

FuseBox24

Creative arts, business and technology fusion in practice

Evidence briefing

New empirical evidence has taken the findings of Brighton Fuse to the next level in demonstrating how arts, humanities and design drive accelerated innovation and business creation in the creative and digital economy. This evidence addresses business growth in the Creative, Digital and IT (CDIT) sector but also contributes to wider thinking about innovation and how we stimulate it.

Research results from the FuseBox24 project, based on the creation of a radical and experimental new business support programme at Wired Sussex in Brighton, turn conventional thinking on innovation on its head by shifting the focus to innovators and their development.

FuseBox24 has broken new ground and taken the fusion principle forward in three key areas:

- A people-centred model adapted to innovation in the CDIT sector focused on innovators, customers and a new fused form of creative arts, business and technology support.
- Designation of a live lab (FuseBox) as a creative and maker space as much as a tech one with activities emphasising flows across these different ways of experimenting with, thinking through and testing business propositions.
- A ToolBox of tested strategies fusing creative arts, technology and business approaches which can easily and flexibly be adopted and adapted in other contexts to support innovators of different kinds.

FuseBox24's focus was research on innovators, with innovators, for innovators.

The FuseBox24 project found that CDIT innovators:

- Trade in ideas and content, but tend not to worry about protecting intellectual property –

open innovation and collaborative approaches dominate.

- Are often sole traders or micro-businesses and so need shared spaces in which to collaborate with others to develop ideas.
- Need support, capability and new tools to enable them to get the most out of collaborations for sustainable innovation.

The Fusebox24 findings demonstrated that arts, humanities and design approaches are highly effective in meeting these needs because they reflect the iterative and ideas-based way in which innovation happens in the CDIT sector.

POLICY RELEVANCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACCELERATED INNOVATION

The dual power of collaborative and individual development in achieving business and customer focus and clarity in innovators needs to be prioritised in skills and education as well as business support arenas. Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs), Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) all have roles to play here.

- Support for innovation needs to take more account of the importance of aiding time and space for experimental collaborative work to help create robust and sustainable innovators.
- While funding and support often focus firmly on individual innovations themselves, more attention should be given to supporting the collaborative development of innovators with fused creative and digital skills who can sustainably and flexibly innovate and innovate again.

See the FuseBox24 report at www.fusebox24.co.uk

LIVE LABS TO DEVELOP FUSED INNOVATORS

New kinds of incubator live lab space and innovator support programmes shaped by creative arts, business and technology fusion are needed. Priorities should include:

- Open innovator live labs that facilitate seamless and diverse forms of individual and collaborative work and mentoring, while representing an identifiable collective space where different kinds of creative and business-development group activity take place.
- The designation of the lab as a creative and maker space as much as a tech one with activities emphasising flows across these different ways of experimenting with, thinking through and testing propositions.
- Diverse arts, humanities and design inputs and perspectives as embedded elements of the business development work as well as features of the lab space itself.

TOOLBOX24

The FuseBox24 programme has produced a Toolbox of tested strategies fusing creative arts, technology and business approaches which can easily be adopted and adapted in other contexts to support innovators of different kinds.

- Toolbox approaches are accessible, flexible,

mobile and geared towards open innovation, so represent a technique with wide applicability in digital transformations across business and society.

- Pop-up innovation can be considered a radical notion, and ToolBox24 offers resources for all kinds of businesses and institutions to think differently about how they support and further innovative practices and, equally importantly, make them more inclusive and open.

RESEARCH-INNOVATION MODEL

The Fusebox24 research-innovation model demonstrates that research needs to be repositioned as an integral part of new paths towards accelerated CDIT development. This means more experimentation in where and how research takes place and greater orientation towards, and opportunity for, co-creation with artistic, business and technological practice.

- Building in the research component as foundational to innovation work in the creative and digital economy ensures that systematic findings can be made available to wider audiences in education and all sectors of the economy, public and private, that are undergoing or will need to undergo continuous change in the CDIT era.

BACKGROUND

The FuseBox24 project is a one-year study based on the creation of a radical and experimental business support programme at Wired Sussex in Brighton designed to extend the findings of Brighton Fuse on accelerated business growth through fusion of technology, the arts, humanities and design with creative, digital and IT skills.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and carried out in collaboration with research (University of Brighton) and industry (Wired Sussex), the FuseBox24 project focused on innovators rather than innovation. The project set out to investigate how innovators are made in a creative and digital economy and how the fusion of creative arts and design with business and technology helps accelerate their development as innovators and businesses.

The aim was to get deeper inside the fusion picture to find out how fusion can be actively supported in developing innovators as collaborative, flexible, robust, sustainable and customer-focused, and to test a Toolbox of techniques combining creative arts, technology and business approaches to those ends. The results are designed to inform future innovation strategies in the Creative, Digital, and IT (CDIT) sector and beyond, through new focus on fused innovator development towards accelerated growth and competitiveness.

Research results are based on: the design and content of the FuseBox24 programme of business support; testing of it and its Toolbox through qualitative survey and video interview data on the participants' experience; and the roles of the programme and the Toolbox in accelerating the participants' development as innovators and businesses.