

## SMART Partnership – Business Butler and Cardiff Met



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Welsh tech start-up creates one of the UK's first intelligent business chatbots, thanks to Welsh Government innovation support.



Business Butler's web-based platform helps SMEs find trusted, relevant and impartial advice and support for their business.

Welsh Government's SMART Partnerships offer financial support to innovative projects that require a range of expertise to succeed. This support helps to increase the capacity and capabilities of Welsh businesses to develop and commercialise a product or technology by facilitating academic collaboration on a specific project.

### Project Timeline:

- September 2018:** Business Butler partners identify the need for a chatbot and approached Cardiff Metropolitan University Centre for Research and Enterprise.
- February 2019:** Following a series of meetings between Business Butler and Cardiff Met, the application for the SMART partnership programme was submitted.
- March 2019:** The application was approved by Welsh Government and funding was provided for Business Butler to hire and train an associate from Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- April – May 2019:** Cardiff Met began their recruitment process for an associate developer.





Business Butler are run by a small but highly experienced senior management team.

A Swansea-based tech start-up, Business Butler, is one such success story having developed one of the UK's first intelligent business chatbots after a SMART partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University helped bring expert knowledge to the team.

Business Butler's web-based platform connects small business users with vetted and appropriate professionals and experts in their local area. It is designed specifically to help small and medium-sized businesses find trusted, relevant and impartial advice and support for their business, easily and quickly. The areas of expertise vary from legal and financial, to copywriting, management and design, with the intentions of helping small businesses to grow and encouraging entrepreneurship.

The work was conducted in collaboration with the Department of Computer Science at Cardiff Metropolitan University who provided a dedicated associate to work on the coding and development of the chatbot, in partnership with the company. This was done with the support and guidance of senior computer science academics, Dr Simon Thorne and Dr Imtiaz Khan.

Speaking about the benefits of SMART Partnerships to Cardiff Met, Dr Simon Thorne said: "Engaging with business in a real world project like this which is highly innovative, is interesting and challenging work. For the university, the funding is a material benefit that helps further research. It enables us to enrich our own knowledge, using new tools in real life situations. Much of our work with Business Butler has been incorporated into my AI teaching so the students directly benefit from that experience."

**Dr Simon Thorne, Senior Lecturer in Computing and Information Systems, Cardiff Metropolitan University**

#### Project Timeline:

- **May 2019:** Ben Hayes, a final year computer science student, joined the Business Butler team as a software developer.
- **June – August 2019:** Researched and refined the chatbot idea and requirements.
- **September 2019:** The tools needed for the chatbot programme were identified. Ben Hayes is recruited as a full time developer with Business Butler.
- **October 2019 – January 2020:** Development phase for the chatbot.
- **April 2020:** Business Butler launched their first Bot, 'Boris', providing up to date advice and information for businesses during the coronavirus pandemic.
- **July 2020:** Business Butler released their second Bot, 'Penny'.
- **September 2020:** Business Butler launched their third Bot, 'Grant'.

Since engaging with the SMART Partnership, Business Butler has taken on more team members and has doubled in size since March 2020. More roles are planned in line with the aspirations of the 2015 Wellbeing of Future Generations Act which aims to create a more prosperous Wales. The new chatbot service helps to reduce commutes between experts and clients, as the platform provides people with access and information to vetted experts in their local area. Encouraging reduced travel in this way contributes to Wales' environmental wellbeing, with sustainable development also a key aspect of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

"The financial and technical support received through the SMART partnership with Cardiff Met University has helped transform our business into an industry leader. Without the knowledge and expertise from our associate Ben Hayes, we would not have been able to create the 24/7 chatbot service that allows us to deliver relevant and impartial business advice for SMEs and start-ups."

"Ben, our associate developer, is now a full time member of the team so we can use his tech skills across the business. We are so pleased with the outcome, we are already making plans to be involved with a SMART Partnership with Swansea University in the future."

**Bhupinder Sidhu, CEO of Business Butler**



Business Butler connects small business users with vetted and appropriate professionals and experts in their local area.

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Prosperity for All: economic action plan is the Welsh Government's national strategy. Find out more about the funding and support available from the Welsh Government:

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[business.wales.gov.uk/innovation](http://business.wales.gov.uk/innovation)

