



## Business Guide

# Technology in the Creative Sector

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## Technology in the Creative Sector

The UK creative sector is a dynamic mixture of industries that includes music, film, broadcast, video and computer games production, design and publishing, and a host of complementary services such as advertising, marketing, software development and web design.

The sector is, of course, highly influenced by developments in communications technology and the advent of Superfast Broadband, in particular, has radically changed both what products and services are developed as well as how they are consumed / delivered.

The massive bandwidths now available have, for example, made real time collaboration possible in the music industry whilst film production companies can dramatically increase the turnaround of projects by sharing large files with customers and responding to required changes more speedily.

Meanwhile, both business and household users are able to choose trial and use a wide variety of software online that, even a few years ago, would have been impossible to delivery over an internet connection. Prime examples for business are the suites of SaaS (Software as a Service) offerings such as CRM, accounting and office productivity products, whilst home users now have access to sophisticated online gaming platforms and music / video on demand.

The sector is now estimated to generate 6-8% of the UK's economic output and employ around two million people. The advertising industry alone will be worth £17.7 billion by 2016 (source: PwC); the publishing industry turns over £19 billion annually; and more than 30% of video games software sold in Europe are developed by British studios.

Technology is the tool that drives innovation, flexibility, interactive customer relationships and new business models in this sector. But companies can only make the best use of it if they have access to high-speed broadband services which support intensive web consumption, and allow them to develop services and products of their own, reflecting the latest and best in modern technology: content sharing and social viewing platforms, music sharing services and content curation tools.

Given this, SMEs in the creative sector have a key role to play in driving demand for and influencing the development of a world-class digital infrastructure which allows them to continue developing and producing the best possible content in a very competitive global market.

High speed connectivity gives businesses the confidence to build virtual creative hubs in cities or rural areas, regardless of the physical location of their people.



## Five Essential Technologies for Creative Businesses

### Superfast Broadband

This is a no-brainer for any business that depends on sharing content with customers and collaborative partners. Digitised content is the norm – and brings with it an increase in data volume, which requires more computing power and more bandwidth to transmit. Customers expect higher audio and video definition for media streaming, increasing demand for Superfast Broadband.

### Mobile communications

The creative sector has been a major pioneer of virtual business models, in which teams collaborate and share content, regardless of location. Employees need to access applications and tools wherever they are. Cafes, hotel foyers, trains—even the London Underground—become virtual offices in which decisions can be made, content shared and published, designs approved, thanks to the growth of high-speed wireless broadband services and Wi-Fi hotspots. Creative businesses need Unified Communications (UC) systems which integrate fixed and mobile communications and manage connectivity securely.

### Social media

Like their customers, many creative sector SMEs are turning to social business tools to collaborate, share and publish content, and build virtual partner networks. These tools are great platforms for curating content, and new options are being developed all the time – often by niche players in the creative sector.

The usual suspects – Facebook, Twitter and Google+ - have been joined by innovative platforms such as Path (a mobile social network) and Pinterest (a social bookmarking service, much favoured by creative businesses).

Making the best and most flexible use of these tools requires the availability of secure, fast, reliable, high bandwidth.

### Cloud services

The cloud allows businesses to buy applications and systems as services. Previously, these usually had to be installed on individual computers, and required at least a degree of proactive management to keep licences current and consistent – a cost and resource overhead. The cloud provides tools for innovation without the need for expensive infrastructure.

Cloud-based apps – anything from personal communication and conferencing tools to accountancy packages and business systems – allow employees to access their information from anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection. They are automatically updated by software providers. And everybody gets access to developments as soon as they are available.



## Visualisation, personalisation and collaborative development tools

Many creative businesses rely on modelling tools to render their designs in a virtual environment. The new generation of 3-D modelling tools allows designs to be distributed and accessed more easily – as long as sufficient bandwidth is available.

For businesses which focus on content creation and curation, integrated design and production tools are essential for building the increasingly personalised experience expected by their customers. Typically, modern web pages are hierarchies of information compiled from large databases of structured content which can be called into action according to individual customer preference.

Speed is of the essence for any business looking to bring a new online service or resource to the network more quickly. Collaborative tools based on Open Source software help to speed up application development, including video games, in a competitive market. Five questions for your superfast broadband supplier:

- How fast is fast?
- How long will it take to fix a fault?
- Can I speak to a real person in real time?
- Will I work with the same person as the fix progresses?
- Do you have a FAQ section on your website?

## Recruitment Challenges

Creative SMEs face particular challenges in recruitment. You are looking for people who are skilled in technology that is relevant to your business. But you also want people who understand the business itself, who can collaborate and are flexible enough to move quickly to meet increasingly sophisticated demands from customers and business partners.

The most innovative and dynamic SMEs treat IT as an integrated part of their strategy and want to hire people who can grow and develop with their business – seeing the whole picture, not just the programming suite.

The growing confidence of more creative and versatile SMEs is reflected in the way they are taking a long-term view of their business and making a strategic decision to invest in the skills that will help them achieve their goals in a streamlined way – mobile apps development, cloud computing, and e-commerce.

The customer experience is the battleground for many of these SMEs. Apps and interfaces are your weapons of choice in the competition for loyalty and business. If you can recruit IT staff who reflect that reality in their skills and knowledge, you will be well-equipped to stay ahead of the game.



Recruiting the right person can be a long game. Consider hiring a contractor for specific projects. If you create a dynamic environment in which they can develop their role, they might stay on.

## What Business Benefits Can I Expect?

### Flexibility

Superfast Broadband guarantees you speed even at the busiest times of day. You can run your business on an anytime, anywhere basis. Employees can be confident they will be able to access their apps and tools wherever they are. And customers will be able to rely on a consistent service.

### Cost savings and outsourced infrastructure

Superfast Broadband gives you access to a host of cloud-based apps and development tools without the need to implement and maintain expensive systems in-house.

As long as you have an Ethernet-quality connection at your end, Superfast Broadband will enable you to build a virtual infrastructure without any of the traditional overheads – and your employees can focus on the core business: creating products, services and content.

If your employees have mobile access to their key apps, you will also save on travel costs and cut back on your energy consumption, making lower bills a reality.

### Internal and external collaboration

Technologies such as VOIP and video conferencing, allow your employees to collaborate with each other and with development partners in other businesses.

The ability to upload bandwidth-heavy content including complex graphics and video, in a fraction of the time it used to take, means that you can share and publish much more quickly – giving you a competitive advantage.

### Personalised customer relationships

You can also build more personalised relationships with your customers – from tailored web content to more flexible real-time communications options – helping to generate greater loyalty and repeat business.

### An all-round IT and business skills pool

If your team is not preoccupied with managing a complex IT infrastructure, it can be liberated to develop a combination of IT and business skills which reflect the creative sector in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## Remote working

With many SMEs operating virtual business models, today's collaborative technologies combined with superfast broadband and mobile connectivity make the distance and location of individual employees and partners irrelevant.

Make your business the driver behind the adoption of any new technology – not the technology itself

## How Do I Get Started?

### Assess your resources

Any business should seize the opportunity presented by Superfast Broadband to reassess their resources and make sure they are optimised to take advantage of the higher connectivity speeds that will be available to them. Start by looking at the entire cost of your telecoms bill – and ask your prospective service provider how Superfast Broadband can save you money by delivering a complete UC package. Then look at your existing infrastructure. For example, you will need to check the quality of your Ethernet connection to make sure the benefits will be realised within your own network. This is something your service provider should be able to help you with.

### Technology for innovation, collaboration, development and engagement

Superfast Broadband will give you access to a range of cloud-based applications and services, many of which will complement or even replace your existing software investment. The benefits of cloud computing—reduced licence costs, simpler management, 24-hour availability, remote access—will depend on your service provider's ability to guarantee security, which should be a primary consideration.

### Security and mobility

Prepare your team to get the most out of an IT environment which they effectively carry around with them on their laptops, smartphones and tablets. Consider implementing a BYOD strategy in which employees are encouraged to access business tools and systems via the interfaces that they feel most comfortable with, wherever they happen to be. This should be integrated with your security policy— and properly managed.

### Choose the right provider

High-speed connectivity is essential to the creative sector's ability to innovate and develop new content and products. So it is vital to find a service provider who understands the dynamics of your industry and can provide the kind of service levels, availability and security that you require to conduct your business, enable collaboration and meet customers' expectations.

Ask them if they provide Fibre to the Cabinet and if so make sure your premises are within a reasonable distance to benefit from the download and upload speeds this should deliver. Find out exactly what speeds they can offer – and match them with your projected needs. Make sure your





service provider can match your growth expectations with service levels. Ask them what other hosted and IP services they provide, which could take the weight off your infrastructure and free you to focus on your core business.

## Top Tips

### Research the broadband market

Suppliers and service providers vary in their own skills and specialisms, and you need one who will work in partnership with you and take the time to understand the specific needs of your business.

### Check out those case studies

Speak to other creative business owners and take up references before you commit to a new service provider.

### Pin down your SLAs

Don't leave it to the marketing blurb – be specific about your expectations and needs, so that you can be sure any problems will be fixed in a recognised timescale, and downtime kept to a minimum.

### Ask about bundles

Service bundles are a great way of keeping costs down, so find out if your service provider has other services and hosted technologies which could reduce your infrastructure.

### Join the campaign

The creative sector has been identified as a key influence on the development of high-speed broadband services, so make sure your voice is heard and your supplier is aware of your evolving bandwidth needs.

### Be prepared to switch provider

Don't sign up to a long term contract, and be prepared to switch to get access to the latest technology if your provider lags behind.

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