

Innovation Skills For Digital Ecosystems

Manchester Digital Skills Festival

The digital and technology industry in Manchester is growing rapidly and its profile across the UK and the globe is higher than ever. To maintain this, Manchester needs a strong pipeline of highly skilled digital talent. That's where the Manchester Digital Skills Festival comes in. The aim is to match talent with the skills needs of the sector and create a "buzz" that helps make Manchester the place to be for digital jobs.

Aim

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Manchester Digital Skills Festival is delivered by Manchester Digital (MD), the independent trade association for digital and new media in Manchester. It is an annual four-day event, which brings those interested in a digital career together with education providers and digital and tech businesses from across the region to address both demand and supply issues. The festival covers:

- A digital skills conference with talks by industry leaders and the results of MD's own annual skills audit report alongside workshops on salary, rewards, inclusivity and diversity.
- A talent day for job seekers. More than 50 digital, creative and tech companies offer opportunities for future careers in the industry. Seminars, workshops and panel discussions on placement programmes and graduate initiatives take place alongside the skills fair. Working with local universities, the event attracts over 1000 students and graduates.
- An experience day for students to get practical skills in coding, website building and hacking.
- A computing, curriculum and careers event for teachers and careers advisers in schools and colleges.

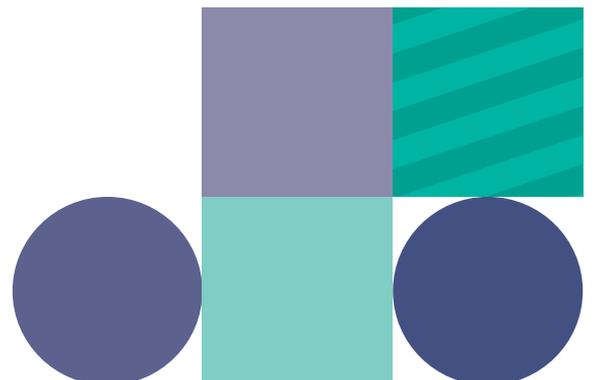
Process

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Manchester Digital (MD) was set up in 2001 with the goal of creating a cohesive organisation that could support the development of the digital sector. With technology becoming an increasingly important part of the city's economy and a major employer, this was identified a key need.

MD is a membership-based organisation meaning that the majority of its services are designed for and available to members. It is run by an elected council.

Increasingly the MD membership has recognised issues of talent identification, recruitment and retention within the industry. The event is curated by MD in conjunction with its elected board members and is free to attend. It is delivered via a sponsorship model drawing on its membership and receives support from key stakeholders, including the city council.



Success factors

The skills festival is a direct response to the concerns and issues of the membership. It is based on industry need and MD members are fully engaged in the concept and the delivery of the event. It is successful because it works both for and with the industry. Over the years MD has created strong links with areas connected to the sector e.g. both school and university education.

Stakeholders

The festival is organised by MD staff and draws on its membership and contacts for delivery. Stakeholders are therefore local businesses along with colleges and universities from the Greater Manchester area.

Challenges & solutions

- The pace of change is rapid and to be attractive the event needs to be current and relevant.
- Maintaining full engagement of the membership.
- Engagement with the membership ensures content is of a high quality.
- Using the event as a platform for the annual skills audit provides a benchmark.
- Close involvement of board members ensures that sponsorship opportunities are exploited.

Achievements

The digital sector is at its strongest when it works together. There is no value to the sector for a new company to locate in the area and draw talent from other companies.

The skill shortage is across the industry and MD firmly believes that industry must solve its own problems. This is backed by its membership who overwhelmingly believes that industry needs to engage fully with education. In response to the work of the festival MD have created new roles. Member fees enable MD to resource their skills development work, and address one of the largest challenges facing their membership.

More information

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www.manchesterdigital.com/events/digital-skills-festival-2018

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Further information on SmartImpact network visit:

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