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GENERATOR

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MINE
MADE IN NORTH EAST

Shining the Spotlight

**Bringing the North East's
Creative Digital Sector to the World**

MEDIA PACK
EDITION 1
SEPTEMBER 2016



NORTH EAST ENGLAND IS HOME TO OVER **4,800** CREATIVE, DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES



THE SECTOR HAS AN ANNUAL TURNOVER OF **£1.25BN** AND CONTRIBUTES **£600M** ANNUALLY TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY



DIGITAL SECTOR IN THE NORTH EAST EMPLOYS AN ESTIMATED **58,000** PEOPLE



THERE WILL BE **6,915** NEW JOBS CREATED WITHIN THE NORTH EAST'S CREATIVE DIGITAL SECTOR IN THE NEXT **FIVE YEARS**



THERE WILL BE THE NEED FOR AN ADDITIONAL **274,000 SQ FT OF WORKSPACE** TO HOUSE THIS GROWING SECTOR

Statistics from the **Auxin 2016 report**, commissioned by Newcastle City Council & Gateshead Council



GVA FOR NEWCASTLE, GATESHEAD, DURHAM AND SUNDERLAND (THE NORTH EAST LEP AREA) IS

£871M

WHICH BREAKS DOWN TO A GVA CONTRIBUTION OF

£33,613.77 PER PERSON

WHILE THE GVA CONTRIBUTION PER PERSON IN GREATER MANCHESTER IS

£32,754.67

Statistics from the **Tech Nation 2016 report**, commissioned by Tech City UK

The Indie Capital of the UK Creative Digital Sector



Just like any underground music scene, it's the undiscovered talent that makes it special – and one corner of the UK has been quietly developing its reputation as the "indie capital" of the creative sector.

Newcastle and its wider North East digital creative community is tight knit, keeps good company and is fiercely self-reliant.

Given the Northern Powerhouse is the buzzword; the most northerly region of England has been powering away breaking the global market for years.

The man bringing this talent out of the shadow is a music promoter by trade, not a surprise then that Jim Mawdsley is taking his 30 years of success in supporting North East music talent through the Generator development agency he leads to the wider commercial creative companies he has met on his journey.

"We took over the reins of the North East business networking organisation Digital Union and, with our usual no-nonsense approach to putting on a gig, we are giving the sector a reboot and placing it centre stage."

Digital Union is now a growing collective of some of the most successful and innovative creative digital companies in the world, never mind the UK. They just happen to be based in the North East. Here's why...



CASE STUDY ONE

Hollywood Hates Me: Newcastle Design Agency to exhibit the art that never made it

COMPANY: KELTIE COCHRANE

The creative force behind one of the North East's most successful design agencies is stepping into new territory, launching an exhibition of commercial work at a popular North East art gallery.

Ian Keltie, one of the founders of the Keltie Cochrane creative agency based out of Newcastle's vibrant Toffee Factory, is mounting the exhibition, titled 'Hollywood Hates Me', at the 11 Grey St Gallery from the 7th to 14th of October.

The exhibition forms part of this year's Northern Design festival, and sees a collection of unused poster illustrations and other designs for film and television that Ian, a renowned designer, produced under brief. Despite its tongue in cheek title, 'Hollywood Hates Me' promises some amazing art based on a wide range of subjects including Django Unchained, The Revenant, Point Break, True Detective, The Simpsons and The BFG amongst others. He says that the way the movie industry works helped with the exhibition:

"If your ideas don't get picked then you can't show them in your online folio, leaving this quite extensive and interesting folio that I'm really proud of just gathering dust."

Incredibly, the pair also have an enviable history with the Star Wars franchise, designing nine book covers over three years and even attending a dinner at Lucas Films in San Francisco by special request.

Keltie Cochrane serves a range of national and international clients, working with the likes of the New York Times, Rolling Stone magazine, The Wall Street Journal, TFE Wines and The BBC. They also do important work with local companies, working on behalf of successful North East based companies like Utiltywise, Browell Smith and Co., Adderstone Group and Alnwick Garden.

Whether a company needs a full rebrand, a new website, signage, TV adverts or ongoing marketing campaigns, they can be sure to receive a quality service from Keltie Cochrane. The agency began life in 2008, but its origins lie further back in time.

"Keltie Cochrane came about when Jason Cochrane and myself worked at the BBC, we were sat in the canteen and Jay said we should start our own thing. I snapped his hand off and here we are. I seriously couldn't ask for a better more talented business partner and friend."

The agency may be moving toward its first decade but that doesn't mean it is settling or taking anything for granted. In fact, it's only growing in stature and reputation.

"Being in business in the creative world is one big roller coaster but it's actually been a great year so far for Keltie Cochrane, we branched out and took office space in London, added 2 new web developers, and have worked on some fantastic projects. We're still a relatively small team of eight, but we are looking to expand our business development team in London really soon."

Despite impressive international success, Ian's heart, and that of the agency he runs, remains in the North East: "We work with companies right across the USA, from California and NY to Texas and Florida, but we would never leave Newcastle."



CASE STUDY TWO

Global Tyneside App firm opens a second US office

COMPANY: HEDGEHOG LAB

The Newcastle-based mobile app developers Hedgehog Lab has confirmed it has opened a second US office as it continues to expand its global reach.

Set up in 2007 by co-founders Sarat Pediredla and Mark Forster originally to service SMEs, the rapidly expanding independent firm has been heralded as a leading global enterprise app developer and has begun work on cementing its position across the Atlantic with a new office opening in Austin, Texas.

Having already opened an office in Boston, India and London, the RAR Digital Award winning company, famed nationally in 2012 for its hugely successful 'Jamie's 15 Minute Meals' app - will continue to build its profile in the States and has plans for expansion throughout the continent and in the Middle East.

Hedgehog Lab Chief Executive Officer Sarat Pediredla, explains: "The key accelerator to growth was a pivot we took into becoming a mobile app specialist in 2010. This has allowed

us to set out our niche and obtain a leadership position in a fast growing marketplace. This has had the single biggest impact.

"The second big milestone was in 2015 when we set up our first US office and bolstered our senior management team, recruiting our Strategy Developer Dan McCarthy to enable a significant period of growth."

Hedgehog Lab, whose current client list includes B&M Homestores, AkzoNobel Speciality Coatings, Fitch Learning, Huntsman, Northumbrian Water as well as the Financial Times brand The Banker, is currently enjoying exponential growth and has more than doubled its workforce from 30 to 63 staff globally in the last 12 months. Its revenue is also on track to grow by 100% in the next three years.

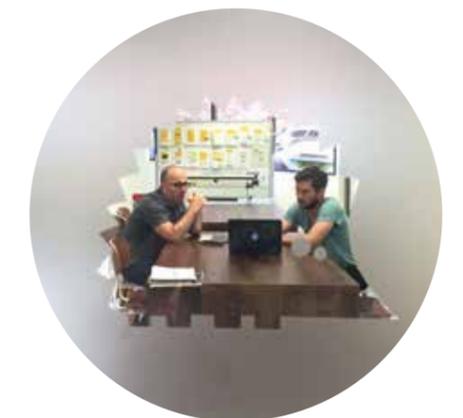
Based at its main UK headquarters in Newcastle, Hedgehog Lab believes its choice to launch and remain in the region has been integral to its success.

"We see being in Newcastle as a strategic advantage and not a disadvantage," adds Sarat Pediredla.

"We are proud of our roots, our office space, our culture and the region. Given that most projects we work on are around 6 figures plus, it isn't unreasonable for us to fly abroad or have clients fly here. What has surprised me is how many of our international clients are eager to fly up to meet us in Newcastle. They like to check out the 'mothership' and it gives them a level of confidence about the relationship.

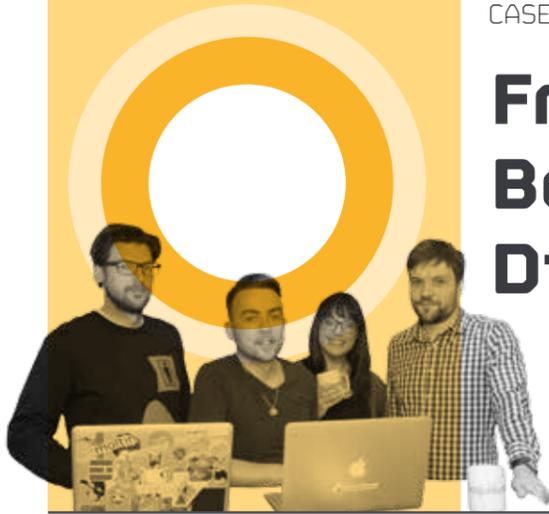
"We have had clients visit from New York who are pleasantly surprised at what the city has to offer and are hugely impressed by its culture, beauty and regional business environment.

"We see Newcastle as our HQ and crown jewel in our global offices."



CASE STUDY **THREE**

From a Wallsend Bedroom to a Digital Powerhouse



COMPANY: Gospelware

When Ryan Davies left university in 2005 to follow his dream of making computer games, he couldn't have envisaged that just ten years later, he'd be the Managing Director at one of the UK's fastest growing mobile app developers.

In just six years, his Tyneside-based company Gospelware has become a beacon in the North East creative and digital community.

Their latest gong, the 'Best Use of Mobile' at the Big Chip Awards for their work on the revolutionary REALRIDER® (motorcycle safety app) in July – has made both the digital and health industries sit up and listen. The firm is a force to be reckoned with – Ryan and his business partner Michael used to host their board meetings in a kitchen:

"We started the company in my back bedroom in Wallsend in 2010," explains Ryan. "We had no clients and zero portfolio, but things started to change pretty rapidly after securing some work in the US."



Gospelware is picking up awards for fun – the gold award for 'Best new service or application' at the App Design Awards, but it was the 'Best Use of Mobile' at the Big Chip Awards a few weeks ago, that the company had its eye on.

Realrider is a motorcycle app that 'keeps riders safe and connected' thanks to its built-in crash detection technology Realsafe® feature, which is the first

app of its kind to be 999 certified. It has proved to be an important and vital tool for the motorcycling community in the UK.

The idea for the app grew thanks to research from Great North Air Ambulance which indicated that motorcycle crashes are difficult to find within the 'golden hour' as drivers often travel and ride rural roads.

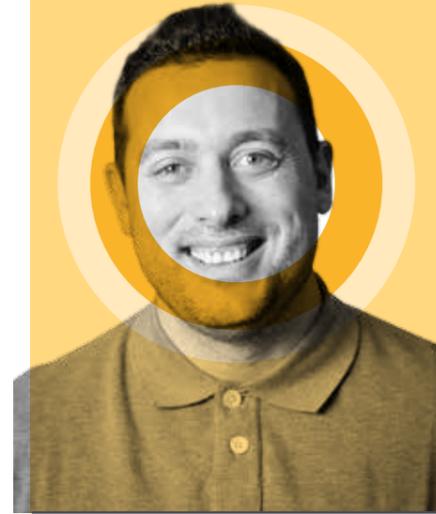
"Finding them in this time is important for survival, and the awesome guys at Realrider, who are keen motorcyclists, created the idea for this app" said Ryan.

"What we create is centred around mobile and web apps, but our work extends into many possibilities from this, like wearables, sensors, and other devices. It depends on the vision of a project and what will work best to achieve this.

"We use technology as the tool to unlock potential, our new tagline 'turning today into tomorrow' is what we do for the people we work with. Our focus is to support those who are changing the world."

CASE STUDY **FOUR**

Geek Talent is bringing global careers advice and student recruitment into the 21st Century



COMPANY: GEEK TALENT

A North East recruitment software company is celebrating after signing an agreement with an international student organisation.

Geek Talent, based in Sunderland, specialises in providing unique labour market intelligence to the education and recruitment sectors, have entered into a partnership with GoUni, a group which helps students from abroad choose and apply for a UK university.

The deal comes as Geek Talent launches a new product that will raise the standard of careers advice for young people.

The software solution, recently rebranded as GoCareer, uses a broad range of platforms, from social media sites to job market data - to map out those pathways that lead to successful careers in various fields.

"We have always described ourselves as a data science who help others make better decisions. Whether that's a CEO understanding the skillset of their own company, a student choosing the best university course or a recruiter hiring the best talent," explains Dominic Murphy, MD of Geek Talent.

"We serve 3 main markets at present; Geek Talent is for the recruitment sector; GoCareer is aiming to become the No1 careers platform in the UK, and we are also launching a commercial recruitment and careers service in the UK which will help hundreds of thousands of students every year find their perfect graduate job."

With GoCareer helping to generate a profit of over half a million throughout Geek Talent's first year outside of research and development, the future is looking bright. The nine-person strong Geek Talent team already covers data science, web and software development, product management and customer support, but the company is set to create five new roles within their marketing department over the next year.

Already named as the careers portal for Tech North and one of the ten Northern Stars companies, Geek Talent is going from strength to strength. With investment recently secured from the Gatsby innovation fund, they will build a virtual careers assistant which they



believe could change the global face of careers advice.

Prior to forming Geek Talent, Dominic worked in outsourcing for an investment bank. It was there he noticed the change in working habits and a shift towards freelancing and hot-desking.

Spotting a gap in the market, Geek Talent was born and Dom maintains the North East has provided multiple unique opportunities for the firm:

"Our head office will always be the North East. Finding talent isn't an issue for us and we have benefitted hugely from the supportive business community. I always say you need lots of cheerleaders for your business, I'm pleased to say we have that in abundance in the North East."

CASE STUDY **FIVE**

Because they're worth it: Award-winning agency begins work on a revolutionary L'Oreal Project



COMPANY: DIFFERENT STORY

One of the North East's most acclaimed multi-media agencies is celebrating, as their latest cutting-edge venture has landed a new assignment with the global beauty firm L'Oreal.

Different Story, an innovative content and experience agency, part of the Everything Different Group, has seen them build an innovative new web platform specifically for the global giant.

"We've worked with L'Oreal since 2011 and our latest project for them is a cool web portal platform called 'Beauty Uncovered,'" explains Ben Quigley, Everything Different's Chief Executive.

"It allows the uploading and sharing of marketing intelligence on the cosmetics industry - including reports, infographics, data and video – insight which L'Oreal employees have secure access to. It's a big, ongoing project, not to mention a first for L'Oreal, so we're immensely proud of it."

Different Story formed this year to enrich clients online experience, offering a level of creative online 'story-telling' most firms simply do not have the capacity for.

Everything Different started out life as an advertising agency with one client, the furniture store Barker and Stonehouse, in a small loft office in 2000. Since then it has grown and expanded into the Different Group, a creative powerhouse with clients that include Sky, Carpetright, Disney and Gulf Bank.

Today, the Everything Different Group comprises of the original advertising agency alongside Different Story and Differentology, which specialises in disruptive, tech-driven research. They employ a team of 55, and have grown to become the 15th largest agency outside London by billings of over £15m per annum.

"Innovative projects for multinational clients like L'Oreal prove you can be located here in the North East and run a successful business that makes a difference to major brands. Everyone knows the North East is a great place to live and work, but more people need to know about the companies who are re-inventing the future.

"Newcastle is both cosmopolitan and affordable, which means it's a great place to find, develop and retain talent. As you'd expect, some of our creative, digital and data focused team come from the region, but we also have staff who have come from London, Thailand, New York, New Zealand and Romania."

"As well as the rapidly evolving creative tech and data fields, there's also a great support network including Digital Union, Creative Newcastle, and Campus North. People are prepared to work collaboratively to find solutions. Quite simply, we get on with the job."



CASE STUDY **SIX**

Gateshead digital art leaders Atomhawk expands on a global scale



COMPANY: ATOMHAWK

The award winning digital art studio Atomhawk, famed for its work on Mortal Kombat, Marvel Movies and its relationship with J.R. Rowling's publishing outlet Pottermore, continues to expand acquiring its first Bollywood client and making significant moves into the world of virtual reality (VR).

Founder and CEO, Ron Astani, explains:

"The growth of our marketing art service this year has proved that we can deliver high-quality art and design from early concept stages through the development cycle and beyond."

This month, Atomhawk revealed the artwork it has produced for some of the world's most recognised video gaming brands. Its work on the third-person tactical shooter stealth video game 'Sniper Elite' for its client Rebellion as well as art for the PS4 smash hit 'Alienation' (Sony Interactive Entertainment), and 'Dead Island Definitive Collection' for video game publisher Deep Silver has helped to cement Atomhawk's position as one of the world's leading providers of world class visual development and design services.



They have won the trophy for 'Best Art Supplier' at the UK games industry's TIGA Awards for two years running, not to mention being twice named 'Best Creative Company' at the North East Business Awards.

Creating imagery for video games is still a huge part of Atomhawk's offering and its studio works on huge projects in the world of movies and magic, new challenges that Ron and the team are approaching with relish.

"We had an out-of-the-blue phone call from the production designer of Marvel's 'Thor: The Dark World', asking us if we were available to work on the film.

Since this initial surprise break into the movie world, we've designed spacecraft, key locations and actions shots for two further Marvel blockbusters: 'Guardians of the Galaxy' and 'Avengers: Age of Ultron'."

As well as working with global entertainment giants such as Marvel, Microsoft, Sony and Warner Brothers, Atomhawk has also helped bring new VR and user experiences to brands such as Sage Gateshead, Eve Valkyrie, and Costa Coffee, creating dynamic interfaces for VR headsets and interactive touchscreens.

Supporting the North East's Creative Digital Industries to thrive

Not only do the North East creative and digital industries benefit from the networking opportunities presented by Digital Union, there is also a set of unique support agencies and organisations committed to the growth of the sector in the region.

Development agency Generator (who operate Digital Union) recently received **£850,000** from the European Regional Development Fund that contributed towards a **£1.7 million** sector specialist business support programme currently being rolled out throughout the North East LEP area.

Generator has already demonstrated a strong track record in enabling the growth and success of creative businesses over the last six years so this is a real boost for the region. Titled **'Digital Futures'**, the programme will provide a growth pipeline for businesses showing significant growth potential, CPD for team members of already thriving companies through a series of seminars, workshops and master classes, as well as mentoring and coaching opportunities for businesses at different life-cycle points. Digital Futures' support for the sector is confirmed until the end of 2018.

If it's support for growing a software company you're looking for then just eight miles from Newcastle you can find **Sunderland Software City**. This private sector-initiated, publicly-backed organisation brings together the best of the public, private and educational sectors to generate a sustainable software industry in the region and drive the development of world class software businesses. They work closely with partners including Sunderland City Council and the University of Sunderland to ensure the region's software industry has the right facilities, business support, connections and the world-class workforce it needs to compete on a global stage.

Back to Newcastle and world-class support for the startup community is also found at **Campus North**, recognised as one of the best co-working and event spaces for tech meetups, startups and established businesses in Europe. It is also home to **Ignite**, the UK's leading angel-led accelerator programme for ambitious digital startups. They are certainly diverse - offering hot-desking, co-working, meeting and teaching spaces and hosting weekly events, from business conferences to coding classes for kids and everything in between.

Alongside Generator and Sunderland Software City, Campus North aim to grow the North East by putting the needs of the creative, digital and tech community at the heart of everything they do.

VITAL SIGNS

Generator's Creative Digital Business Support Programme statistics since 2010:

GENERATOR IS NORTH EAST ENGLAND'S LEADING CREATIVE DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY, WHICH OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS HAS PROVIDED AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS SUPPORT TO THE COMMERCIAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND:



CREATED
98
NEW BUSINESSES



SUPPORTED
249
EXISTING BUSINESSES



SUPPORTED
322
NEW BUSINESSES



CREATED
225
NEW JOBS



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