

Many people have asked where it all started and why we are so passionate about training and development ? Here's an honest and genuine account of why Talent is the way it is.....

Tracey Lally, Talents MD, is a self made woman.

Having been told at school she would not achieve any qualifications or make anything of her life, she now heads up the Talent Skills & Employment Group, a company with a £3.4 Million turnover, employs 30+ staff, was the first female President of Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Chaired 'Young Enterprise', influences many local and regional bodies supporting the development of local people – and so much more. This account details the rise of Tracey, her passion for inspiring others to achieve their true potential, and how she created her own award winning company over the last decade.

Our story starts in 1965.

Tracey's natural father had been killed in a motor cycle accident when she was only 7 weeks old, so she had been brought up by her mother who held down various jobs with supporting Tracey's development. Nowadays, a great deal of support would be bestowed on anyone in such a position but in the 60's and 70's such support was not available.

When she was only 9 years old, Tracey's mum was called into school and was told that Tracey didn't like school, was turned off by education and in reality wouldn't achieve anything. It was even suggested that she be moved to, what was then called, a 'Special School'.

Tracey's confidence suffered a great deal because she knew, long before the school called in her mother, that she and school didn't get along. This lack of personal belief and confidence manifested itself in a nervous stutter that caused communication issues with the teachers which only enhanced and supported the authorities view that she would not achieve anything.

The headmaster was concerned that Tracey's lack of progress would hold back brighter, more able children and encouraged her mum to consider his recommendations.

Helen, Tracey's mum refused and fought the system to try and recognise her skills and abilities in other areas and refused to sanction her move to a different school. A decision and stance that had a positive and profound long term impact on Tracey.

The scene was set however. Through the dedicated help of her step father- Geoff, a former teacher who now headed up the 'Youth Services' in Halifax, West Yorkshire, she conquered her stutter and the world could then hear quite clearly from Tracey.

Even at that age she was determined that she would 'be someone', would do something different with her life, but she didn't know exactly what. Tracey concedes that even when she left school with no

qualifications to speak of, she was aware that she had the 'fire in her belly' and had a great deal of energy and drive but lacked a vision of exactly what she wanted to do.

Life after school – a new opportunity

Tracey enrolled on a hospitality course and moved out of the area and began working in a Hotel in Wolverhampton. She needed a fresh start and didn't want to come in contact with anyone who knew her and who may judge her from her schooldays. Tracey's post school learning journey had begun.

She quickly established herself within the hotel, most importantly she had a Manager that had belief in her, he coached her, acted as a mentor and helped her identify a flair she had in customer service, in particular handling customer reservations and dealing with customer's issues face to face.

The non judgemental style, personal attention, support, guidance and encouragement received by Tracey at that time was to have a massive impact on her long term career aspirations and ultimately to her setting up Talent.

Such was her success in Wolverhampton, she returned to her native Barnsley and took on a Head Receptionist role in the Queens Hotel. Her supervisory style was a mirror of the support she received in Wolverhampton, she developed younger receptionists, support front of house staff, and was held in high esteem by the Hotel Managers and owners who began to allow Tracey to train staff in hotel policies and practices.

Within 18 months, Tracey was the Manager of the Queens Hotel. As Manager she was able to positively influence the hotels customer focus and service, more staff were developed, many were 'low skilled' part time staff who had never had any training – formal or informal. Tracey immediately recognised the impact personal development could have on an individual, a team and then on a company.

Out of work but still determined

Tracey married Simon, a Policeman working in some of Barnsley's most deprived areas. They quickly had a son Daniel. Dan's arrival and the subsequent maternity period signalled a temporary end to Tracey's working life, but it didn't stop her furthering her education, attended College in an evening to undertake a University access course and another developing her own literacy and numeracy skills.

Within 3 years of Dans birth, Helen, Tracey's mum lost her battle with Cancer. Her mother's death caused Tracey to reflect on her own life and the massive support, encouragement and belief her mother had always shown her. Now more than ever she was determined to use the inner strength and determination she had inherited for her mother to improve others lives who like her had been 'passed over by the system'.

Following the birth of their second child, Beth, Tracey returned to work, working in a Barnsley Recruitment Agency. Her previous management skills were reignited and she learned to sell, to understand different businesses staffing and training needs, recognised their blockages to employing new unskilled staff and most importantly identified that there are MANY people who like Tracey, had no

formal qualifications but had a 'fire in their belly' and a steely determination to work and provide for themselves and their families.

Tracey's destiny was set

Tracey knew what she wanted, so she moved to Barnsley Skillshop and took over a half spent £500K contract developing peoples Customer Service skills in Barnsley town centre.

Within 2 years Tracey had achieved such success, developing so many peoples customer service skills that the project had secured another £2M worth of funding, had developed into the countries first Customer Service Training Academy, and had achieved national notoriety resulting her appearing several times on TV and radio.

Such was Tracey's success she was invited to set up other such academies in other Northern towns, the opportunity was too good to miss and so she set out as an Independent Training Consultant.

Opportunities quickly followed, her reputation for developing ideas, people and businesses grew. Her passion for people development, for inspiring people to achieve, motivating people to increase their skills and find fresh employment became well known and she was invited to be the Managing Director of a recruitment agency, and she could bring with her and still run her own training company.

Tracey ran the company for nearly a year before successfully heading up a Management Buy Out.

Tracey wanted the company to inspire, to be different form all the rest and to provide others with the chance she so nearly missed out upon. She recognised that had her old Headmaster got his way, the path of her life would have been so very different. She wanted the company to have the values she had been brought up by her mother – to know that we are all different, have different skills and if you search hard enough and give everyone an opportunity you will see they do have different Talents .

And so in May 2000 'Talent' was born.

The Talent Era

Since taking the helm of Talent Tracey has seen Talent:-

- ✓ Increase turnover from £231K to an anticipated £3.4M in 2011-12
- ✓ Increase staff numbers from 5 to 40
- ✓ Win the Barnsley Business of the Year Award, Professional Company of the Year Award and ICT user of the Year in 2006
- ✓ Spent in excess of £100,000 developing her own staff
- ✓ Become the first UK Recruitment Agency to achieve the Customer First Standard

- ✓ Been the only company – Nationally to have a 100% success rate for companies achieving the Investors in People standard following consultancy support.
- ✓ Be in the top 5 – Nationally for the delivery of a Government Leadership and Management initiative
- ✓ Tracey becoming the 1st ever Female President of Barnsley Chamber of Commerce
- ✓ Tracey becoming the Chair of ‘Young Enterprise’ in the Yorkshire region
- ✓ Tracey becoming the Chair of Trustees of Barnsley Civic – an Award winning £7Million project

And most importantly, Talent have now secured long term contracts to develop young people, with low self esteem, little or no qualifications, and inspire them, train them, equip them with the employability skills and confidence to be able to take the first steps into employment.

She’s not stopped yet, Tracey’s passion, drive and determination – what she calls ‘the fire in my belly’ will ensure that this is one story that rolls on and on.

Watch this space.