinical test publishers, but as the tradition continued, they found themselves being joined by representatives from educational and industrial/organizational test publishers, as well as by European test publishers.

Gregg Gillmar, Senior Vice President of WPS, remembers those breakfasts fondly, recalling a friendly, informal atmosphere. "The meetings were much like the Clinical Division meetings are today. People sitting around in a circle sharing their business concerns with one another," says Gillmar. And the major concern at the time, he recalls, is still a major concern today -- copyright. "Even though he was involved in and concerned about a great number of issues, probably 99% of the initial motivation for Ira to get the group together each year was his concern about copyright infringements," Gillmar recalls.

Also prior to 1992 another group had formed...

THREE SMALL TEST PUBLISHERS AND A TELEPHONE

"We were facing state and Federal legislative bill that literally would have put us out of business" recalls Samuel J. Maurice, when recounting the impetus that lead to the formation in the late 1980's of the Association of Personnel Test Publishers (APTP).

Three companies -- Stanton Corporation (later Pinkerton Services Group), Reid Psychological Systems and London House (now owned by other companies) -- joined forces to fight state and federal threats. "U.S. House Bill 1212 and an Office of Technology Assessment ("OTA") study requested by the House Committee on Education and Labor posed the most serious threat. We knew that test publishers had to be more organized and proactive in the defense of our industry," recalls Sam.

Part of getting organized included incorporating themselves as a trade association and retaining the services of Legislative Counsel Alan J. Thiemann.

Sam also likes to add that with the addition of an answering service, a mail drop in Washington D.C., and a “pesky” presence at every state and federal legislative committee hearing that negatively impacted testing, the fledgling trade association was able to burst onto the national scene appearing a lot more formidable than it truly was.

“People thought we were bigger than we were, we were really just like three guys and a telephone,” recalls Sam with a smile.

But once the group was formed -- they found they truly could be effective as a watchdog for the industry. The group continued to monitor legislation at the state and federal level, and they began to respond to negativity they saw in the press.

David Arnold, then with Reid Psychological Systems (now with Wonderlic) became instrumental in responding to bad press. “We started shooting letters out to major publications, instead of just sitting and taking it on the chin,” he recalls.

The young organization also released, under the auspices of Dr. Jack Jones (then with London House) its first set of industry standards, The Model Guidelines for Preemployment Integrity Testing.

But Sam, Ryan Kuhn (then CEO of Reid), and the other APTP members continued to have a vision of something larger than an organization just dedicated to personnel test publishing. “I just couldn’t get away from the idea that all test publishers needed to be organized in a professional capacity so that we could become more proactive in changing society’s view of testing -- rather than always being reactive to negative legislation or negative press,” says Sam.

They began to approach other organizations with interests in test publishing. But no match appeared to be the right one until one year, at APA, Sam was invited to breakfast...

AND TWO SHALL BECOME ONE

“Breakfast was at the Four Seasons,” recalls Sam. “And I sat pretty quietly in the back of the room and listened to Ira Manson and Lorin Letendre of Consulting Psychologists Press (“CPP”) talking about their need to get organized and proactive.”

Sam says he approached Ira and Lorin at first in an advisory role. “I offered them assistance in what they wanted to do and let them know that we’d been down that road already.”

It soon became apparent that a new organization should emerge. Sam and Ira sat down with other founding members and talked about a new vision they now had together -- The Association of Test Publishers (ATP).

In 1992 ATP was officially incorporated as a nonprofit trade association. Sam Maurice would serve as Chairman, followed by Ira Manson. David Arnold and Steve Coffman, of Reid

Psychological Systems, and Gerald Borofsky, of Bay State Psychological Associates, were elected by the new board, respectively, as ATP's first General Counsel, Treasurer and Secretary.

ON OUR WAY

The new trade association, now much larger and on its way to becoming far more influential than its original "three test publishers and a telephone" beginning, found a myriad of challenges awaiting it.

The American Psychological Association, which had inadvertently incubated the original breakfast club, was orchestrating the revision of the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. And for the first time, test publishers had a unified voice to take part in the revision process.

In the courts in Ontario, Canada, test publishers found themselves threatened with the disclosure of test materials. ATP intervened as amicus curiae in a judicial appeal and provided background information to assist the court in understanding how tests are developed, validated and how lack of security would impact test publishers and test users. As a result, the court set aside the order to disclose portions of the student's test and scores finding that it was "patently unreasonable."

In the state legislature of Rhode Island a House Bill would have prohibited employers from requiring job applicants to take some types of standardized tests. ATP representatives testified against this bill and it was soundly defeated

In the state of Florida, the Board of Psychology attempted to restrict the use of certain psychological tests. ATP provided the Florida officials with new insights about publishers' test purchaser qualification requirements and the procedures test publishers use to screen test purchasers, thereby diminishing their concerns about the distribution of tests to unqualified individuals. The result of the meeting was a new, more favorable, draft of the Florida regulations.

In the White House President Clinton signed into law the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act which included some of the most sweeping assessment provisions ever adopted by the federal government for educational and clinical testing. ATP monitored the bill every step of the way, making sure that key assessment provisions remained intact. And these were just a few of the legal, legislative and regulatory challenges that ATP found itself rising to again and again. By the mid 1990's ATP was clearly on its way to being an influential and proactive organization.

OTHER MILESTONES

By 1996 it had become clear that ATP had become an entity too large to be managed by a purely volunteer Board of Directors. The time had come for the selection of an Executive

Director. A search was conducted and the Board chose William G. Harris, Ph.D., formerly of Pinkerton Services Group, and a long-time supporter of, and volunteer legislative advocate for, the old ATP, as well as a board member and division leader for ATP. Educated as a psychometrician and bringing with him a wealth of experience in the field of test publishing, Dr. Harris was quickly committed to leading ATP into the new century.

Also in 1996 ATP suffered a loss in the passing of Ira Manson. As David Smith of NCS Assessments, and ATP Chairman at the time of Ira's death, told the Test Publisher newsletter that fall, "Ira took what was once an ad hoc group of publishers and, through his leadership and vision, helped to form what is today the first truly unified voice for test publishers throughout the United States and Canada...his vision will live on in the work of the Association of Test Publishers." And live on it did.

In 1997 Dave Foster, Ph.D., of Galton Technologies was elected to the ATP Board of Directors. Dave represented the first of a new wave of companies who were joining forces with ATP -- those with an interest in certification and licensure testing. Well-known information technology companies, that were now heavily into test development, such as Hewlett-Packard, Novell and Microsoft Corporation, were now joining the ranks of ATP along with professional certification organizations such as the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants ("AICPA"). Soon they were calling for a new Division to be added and the Certification/Licensure Division was launched under the auspices of Jamie Mulkey, Ed.D. of Hewlett Packard and Cyndy Fitzgerald, Ph.D. of Microsoft. The IT companies also came into the association with an important agenda - to coordinate and spearhead the creation of Computer-Based Testing Guidelines. ATP, with its prior experience in creating and editing industry standards, provided an excellent forum for this effort.

LOOKING AHEAD

Finally, in 1998 ATP members cast an historic vote when they chose to disassociate their annual conference with the annual convention of APA. In so doing, they cut the "apron strings" with their early beginnings and paved the way for ATP's first stand-alone conference and General Meeting.

And in February of the year 2000, in the dawn of the new century, ATP launched its first annual conference. The theme was chosen as one that crossed all division lines of the now burgeoning trade association -- Computer-Based Testing: Applications for the New Millennium. In looking back over the years, Sam Maurice notes, somewhat in awe, "I guess I shouldn't be surprised to look back and say we really built something after all."

He also adds, "If I were to deliver a message to today's ATP leaders and members, it would be this -- to this day, we still need to get out there and build a better image for testing. We need to continue to be proactive and we need to do it in a professional way. That's why we started this group and that's the direction they need to continue to go."
