

WANTED: Creative approaches to effective knowledge transfer

Jeremy Davenport, Creative Industries Knowledge Transfer Network, UK

The UK's creative industries are a powerhouse of the nation's economy, generating almost £68bn worth of revenue per annum. They are also widely seen as having great potential to be at the heart of the new knowledge economy, offering the opportunity to create new businesses, new revenue streams and new jobs.

The ability to harness technology and share knowledge across sectors is critical to achieving growth in the creative industries. However, a new report by the Creative Industries Knowledge Transfer Network 'Unlocking Knowledge Transfer' says that creative businesses are failing to exploit fully the opportunities offered by knowledge sharing.

Jeremy Davenport, deputy director of the creative industries KTN said: "We found that there is a disconnect between creative businesses and knowledge transfer activities. Although KT has a great track record in more established parts of the economy, such as engineering, the message of how it can help businesses grow has yet to reach large parts of the creative sector."

One of the key findings of the report was that creative businesses said they found the current methods in which KT is delivered - and even the language used - to be confusing and that there is a need for change.

Davenport said: "One of the people from the creative sector who we interviewed for the report said 'the vast majority of people in my field wouldn't know what Knowledge Transfer is.' To a large extent this sums up the challenge. Getting KT on to the agenda of creative businesses is important but we are confident that our report will help make it happen."

The KTN project involved interviews with several leading players from the creative and knowledge transfer sectors, an online survey and a series of workshops across the UK.

The report sets out three ideas to provoke discussion around the issue of KT and creative businesses plus 16 areas of opportunity, each of which can help contribute to delivering increased engagement and success of KT among creative businesses.

The opportunities evolved from a number of scenarios that were developed through the project and refined in the workshop programme. They include some existing examples of good practice, some ideas that could be further developed and some new and radical opportunities.

Davenport said that it was clear from the project that one of the barriers to knowledge sharing among creative industries is concern over protection of IP.

“One of the opportunities we identify is the idea of a UK knowledge bank,” said Davenport. “Universities, research organisations and businesses of all size would be able to make their innovative ideas available to potential partners but in an ‘IP safe’ environment.”

Other ideas include ‘rapid innovation’ events. These would be challenge-based activities that would bring together people from different backgrounds to forge a link between the knowledge that exists in one place and the means to capitalise on it. Another idea is for a ‘best business practice’ programme that will help creative SMEs develop their proficiency in the business aspects of KT, making the most of opportunities to collaborate with organisations of different sizes and in different sectors.

There are many success stories of KT partnerships and projects involving creative businesses, many of them using events or premises to establish relationships and generate ideas. However, these success stories are not widespread.

The Creative Industries KTN report has been published online and is being distributed to key figures and organisations. The KTN is particularly keen to work with industry bodies to help them become evangelists for KT activities.

A community has been created online around the KT project to encourage the next wave of activity around the report’s outcomes. These outcomes will all influence future thinking and funding opportunities from the Technology Strategy Board.



CIKTN is part of the Technology Strategy Board’s family of KTNs. The role of KTNs is to stimulate innovation and wealth creation in the UK by connecting industry, academia and the public sector.