VENTUREFEST
SHOWCASING INNOVATION ACROSS THE NORTH WEST
Welcome to Venturefest North West and to the event’s first ever dedicated magazine! Our region is such a vibrant hub of innovation, a place where creative minds, science, discovery and investment in future technologies is opening up new and exciting business opportunities.

What better place for Venturefest, an annual event that brings together businesses, investors, and academics and researchers under one roof, for a day packed full of inspiration, collaboration and innovation.

The idea of Venturefest was born out of the realisation that, for Britain to be more competitive, more businesses need to be able to identify fresh market opportunities and ways to successfully commercialise new products and services more easily. And for this to happen, it needs to be simpler for businesses to be able to tap into local networks, facilities and expertise, and find the funding and resources needed to succeed.

This was recognised by Innovate UK, which also spotted the potential offered by the pioneering Venturefest Oxford event. Working with partners across the country, Innovate supported the roll-out of a nationwide series of events based on this model, to bring together and inspire business leaders, entrepreneurs and investors. Led by GC Business Growth Hub with the support of partners, the first Venturefest in the North West took place in 2014 and since then has expanded to become the region’s biggest annual innovation exhibition and conference. In 2018, more than 1,100 delegates attended the one-day event, and in 2019 and beyond, I expect to see Venturefest continuing to grow.

It's fitting, then, that we’re launching this new publication. I believe it’s an essential read for people who are passionate about business and I’m delighted that it will give some of the North West’s pioneering SMEs the visibility and recognition they deserve. Inside, you’ll find profiles of the major players in the Innovation Showcase Competition, one of the real centrepieces of Venturefest North West and an unrivalled shop window for SMEs to pitch their business propositions to an audience of serious investors looking for their next big commercial opportunity. We introduce and profile the 2019 finalists and semi-finalists, and take a look back at winners from previous years, charting the progress they have made.

I’d also like to draw your attention to the series of How To guides, which look at a selection of the services provided by some of our partner organisations in the North West. These contain practical advice and tips for growing businesses, in areas ranging from tax and protecting your intellectual property, to getting started with graphene, through to making 2020 your year for international growth.

So as well as being an enjoyable read, I hope you’ll find the magazine a useful tool to help your business, alongside the support offered by the region’s Growth Hub Network and our partners.

Richard Jeffery
Director of Business Growth at GC Business Growth Hub
@RJ_bizgrowthhub
North West Growth Hub Network

If you’re looking for advice and guidance to help you achieve business growth, your local Growth Hub is there to support you on that journey. Growth Hubs are part of a national network across England, led by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) working in partnership with government and focused on making it simpler for businesses to access the best advice from the public and private sector. Whether scaling up, identifying new markets, or harnessing new technology and facilities, Growth Hubs can help.

GC Business Growth Hub
Our passion for business, and deep-rooted understanding of the challenges that business owners face, allows us to deliver the best possible support to SMEs. As part of the Growth Company, we also leverage local resources and tap into our extensive networks to unlock new growth opportunities both in the UK and global markets.

Since it was established in 2011, GC Business Growth Hub has provided fully-funded support to more than 11,000 businesses and secured over £240m in finance offers.

Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub
We support all businesses across Cheshire and Warrington to accelerate growth, innovation and skills. Working with over 200 partners, we help your business, linking you with the specialist support you need, including:
- Growing through innovation and internationalisation
- Accessing finance and public sector contracts
- Developing your network and workforce
We help businesses at whatever stage of their growth journey, from budding entrepreneurs to start-ups and scale-ups to multinational companies.

candwgrowthhub.co.uk
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Boost – Lancashire’s Business Growth Hub
Boost is Lancashire’s £6m business growth hub. Through Boost, Lancashire businesses from start-ups to large companies can access a number of funded programmes in areas such as mentoring, innovation, international trade, leadership development, and accessing finance.

We can also help businesses navigate the plethora of national business support programmes to find the support they need. Founded in 2013, Boost has already helped over 5,000 business grow, creating over 2,200 jobs.

boostbusinesslancashire.co.uk
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Cumbria Business Growth Hub
Cumbria Business Growth Hub helps businesses unleash their full potential, whether they’re starting up or well established. As the focal point for businesses in Cumbria, we offer a great choice of support to help your business become more competitive and increase your productivity and profitability.

The Growth Hub brings together the range of support – advice, training, networking, funding and more – delivered by the Growth Hub and others. Often, it’s free or subsidised. And we can work with you to put together a support package tailored to your individual needs.

cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk
info@cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk
0844 257 8450
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Local Growth Hub, Liverpool City Region
We help businesses in the Liverpool City Region identify and find the support and funding they need to grow. The Local Growth Hub provides advice, support and funding for businesses across Liverpool, Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. We have teams in each of the boroughs who help businesses at the thinking, starting, scaling and unlocking stages of growth.

From April to October 2019 alone we supported more than 2,500 businesses, and over 11,000 have benefitted in total.

localgrowthhub.com
localgrowthhub@LiverpoolLEP.org
@localgrowthhub
At NatWest, we understand that SMEs are the lifeblood of the UK and it’s vital for the sustainable growth of the economy that we create an environment where entrepreneurs can start, scale and succeed. We know that every business and every entrepreneur is different and that the motivations for starting a business can vary greatly. So we’ve developed a variety of support programmes that focus on the specific needs of the individual. We’re proud to support those with an idea that haven’t taken the leap into business yet, through to established businesses of all sizes.

At the heart of our support is our comprehensive programme of free mentoring, insight and bespoke coaching, specifically designed to help businesses grow and scale. We provide entrepreneurs with full wrap-around care, connectivity, knowledge and tools, all crucial for their success.

With a network of 12 Entrepreneur Accelerator Hubs around the UK, we offer the UK’s largest fully-funded accelerator network and we’re able to support 1,000 entrepreneurs simultaneously across the country. For more information on how we can help your business, search NatWest Rethinking Business. www.natwest.com

Catax

Catax are experts in specialist areas of tax relief, including Capital Allowances, Research & Development (R&D), Remediation of Contaminated Land and the Patent Box.

R&D and the Patent Box tax relief are especially targeted at businesses that are investing in innovation and pushing the boundaries in their sector. In terms of R&D, this could be in the form of developing new systems, processes, products, materials, devices, or any changes to the way your business works.

We have been helping clients secure tax relief for over 10 years and have identified over £242m in tax benefit for our clients to date. We have a team of over 100 in-house experts which includes Surveyors, Tax Technicians, Accountants, Report Writers and Technical Account Managers.

We are trusted partners with many of the UK’s top accountants, solicitors, the Law Society, ICAEW, IFA and CIMA amongst other industry bodies. So far we’ve helped thousands of clients claim their money back from HMRC.

Contact us today to find out how we could help your business on 0300 203 1903, or enquiries@catax.com.

“Made Smarter helps makers keep their competitive edge, with digital tools that let people make an everyday difference to their business. By 2030 the UK will be the global leader in the creation, adoption and export of advanced digital technologies, shaping how the modern world does business. New technologies are changing the way we live and the way we work. They are transforming the way data is gathered and used. Made Smarter helps to ensure that your business benefits from being at the forefront of digital innovation.”

Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre

Graphene is a remarkable new material that has an amazing array of unique characteristics and properties, that include supertoughness such as the strongest and stiffest material currently known to us, the most electrically and thermally conductive; the most stretchable; most impermeable; and the thinnest material that can be imagined, with the highest surface area.

The Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (GEIC), opened in 2018, specialises in the rapid development and scale-up of graphene and other 2D material applications, essentially ‘bridging the gap’ between the University and industry. Our role is to work in collaboration with business and industry partners to create, test and optimise new concepts for delivery to market, along with the processes required for scaled manufacturing and supply chain integration.

Recognising the desire for organisations of all sizes to engage with the Centre, we are well positioned to help businesses grow and scale. We provide entrepreneurs with full wrap-around care, connectivity, knowledge and tools, all crucial for their success.

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work in collaboration with business and industry partners

“Catax are experts in specialist areas of tax relief, including Capital Allowances, Research & Development (R&D), Remediation of Contaminated Land and the Patent Box.

The Patent Box rewards companies making a profit from their patented inventions, making them eligible for a lower effective corporation tax rate of 10% on the relevant profits. Capital Allowances tax relief offsets the hidden expenditure in your commercial property. Typically, this includes elements such as air conditioning, wiring, heating, lighting and security systems – essentially everything that would remain in the building if you tipped it upside down.

Finally, Remediation of Contaminated Land tax relief is a government incentive designed to help companies bring derelict brownfield sites back into use. This usually involves treating or removing contaminants in land and property to prevent harm to animals, humans and the property itself.

We have been helping clients secure tax relief for over 10 years and have identified over £242m in tax benefit for our clients to date. We have a team of over 100 in-house experts which includes Surveyors, Tax Technicians, Accountants, Report Writers and Technical Account Managers.

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Contact us today to find out how we could help your business on 0300 203 1903, or enquiries@catax.com.”
Manchester Metropolitan University

Manchester Metropolitan University is a great, modern university in a great global city. We have a driving ambition to discover and disseminate knowledge. We deliver outstanding research to a world-leading standard, to drive the economy and improve people’s lives.

We use our in-depth knowledge and ground-breaking research to develop practical solutions to real world problems. We can help you achieve your business objectives through access to leading edge expertise and work with you to shape, scope and deliver a tailor made solution.

PrintCity: an education and innovation facility specialising in 3D printing and digital manufacturing. Academic expertise and an extensive print-suite to help you understand how to incorporate this technology into your products and services.

Innospace: our incubator for start-ups, new enterprises and established businesses wishing to collaborate with the University. Specialist support to grow and develop your business and financial support to access University expertise.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships: an initiative to support businesses to improve their competitiveness, productivity and performance, through placing a high quality graduate to work on a specific project.

The Manchester Fuel Cell Innovation Centre: supports companies to develop new products and services in hydrogen and fuel cell technologies. Providing access to the latest equipment for businesses looking to develop materials and technologies to create green and emission-free energy.

GM Cyber Foundry: A £6m cyber security scheme supporting Greater Manchester SMEs to access academic research expertise, build your cyber resilience and to develop new and innovative cyber security products and services.

Augmented Reality (AR) & Virtual Reality (VR) Hub: linking academia and industry to increase the quality and scope of AR/VR/Immersive Technology research.

Innovation through Collaboration Masterclasses: develop new ideas and concepts and develop these into productive collaborative projects with the University.

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University of Salford

The University of Salford is a truly global 21st century university, rooted in exceptional experience of working with industry for over a hundred years. Industry collaboration is our single strategic priority. This means we develop and nurture outstanding relationships between the University and industry in all aspects of our business, from co-creation of the curriculum and producing job-ready graduates, to research, consultancy and knowledge exchange.

We have had University status for over 50 years and worked with industry as The Royal Technical Institute since 1896. Alongside this, our work with global brands, SMEs and public bodies has put us in the top ten universities in the UK for delivering consultancy.

The University of Salford is the fastest growing university in the North West and the fifth fastest growing in the UK with more than 21,000 students and 2,600 staff. Our portfolio of degree apprenticeships is an ideal way to upskill your workforce and help your business attract, retain and develop talent. We also have a strong and highly engaged global community of over 170,000 alumni around the world.

Our industry-focused, research-informed approach is aligned to the government’s Industrial Strategy and today’s global challenges. We provide our students with real world, industry relevant experiences to better prepare them for employment, providing employers with future-focused graduates who understand the needs of industry. Not only do we have the highest student satisfaction rating compared to all other universities in Greater Manchester (National Student Survey results 2018), we deliver the same great service to our industry partners.

Let us connect you to our world-class facilities, expertise, graduate talent and researchers so you can better achieve your commercial goals and increase productivity. Our strengths lie in health and wellbeing, sport, science, engineering, digital and creative, and business; but our aspirations are endless, and our people deliver the skills and knowledge to add commercial value to your business.

Contact us on 0161 295 7086 or enterprise-support@salford.ac.uk

Local Growth Hub

Building a business isn’t easy, but it should be exciting.

“To scale quickly you need strong foundations in place, which the Local Growth Hub is committed to helping businesses like ours achieve. Since working with the Local Growth Hub we’ve tripled our turnover, have gone from 7 to 35 staff and are working internationally.”

Liz Ashall-Payne, CEO, ORCHA

Find out how we can help grow your business

@localgrowthhub / #SixStoriesSixBoroughs

localgrowthhub.com

venturefestivalnorthwest.com
Dehns

Dehns is a leading European firm of specialist patent and trade mark attorneys, with more than 200 people across seven offices, with an internationally renowned reputation. Top tier ranked by leading Intellectual Property (IP) and legal directories, clients range from large, multinational corporations to small and medium sized businesses, and from universities, spin-outs and start ups to private inventors. With increasing recognition of the importance of IP in securing a competitive edge in a global marketplace and driving the value of growing businesses, our clients see us amongst their key advisors. Many expect us to be a part of their business, understanding their commercial objectives and being proactive in helping them get the most out of IP.

The core of our services remains creating and securing IP rights and dealing pragmatically with others’ rights. However in recent years we’ve been expanding the ways in which we support our clients to include:
• working with clients in mapping and managing their portfolios
• carrying out landscaping exercises in new areas
• providing support in negotiating licences and agreements
• IP audits and valuation
Dehns has filed the most patent applications of all UK patent attorney firms every year for the past four years (2015 – 2018). We have also been in the top three of all European patent attorney firms for filing European Patents (EPs) for the last few years [3rd in 2016, 3rd in 2017 and 3rd in 2018].

www.dehns.com

Bruntwood Works


Flexibility is built into all our workspaces. Meeting rooms. Co-working. Small and large offices, and social spaces. So when businesses grow, we accommodate them. If they take a different tack, we travel ahead. We offer amenity, retail and exclusive memberships to all of our customers – we’re here to support in each and every way. Because we know business. We never stand still. With our growing portfolio across the North and Midlands of 5 million sq ft and counting, we can change and adapt – so businesses can too.

We’re part of the community and the community is part of us. We fit in. Feed off the energy. Connect the right people. Create new networks and make things happen. We’re never afraid to try new things. We face forward. Always. We make sure our workspaces are the key to future success.

Bruntwood Works. Brilliantly.

Contact us on 0161 233 7877 enquiries@bruntwood.co.uk

SPONSORS

Dehns

The core of our services remains creating and securing IP rights

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SPONSORS
Delivering productivity through collaboration

Industry collaboration is central to meeting the challenges we face, as the University of Salford explains.

Industry collaboration is the University’s single strategic priority, aligning with the government’s Industrial Strategy to address the grand challenges we face today and in the future, providing a pipeline of relevant talent and expertise to industry as it evolves. Regional Devolution is investing millions in Greater Manchester – we are the real alternative to London with a global transport hub. Our track record of delivery speaks for itself. Here are just some of the facilities, projects and expertise you can find in our industry collaborations zones:

**ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTS**
This zone encompasses a wider range of disciplines from Archaeology to Zoology, Architecture to Sustainable Cities, AR to VR, Connected and Autonomous Vehicles to Robotics and Automation, and Acoustics to Industry 4.0.

With our Salford Energy House resource, we are the international leader in whole-building performance testing. This terraced house is the only full climate-controlled research facility in the world and is used in world-leading academic and commercial research and product testing for companies such as Saint Gobain, Honeywell, Siemens, Danfoss and the controls manufacturers association BEAMA, as well as smaller tests for innovative products such as Radfan. We are constantly developing and enhancing our facilities so are in the planning stages for Energy House 2 and have recently launched our Smart Meters + Smart Homes Laboratory.

Our interactive THINKlab’s 3D visualisation and software solutions can support your audience engagement and need for innovation and collaboration. Industry 4.0 as an ageing population expect to rapidly prototype solutions, or research new techniques in the finest detail before deployment in specialist industries. The Maker Space on our Peel Park campus, funded by engineering recruitment company Morson, offers testing and production facilities in a collaborative space where you can bring ideas to life using high-tech lasers, cutters, computer-design and 3D printer facilities.

We are also internationally recognised for excellence in Autonomous Systems and Robotics and boast our own connected and autonomous vehicle on campus. This shuttle is part of an exciting partnership with Salford City Council and Transport for Greater Manchester that will set the course for innovation and the future of mobility. Our Centre for Applied Archaeology delivers important services for the construction industry and hosts the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service. It’s not surprising to hear too that we have more Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) members amongst our staff than any other university. We perform award-winning Chernobyl radioactive assessments for humans and wildlife and under the brand Aquapoll the University is using drone technology, high-end sensors and cameras to redefine environmental consultancy and deliver process-based hydromorphology, hydraulic modelling and surveying services to environment agencies, organisations and land-owners both in the UK and internationally.

The Salford Innovation Research Centre has a global reputation in acoustics – our Anechoic Chamber is the quietest room in the world and we’ve been conducting UKAS accredited, ground-breaking, industry-leading research and commercial work in noise, vibration and harshness since 1965. We also deliver degree apprenticeships for many companies including Siemens, Morgan Sindall, HMG Paints, and Bardsley Construction.

**DIGITAL AND CREATIVE**

The digital and creative economy includes a wide range of industries from information technology and data services to media and entertainment. Digital technology jobs are also found widely in traditional industries such as health, sports, finance and marketing. Digital media comprises new forms of delivery and presentation as well as new content; it is increasingly an essential component in communications, and in the representation of data and information used in mission-critical decision making.

New skills are constantly needed to thrive in this arena and we’re on hand to deliver the right training to keep your workforce up to date. We do this by bringing together the best/greatest talent and expertise from the University and emerging technologies and tune it to the industry needs. We support curriculum innovation and the University that is informed by industry to attract inspiring students and provide them with an industry experience that better prepares them for a future career, as well as securing future of growth and innovation for the University.

Our Studio for International Media & Technology (SIMT) in our MediaCityUK campus operates a production unit to integrate emerging creative technology, including AI and cloud-based media workflows. There’s also a Digital Performance Laboratory to stage and measure audience experiences from immersive and interactive, to live esports events on Twitch, to IoT-driven ambient media.

Our portfolio of industry linked projects covers a wider range of industry sectors we’re working with BBC researchers to look at how we consume TV and radio in the home, collaborating on a VR and interactive exhibition with the Science and Industry Museum and providing multi-camera internet livestreaming for Sale Sharks games. We deliver crucial CPD digital transformation training to dozens of corporate leaders and present interactive media installations and performances across the world.

**HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SOCIETY**

Improving the health and wellbeing of society is a central challenge in practical, policy and academic terms. Society faces issues such as an ageing population, a rise in rates of preventable illnesses and resistance to antibiotics amongst others. A key focus in our NHS zone is improving social mobility, employment and living conditions. This includes attention to physical environments, as well as how society functions and businesses operate responsibly.

Our work is structured into three interconnected themes: Co-producing Wellbeing, Delivering Better Health and Social Care and Improving Society. Our state-of-the-art, NHS specification Simulation Suites are one of only a handful in any UK university and provide an environment for student nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to experience real life scenarios for teaching, testing and research. They provide specialist facilities for our partners and the local community to use, and our on-side clinical services include podiatry, sports rehabilitation, running clinics and counselling services. We are proud to have recently been funded by the EPSRC to host a Centre for Doctoral Technology in Prosthetics and Orthotics.

The Ageing and Dementia Hub is our international centre of research, education and knowledge sharing in dementia care. The hub has received international awards for research into neurological disorders that affect people living with dementia. We are using robotics and artificial intelligence in our Living Lab and, in partnership with a social housing provider, in people’s homes to develop and test the use of technologies in this field. We also launched the first ever Centre to support the mental health of higher education students in collaboration with other Greater Manchester universities and are developing a specialist Autism Hub on site.

**SPORT**

Sport is recognised as a major lever of social and economic development in Greater Manchester. Our new campus in Salford and our state-of-the-art MediaCityUK campus are both located minutes from major sporting events and half of which are part of our growing list of partners.

Industry collaboration in our Sport Zone focuses on five interconnected themes:

- Digital technology in sport
- The business of sport
- Smart healthy cities
- Sport, exercise science and movement
- Social impact and provision through sport

The University of Salford is working with its built environment experts to look at the design of public space and highways within its Smart Cities programme. It is also working with the wealth of professional sport on Salford’s doorstep through the Business of Sport, and it is looking at the future of how people consume and participate in sports and experience it through its Sports Digital Futures programme. The University has also developed its own app FanFit, which is being used by Glasgow Rangers and Salford Red Devils.
WINNER

Reaching out

Overall Winner and Product Innovation Winner 2018
Reach and Rescue, Wigan

Innovation isn’t just a matter of increased efficiency and improved productivity, it can also be a matter of life and death, as Reach and Rescue demonstrates.

Reach and Rescue have developed innovative, long-reach, telescopic water rescue poles. These enable emergency services, search and rescue teams and the public to conduct swift rescues by retrieving casualties from safe distances, minimising the danger posed to themselves while also boosting casualty survival chances.

In the UK, the Fire and Rescue Services shoulder the bulk of responsibility when it comes to water rescue, as the best equipped in terms of training and equipment compared to other emergency services.

However, just 20 years ago the established procedures that they used today for conducting safe and effective water rescue simply didn’t exist. The catalyst for sparking an improvement in their water rescue training procedures was the tragic death of Paul Metcalf in 1999, a firefighter from Greater Manchester who entered a lake in a brave attempt to rescue a teenager.

The UK Fire and Rescue Service realised they were missing a vital component in their water rescue procedures they had developed and needed an innovative solution. Their National Operator Guidance (NAG) described a stage in proper water rescue as needing ‘an object to make physical contact with the casualty’, a tool designed specifically for the purpose.

This is when Reach and Rescue recognised a requirement and so its telescopic rescue pole was conceived – the first of its kind designed specifically to extend to casualties in water.

It has developed a comprehensive range of long-reach telescopic rescue poles – up to 17m in length and adaptable with attachments – to allow rescue operatives to avoid putting themselves in extreme danger by entering hazard zones, such as water, height, ice or mud, in order to rescue an individual.

The company was set up in 2010 and now supplies its water rescue equipment to several industries, including the emergency services sector, maritime and commercial fishing, and the military. To date, its long-reach telescopic rescue poles have prevented the deaths of more than 50 people in life-threatening situations, including the lives of professional and volunteer lifesavers in 47 countries worldwide.

Reach and Rescue’s official Water Safety Partnership with leading drowning prevention charity The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS UK) was born out of a mutual strategy to dramatically improve the standards of national water safety. Whereas RLSS UK’s primary focus is on delivering its extensive knowledge of water safety through comprehensive training and education, Reach and Rescue’s contribution to reducing the amount of water-related deaths is through their continuous innovation of effective water rescue equipment. Its equipment is a tool with which the RLSS UK can deliver their vital water safety training and education.

But Reach and Rescue is not resting on its laurels. “Our corporate policy dictates we must continue to work towards innovation,” says Jo Taylor, director of Reach and Rescue. “Regardless of Reach and Rescue’s national and global reach, as a company we’re extremely proud to be in an innovative idea that met an obvious need, but it has been assisted by its location in the North West.

Taylor says: “Regardless of Reach and Rescue’s national and global reach, as a company we’re extremely proud to be based in Wigan in the North West. All of the team are hired locally and represent the cream of the crop in terms of the expertise our town has to offer. Most recently we have attracted an accomplished production manager with 17 years’ experience at global food company Heinz, who oversaw our next phase of expansion including our move into new premises housing production facilities six times the size of our old site. “Our corporate policy dictates we support our local community where we can, be it through using local suppliers for components and tools, or local couriers for transport and prioritising employing from the local talent pool. We believe opportunity is paramount: we support work-place apprenticeships and always aim to give young people a wholesome first career where proper values and principles that can take with them into wider society are instilled in them from the get-go.”

Success is its own reward, but Reach and Rescue also appreciated the recognition of the Venturefest Innovation Showcase awards in 2018. “We are absolutely delighted to have won the overall award and the Product Innovation Category,” says Taylor. “The long reach telescopic rescue pole system has revolutionised the way that firefighters and search and rescue teams carry out lifesaving water rescues. With an unmatched reach of up to 17 metres it can reach a casualty with directional accuracy in under 20 seconds. It has been proven to save lives and we are so proud that this versatile innovation has been recognised.”
WINNER

Building connectivity

Audience Award Winner 2018

The audience at Venturefest North West 2018 picked Telcom as a winner and, judging by the business’s progress since then, they chose well.

Business broadband and communications provider Telcom Group was established in Manchester in 2014 by chief executives Doug Ward and Shaun Gibson.

Telcom’s goal is to build affordable, unlimited bandwidth, full fibre networks in cities across the UK.

In its first year Telcom was appointed as managed services partner for Spinningfields and Old Granada Studios, involving management of both fibre networks and WiFi. It was also named the preferred supplier for both estates.

Later in 2015, Telcom Voice was launched for commercial and residential customers and then Telcom Partner, its reseller platform. It soon signed up a number of IT companies and resellers providers keen to resell its services to their customer base.

Telcom also agreed to support Glasgow’s first tech co-working space, Rookie Oven, by providing free access to one of the fastest connections in the city. It also launched Telcom Unity in the Govan district of the city, to help local businesses access previously unavailable services.

In 2016, Telcom won the New York City Mayor’s Office Call for Innovation, beating more than 100 submissions from around the world to become the first UK-based ISP to be invited to provide a connectivity solution for their tenants. Telcom Voice was launched for commercial and residential customers and then Telcom Partner, its reseller platform. It soon signed up a number of IT companies and resellers providers keen to resell its services to their customer base.

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In 2016, Telcom won the New York City Mayor’s Office Call for Innovation, beating more than 100 submissions from around the world to become the first UK-based ISP to be invited to provide a connectivity solution for their tenants.

That year it achieved the status of a fully fledged ISP and, on the back of success in Manchester and growing requests for service across the North, Telcom launched its second city network with the activation of Leeds Dock.

In December 2016, Telcom Technology launched Node, an innovative product providing in-building connectivity management.

Inspired by Google, Telcom operate a 20% time policy and Node was born when the team took time out to explore the idea and solve a problem they saw in the industry.

It was quickly spun out into its own subsidiary.

Telcom’s Node acts as a building’s nervous system, combining connectivity hub and fibre optic infrastructure to give the best connectivity solution.

Node is the communications pluggable interface. It’s a secure, supplier agnostic telecommunications point of presence for buildings and the vertically integrated hardware and software with fibre optic infrastructure enables landlords to offer a connectivity solution for their tenants.

Node launched in 2017 as a connectivity management service becoming a greater concern for the property world. Node works by pre-connecting every home or office in a development. It enables the occupier to have internet from day one, as well as the freedom to switch by selecting a favourite provider on the Node portal.

Co-Founder Doug Ward (pictured) says: “Every tenant receives a dedicated relationship manager to help you get connected as smoothly as possible. One of our qualified engineers will attend all ISP site visists and meet your IT professionals to understand and implement your connectivity needs.”

Following the Venturefest North West 2018, Node secured a £100,000 loan from NPIF – BFS & MS IF Microfinance, a product managed by GC Business Finance and part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund.

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In December 2016, Telcom Technology launched Node, an innovative product providing in-building connectivity management.

Inspired by Google, Telcom operate a 20% time policy and Node was born when the team took time out to explore the idea and solve a problem they saw in the industry.

It was quickly spun out into its own subsidiary.

Telcom’s Node acts as a building’s nervous system, combining connectivity hub and fibre optic infrastructure to give the best connectivity solution.

Node is the communications pluggable interface. It’s a secure, supplier agnostic telecommunications point of presence for buildings and the vertically integrated hardware and software with fibre optic infrastructure enables landlords to offer a connectivity solution for their tenants.

Node launched in 2017 as a connectivity management service becoming a greater concern for the property world. Node works by pre-connecting every home or office in a development. It enables the occupier to have internet from day one, as well as the freedom to switch by selecting a favourite provider on the Node portal.

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Innovation abounds

Venturefest North West 2018 saw a trio of highly impressive businesses take Innovation Showcase Competition awards in three other categories. Here we take a look at Corporation Pop, Whitham Mills Engineering and Urban Chain.

Service Innovation

Urban Chain, based in Manchester, supplies world-leading products and services by designing, developing and disseminating blockchain technology in different utility services. It redesigns the utility markets, optimises their performance, democratises their structure, and integrates services to reduce the costs for end users.

Focused on the energy sector, its blockchain-based platform links consumers directly to energy generators and facilitates switching to the best deal for consumers, and provides a competitive platform for renewable energy generators to directly sell their energy to consumers.

Its disruptive energy trading platform eChain not only oversees the direct connection of generators and end users, but also enables P2P trading of energy. It reduces unnecessary shared and search costs. This is distributed supply of energy to SMEs and households which helps to reduce costs. This is distributed supply of energy to SMEs and households which helps to reduce costs.

Innovative Established Business

Whitham Mills Engineering specialises in waste management equipment and can design bespoke solutions it has designed, developed and patented what it believes to be arguably the widest range of specialist container tippers anywhere in Europe for key customers such as Tesco, YPO Logistics and Kimberly Clark.

It won the award on the back of an innovative food waste tipping solution that reduces cost and downtime. It uses a state-of-the-art hydraulic tipping system to tip backhauled food waste roll cages into walking floor lorries for transfer to an anaerobic digestion plant.

The Rochdale-based company was established 20 years ago, by two engineers, to be a mill-size baler manufacturer. Now, the award winning business is well established in the North West, having recently moved into a 30,000 sq ft manufacturing facility, and it is installing and servicing equipment nationally.

The company has been granted a £2 million patent after designing an award-winning solution for a multi-billion pound grocer. The solution has now reached sales of nearly £2m and been successfully installed in six leading grocers and is currently been adapted to tip return packages for an international retailer with more than 1,000 stores worldwide. A leading UK grocer first approached Whitham Mills with a question: “How can we empty backhauled food waste from roll cages in the most cost-effective and efficient way?” The Whitham Mills team designed, prototyped and then rolled out their tipping solution across 10 distribution sites nationwide, and it is now the preferred supplier of equipment and maintenance nationwide for the customer’s waste management machinery.

Saving more than £1.2m in the first year post installation, the tipping solution has halved the number of operators required to empty each roll cage, as well as saving more than five minutes of ‘empty time’ per cage.

Abby Mallory, marketing manager, says: “Winning the Innovation Showcase has been great for Whitham Mills. It’s given us strong sales leads in the region and inspired our business to invest further in innovation.”

Digital Innovation

Manchester based Corporation Pop spent four years developing Xploro, a mobile app to address one of the NHS’s key challenges.

The design company’s managing director Dom Raban (pictured, central) was inspired to develop Xploro after his 13-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a rare bone cancer. While the clinical care she received was second to none, the information she received about her illness and treatment was severely lacking and it left her feeling scared, anxious and alone.

More than two million children are admitted to NHS hospitals for elective episodes every year but provision of information to prepare them is poor, even through research shows that patients equipped with prior knowledge about their treatment, experience reduced stress and anxiety, leading to improved clinical outcomes.

Xploro uses 3D augmented reality interactive models, a patent-pending AI chatbot, designed with children in mind, and a series of games based on the human body, 3D hospital environments for children to explore, and experiences, so they know what is going to happen while they’re being treated. All of this is delivered through a chirpy, augmented reality character that the child creates, and names themselves. This character becomes their virtual friend, and leads them through every part of the app to improve understanding and knowledge of health interventions, increasing their health literacy and reducing the stress and anxiety associated with hospitalisation.

In 2018, Xploro gained its first customer: The Christie, one of Europe’s leading cancer centres. It commissioned Corporation Pop to create a brand new module for Xploro which is to be used by children undergoing Proton Beam Therapy. The additional module includes environments modelled on the hospital itself and a 3D experience showing exactly what happens when someone has the pioneering treatment.

After trials at The Christie and Royal Manchester Children’s Hospital, Xploro will be available for wider use when it will include an artificially intelligent chatbot which can answer any questions the child has about going to hospital. Corporation Pop is already in talks with hospitals in the UK, Europe and North America and there are plans to create versions for other illnesses such as diabetes and asthma as well as develop the app for older audiences. By 2020 Xploro will also be available in other languages.

WINNER
I always think of Venturefest as being a sort of flame moment where we first got validation of our ideas and the things we were trying to do.

A catalyst for growth

The Innovation Showcase Competition has established quite a pedigree, with an impressive array of winners going back over five years. Here we profile a few of them and see the progress they’ve made.

2016 WINNER

Nothing But Epic/Padoq

Award-winning Manchester-based Nothing But Epic, recently rebranded as NBE Digital, started trading in January 2015 as a digital agency delivering websites, social media campaigns, design and PPC marketing to SMEs in the North of England.

Padoq is a community-focused network platform launched in 2018, founded by the team behind Nothing But Epic. The platform focuses on delivering an effective solution for organisations to better engage with and manage their communities.

Padoq is an app which creates a social feed with boundaries for groups of friends, those with shared interests, or around brands and causes.

Padoq can be used to arrange friend groups, such as a weekly five-a-side football or a holiday, a shared interest group, people who want to follow or engage with a cause, or for a favourite restaurant or brand.

What happens in a Padoq is seen only by the people in the Padoq and there are several features for users to use within this feed including posting text, images, votes, sharing files, taking attendance and collecting money. It’s also possible to embed Padoqs into existing websites as a replacement for the online forum.

Since winning the Venturefest innovation award, Padoq has been made a separate company and, together with NBE Digital, employs about 25 staff. More than 5,000 people have used the Padoq app and the business has raised more than £1.5m in investment. It has recently moved into the E20 office building, home to many white label app and brand businesses.

2015 WINNER

Formisimo

Formisimo is a form analytics platform. Form analytics is a method of analysing user behaviour in online forms, the end-point in the majority of online processes, from buying a product to searching for a job, to applying for a mortgage. Form analytics measures how website visitors engage with forms. It can consist of many elements. The aim is to find user experience issues that - when fixed - will allow more users to complete the form successfully.

Formisimo gives deep user behaviour insights allowing a business to improve its form, and prioritise changes to get the best return on investment.

Users of Salford-based Formisimo include: Uber, Toyota, Capital One, Just Giving, Travellers and William Hill.

Formisimo co-founder Tom New said: “The company has come on leaps and bounds since our success at Venturefest. We recently launched our new website and app, Nudgr, which will be compatible with Formisimo. Access to capital and professional advice is imperative for any business looking to expand – especially for those at early stages in their development. The exposure that we have had as part of the support package really got our brand out there, and the impact from that has been incredible.”

2014 WINNER

Offer Moments

In 2018 Offer Moments changed its name to Bidooh. Its technology allows advertisers to publish an ad on specific digital billboards within minutes and accurately measure who has viewed each message.

It uses facial analytics to choose the adverts it displays upon its digital billboards – such as selling shorts to young men in a heatwave, and it is looking to dominate the ‘out of home’ advertising industry.

Its ambitious plans are to deploy 5,000 screens in the next 12 months and 20,000 within three years – which, if achieved, Alim believes could put its annual revenues at £50m plus judging by the trials to date.
2019 finalists
Open to SMEs across the North West, the Innovation Showcase Competition offers unrivalled profile-raising opportunities, and the chance for finalists to pitch to an audience of potential investors.

The Innovation Showcase Competition not only celebrates the businesses and innovations that come out of the North West, but also has a very real and potentially game-changing benefits for those involved.

The prestige and increased profile that comes from pitching in front of leading players from across the North West – not to mention the high-level media coverage – has enabled previous finalists to significantly widen their client base, launch products and services and secure new funding.

Now in its sixth year, the contest was open to small and medium-sized businesses from across the region, and attracted more than 120 entrants competing for four category awards: Digital Innovation, Product Innovation, Service Innovation andMost Innovative Established Business. There’s also an Overall Winner, as well as an Audience Winner chosen by Venturefest attendees after the finalists’ pitches at the Manchester Central event.

We have been overwhelmed, not only by the number of entries, but also by their sheer quality, not to mention the enthusiasm, dynamism and originality of the ideas.

Entrants have come from a variety of sectors, from start-ups to ambitious established businesses with big plans for the future. The North West has long been regarded as the cradle of innovation and enterprise and, if the 2019 entries to Venturefest’s Innovation Showcase are anything to go by, that looks like continuing far into the future.

In the following pages we give you pen portraits, first of the 12 finalists and then of the semi-finalists who didn’t quite make the final shortlist.

Congratulations to all.

The North West has long been regarded as the cradle of innovation and enterprise

Al Rehab produces patented devices for patients having hip and knee surgery. Through an app on the patient’s own mobile phone, it encourages and monitors rehabilitation and reports outcomes and deviations from the patient pathway. It optimises care with AI, making exercises fun and encouraging behavioural change through gamification. www.alrehab.com

Alison Handling Services Limited, Preston
Alison Handling claims to be Europe’s largest independent stockist of new plastic storage boxes, plastic trays, plastic skips, plastic totes, plastic pallets, plastic pallet boxes and second-hand plastic boxes. www.alisonhandling.com

Artemis Analytical, Manchester
Artemis Analytical is a start-up company that is developing a quantum-based technology for enhancing the sensitivity of mass spectrometry by more than a factor of 1,000. It is currently using this to develop a table top device for carbon dating. www.artemis-analytical.com

Clever Cogs, Manchester
Clever Cogs Learning aims to completely shake up education for children in schools across the UK and abroad through completely unique immersive mobile learning experiences that are fun, and productive alternative to a school trip. www.clevercogslearning.com

Dicey Tech, Manchester
Dicey Tech is an edtech company which uses 3D-printing to teach secondary school students tech, social skills, and careers insight, as after-school workshops or as a full curriculum for key stages 3-5. Its offering is targeted at city councils and corporate partners, at parents and at schools and trusts, providing bundles of hardware, curriculum resources, and teacher CPD training. www.diceytech.co.uk

Eco-Mist Biotechnics Ltd, Milnthorpe
Eco-Mist Biotechnics is a company which specialises in the development, manufacture and application of eco-friendly infection control solutions. They have developed a range of products that eradicate 99.9999% of pathogens in rooms and vehicles, yet are harmless to humans, animals and the environment. www.eco-mist-biotechnics.com

NGPod Global Ltd, Manchester
NGPod Global is dedicated to providing innovative solutions to the patient safety issues surrounding nasogastric (NG) tube placement. Its NGPod device is being trialled at two NHS hospitals in the North West with soft launch planned towards the end of 2019.

www.ngpodglobal.com

Wattl, Manchester
Wattl aims to become the world’s premier video discovery platform. It blends user generated videos with professional content from broadcasters and brands, with use cases from media to e-commerce.

Wattl uses an algorithm to fade cells that are no longer popular, leaving an empty space for something new.

www.wattl.com

Seven Bro7hers Brewery & Bars, Salford
Seven Bro7hers Brewery, owned by seven brothers of the McCoy family, was set up in 2014. It has gone on to become one of the most popular craft beer breweries in the UK. Its products are bought by thousands of craft beer fans each week at its beer house and other bars across the country.

www.sevenbrothers.com

Piing, Manchester
Piing is aimed at encouraging crowds to play and interact, using their phones to join a big screen arcade game. Hundreds can play at once, using their phones as controllers.

www.rhythm.digital

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Dream Agility, Ramsbottom
Dream Agility is one of only 200 Google Channel (technology) Partners internationally. It is also in the top 5% of Google 55K partners. It has developed Visual AI and Machine Learning to give organisations such as Samsung a 900% increase in return-on-ad-spend, at an 80% reduction in cost per acquisition.

www.dreamagility.com

Neptune Solutions, Oldham
Neptune has designed an innovative, modular, adjustable and environmentally friendly fluid management system directed towards flood management and water retention systems, which also provides cost savings against the traditional concrete based solutions currently utilised throughout the world.

www.neptunesolutions.co.uk

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www.sevenbrothers.com
2019 semi-finalists

### AHE Innovative Hydrogel, Manchester

Amputations due to chronic wounds are increasing due to the failure to detect and treat infection promptly. AHE Innovative Hydrogel provides a solution. Without electronics, its cost-effective "SmartGel" combines detection and treatment at an early stage in the clinical pathway, potentially saving millions of lives and billions of pounds annually.

www.aehinnovativehydrogel.com

### Alternate States, Rochdale

Alternate States, established March 2019, is a Virtual Reality Development Studio which is pioneering the development of VR within the events and architecture industry. Through its VR platform, it aims to reshape how an organisation engages with a client through an interactive, full-body immersive experience through bespoke VR solutions and development.

www.alternatestates.com

### Avalon Airships, Manchester

Avalon Airships is a Manchester based start-up which wants to drive sustainability in aviation through its zero emissions, autonomous, heavy lift, airship drone. This would disrupt industries including freight, search and rescue, police and entertainment. The business is looking for investment that will allow it to develop a scale model of its aircraft as a proof of concept.

www.avalon-airships.com

### Geminus Management Consulting, Preston

Geminus is an Innovation Agency which helps companies grow by utilising the knowledge, experience and creativity of their people. Its R&D Tax Credit service provides quotes at no cost and with no commitment, to help clients save money, time and hassle against the current method.

www.randdtaxclaims.com

### Hair Made Easi, Bury

Hair Made Easi designs and manufactures products that aim to make working with hair extensions easy. It launched in 2017 and has since developed three more products with 'many more' in the pipeline. Its manufacturing is done in the UK, most of which is done in the North West.

www.haimadeeasi.com

### It’s all about the Shoes, Manchester

It’s all about the Shoes has developed a designer shoe that offers a patented mechanism incorporated into the shoe. This allows the wearer to adjust and remove the straps for comfort and design possibilities.

www.itsallaboutshoes.co.uk

### Carocell Bio, Macclesfield

Carocell Bio is developing medicines to more safely treat serious inflammatory diseases, such as atopic dermatitis, inflammatory bowel disease and burns.

www.carocellbio.com

### Distributed Management Systems, Blackburn

Distributed Management Systems Ltd (DMS) has invented and developed CASQUE, a radical approach to head assurance. All current authentication products are vulnerable because they each rely on a fixed secret whereas CASQUE does not, so there is nothing for an insider to disclose, or for a hacker to target.

www.casque.com

### Jobskilla, Oldham

Jobskilla is an online service designed to streamline specialist intervention for the pre-employment projects. Founded in 2008, Jobskilla is a Virtual Reality Development Studio which is pioneering the development of VR within the events and architecture industry. Through its VR platform, it aims to reshape how an organisation engages with a client through an interactive, full-body immersive experience through bespoke VR solutions and development.

www.jobskilla.co.uk

### Kindsuits t/a ‘Kidunk Clothing’, Manchester

Kindsuits is a brand of children’s playwear. It’s a patented product, designed to make life easier for children with special educational needs and for their parents, and for children with impairments. It takes its name from the Japanese art of kintsugi, where broken pottery is mended with gold.

www.kidsunk.co.uk

### Kindersuits Clothing, Manchester

Kintsugi Clothing is an inclusive clothing brand which uses suggestions from across the disabled community to make sure its apparel is accessible to women with physical impairments. It takes its name from the Japanese art of kintsugi, where broken pottery is mended with gold.

www.kintsugiclothing.com

### Equitus Engineering, Manchester

Equitus Engineering Ltd is an SME mechanical engineering and innovations company. Its three areas of service are mechanical engineering solutions, designing and engineering led product development, and engineering driven innovation. It says that a people-centric approach lies at the core of what it does.

www.equitusengineering.com

### Libralato, Manchester

Libralato is an innovation specialist in low cost, low carbon, low emission vehicle technologies, validated through European Green Car’s Initiative and Innovate UK projects. Founded in 2008, Libralato aim is to demonstrate how to de-carbonise the road transport’s addiction to oil without compromising to the customer.

www.libralato.co.uk

### Lucentia Design, Oldham

Lucentia Design specialises in creating original site-specific design for interiors centred on well-being and sustainability. From transparencies for interiors centred on well-being and sustainability. From transparencies for interiors centred on well-being and sustainability. From transparencies for interiors centred on well-being and sustainability.

www.lucentia-design.com

### Finstant, Manchester

Finstant is a cash flow forecasting website that allows entrepreneurs to build a forecast in under 30 minutes. Its method turns numbers into words, allowing the user to create an accurate forecast they can trust without any prior financial knowledge.

www.finstant.co.uk

### Flock, Manchester

Flock’s vision is to help people find their calling at work. Flock aims to accelerate companies’ growth by hiring the best-fit candidates and by uncovering what motivates them, using a 10-minute online assessment to leverage and maximise their potential to the hiring team.

www.yourflock.co.uk

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www.kidsunk.co.uk

### Mindful Store, Manchester

Mindful Store is a modern retail space that allows growing sustainable brands to enter physical retail with minimal effort. Brands rent space, gain data-driven insights on their product performance and receive marketing support - all on a fixed monthly subscription base that allows them to keep 100% of their sales revenue.

www.mindfulstore.co.uk

The Innovation Showcase Competition has attracted many companies, which, while not making it to the final selection, are still amazing businesses. The judges have no doubt that they will be making their mark in future years.
Noob Guides, Manchester
Noob Guides provides educational solutions for parents, teachers, students and the general public to help the non-gainer start their path to being one. Through e-learning and engaging lessons it aims to help those who want to engage with a video game and turn them into a champion.
www.noobguides.net

Paus TV, Manchester
Paus TV is a video streaming service to enable short-form video content creators to connect with global audiences. It permits selective content creators to upload their videos for viewing by audiences, who will reward those content creators via micro-payments on a ‘pay what you want, when you want’ basis. Paus takes a 10% commission on every micro-payment.
www.paus.tv

Recognito Ai Ltd, Manchester
Recognito Ai provides intelligent structured data extraction from PDFs and other unstructured documents. It says it is more than a “PDF-to-Excel” converter and that a combination of deep structure analysis and natural language processing enables it to extract meaningful data accurately from unstructured formats.
www.deepcognito.com

Social Republic Digital, Manchester
Social Republic Digital was set up in Manchester in 2006 and now works worldwide with ambitious brands and brands with ambition to become famous. It has a team of more than 400 global social media experts providing strategy, account management and campaigns.
www.social-republic.co.uk

Sunset International, Manchester
Sunset International launched Crave in July in the UK; its first naturally flavoured and sweetened, non-alcoholic, energy, vitamin and amino acid drink. It is aimed at helping health-conscious clubbers, festival-goers and DJ’s stay clean, sharp and hydrated.
www.sunsetinternational.co.uk

The Eco Heroes, Preston
The Eco Heroes aims to inspire a green generation to take better care of the environment and world. Through digital and traditional learning resources, The Eco Heroes helps primary school children to learn about climate change and the actions they can take to be Eco Heroes and save the world.
www.theecoheroes.com

Redmoor Health, Preston
Redmoor Health is a team of digital health experts specialising in the practical application of technology across health and social care. They have experience of embedding technology on the front line, supporting staff and empowering patients to manage their health.
www.redmoorhealth.co.uk

RevolutionEyes, Manchester
HeyCane allows visually impaired cane users to become organised, to be in control, and have their level of confidence elevated. This is achieved by transforming the cane into a clever cane by attaching HeyCane to the top.
www.revolutioneyesltd.co.uk

The Nutcase Label, Bootle
The company has two products. One is “Nutcase Ginz”, which are personally blended and are in logo driven bottles. The second is a holographic luggage system “Nut4travel”, with ID taken from passport numbers, with personally created labels and a fitting holder integrated with three types of over-bags, being produced in China.

Shum Technologies, Manchester
Shum Technologies enables teams to flag and fix project risks efficiently. By combining real-time project delivery tools with AI-assisted people management, Shum’s project and resource planning software assists businesses looking to reduce delays, eliminate unplanned costs and increase customer satisfaction.
www.shumio

SACO Trading, Salford
SACO Trading specialises in importing 100% natural and highly nutritious ingredients from Africa. A family business founded in 2016, it works directly with cooperatives of women producers.
www.sacotradingltd.com

The Pentone Family, Manchester
The business, founded in 2018, sells flavoured gins. It says its vision is to become the world’s number one innovative alcoholic beverages company and its mission is to bring the world’s most innovative beverages to consumers all over the globe.
www.pentonefamily.com

Sophron, Liverpool
Sophron delivers bespoke corporate wellness packages based on the biopsychosocial model for health. The packages are designed to incentivise people to live more healthy, balanced lifestyles. One product, Life-Life, is a premium discount card and digital platform. It is exclusive to the Liverpool City Region but it is planned to expand into other major UK cities.
www.sophronuk.com

Tipsy Tea, Manchester
Tipsy Tea is a range of tea-based liqueurs in a range of flavours: Comfortable Ginger Toddy, Long Island Spiced Tea, and Mo-Tea-To, all of which can be served hot or cold. It has international sales.
www.tipsytea.co.uk

Stylebook Directory, Manchester
Stylebook is a website for fashionists to showcase their work using photos of the styles they create, allowing the public to search for their desired style in their own area. It is planned for Stylebook to also have a beauty and tattoo directory, eventually worldwide. The website is currently being built.
www.stylebookdirectory.com

Vimzee, Manchester
Vimzee provides visual intelligence based AI models for solving problems via its vitality platform. Its models will be initially deployed on insurance apps, and products predicting lifestyle illnesses such as obesity and stress. It is targeting platform expansion to incorporate visual intelligence into retail, fashion in 2020.
www.vimzee.co.uk

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Alison Handling Services

Lancashire-based Alison Handling reached the finals of the 2019 Innovation Showcase Competition with the design, creation and sale of its innovative A-link Dolly handling and storage solution.

Launched in 1988, Alison Handling is the UK’s largest independent stockist of new and used recyclable plastic storage boxes, trays, pallets and pallet boxes, with 16 employees and an annual turnover of £5.2m in 2018. The company works with some of the UK’s largest and prides itself on its reputation for getting the right product, at the right price, at the right time – promptly delivered from our extensive warehouses in Kirkham, near Preston – coupled with an emphasis on customer service.

They are presenting the brand new A-Link Dolly, a storage and transportation system, which they say will cut handling times between warehouse and store by approximately 46%.

In addition to its flexibility in terms of what can be placed on the Dolly, it is also adaptable in how it can be used. It has a feature where it can be locked on all four sides with no moving parts. This means Dollies can be put together in either a portrait or landscape formation, giving the opportunity to create a dolly train or a customised formation. This means they can connect the Dollies to make the most suitable and efficient formation for their facility and transport much larger amounts of product from the warehouse to the shelf in one go. Other features include a removable handle allowing the Dolly to be pushed in either direction. The handle can also be easily removed when stacked with products, enabling further space saving opportunities during transportation or when stored in the warehouse. The recesses in the base of the A-Link Dolly enables a label and RFID tags to be applied, and a central cavity within the dolly is provided to allow easier access and cleaning. The product is also manufactured from high density polyethylene to meet hygiene criteria for food handling, while the base is fully recyclable and compact for easy storage.

Alison Dearden, Alison Handling director (pictured) said: “This has been a rigorous process already and we are delighted to be recognised by Venturefest and to be given the opportunity to take centre stage to showcase our Dolly solution.”

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In 2019, the number of patients suffering from hip OA in the UK, 9.6 million in the EU, and 16 million in the US. These are associated with injuries or arthritis of the hips and knees. Patients with osteoarthritis, post knee replacement, have a need to address this problem.

Alison Handling’s patented technology monitors in real-time the exercises done by patients and employs advanced Artificial Intelligence algorithms to optimise the therapy for individuals. It uses specially designed gymnastic techniques to encourage engagement with the protocols.

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Artemis Analytical

Artemis Analytical is a Manchester based start-up company that provides environmental analysis services using next generation quantum technology.

Research at the CERN accelerator laboratory has led to the development of a new method for the detection of isotopes which has unparalleled sensitivity and specificity. Prof. Kieran Flanagan, founder director, says: “Our new analysis method has several technical advantages over the current industry leading techniques. Most significantly our novel technology is far less prone to interference from other contaminating species, the equipment we use is much smaller and cheaper to produce and it critically the high efficiency of our process allows for a high throughput. We see an enormous opportunity for the commercialisation of our technology and have identified several core markets.” Artemis’ key market is in low level nuclear waste characterisation. This sector uses a variety of technique including inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (ICP-MS), which offers high sensitivity and rapid sample analysis. However, for key radiometric samples such as 85Sr this method is rendered ineffective due to the presence of intense – by a factor of more than a million – contamination to the presence of intense – by a factor of more than a million – contamination. Our new analysis method has several technical advantages over the current industry leading techniques. He says: “Our new analysis method has several technical advantages over the current industry leading techniques. It provides financial consultancy support from Pomegranate Consulting which included business development. UMIP provided further market research support and IP advice. UMIP also gave support in the form of an entrepreneur in transit and regular aftercare meetings with other companies and training events. This preparation contributed to the successful application to the STFC CERN Business Incubation Centre. The programme has included investment readiness and further business development from Ashby House. This programme has further developed Artemis Analytical and strengthened its business strategy. The company senior leadership team is made up of Prof Flanagan, scientific director Dr Giles Edwards and chief financial officer Dr Chris Yates. Prof Flanagan has spent the last 18 years developing the CRIS methodology. This started as a PhD project and has continued through sustained funding from the STFC and ERC. He believes this depth of experience in the capability of the technology will be essential for the commercialisation stage of the project. Dr Yates has 20 years of experience within the investment banking sector and provides financial management of the company. He brings not only financial expertise but extensive management knowhow, having run teams of more than 150 individuals across multiple international sites. Dr Edwards completed his Chemistry PhD in 2017, where he developed novel laser techniques for mass spectrometry. He has extensive expert knowledge on a variety of mass spectrometry methodologies and commercial products and has worked with instrument developers and supported field service engineers globally. Prof Flanagan says: “Together we have created a dedicated and experienced team who are fully committed to the successful commercialisation of the CRIS technology. This team fully engaged with the preparation of the business in readiness to run a sample analysis service. The business is currently preparing to enter for ISO 9001 certification. We plan to enter the market in the phased approach, introducing new product lines to key customers.”

In the words of chief executive James Lomax: “We bring innovative learning experiences such as learning escape rooms and a full size roll play street directly into schools to give children and teachers the real wow factor.”

He adds: “After two years of research within the education sector I realised that there was a huge problem for teachers planning productive and memorable school trips due to logistics, cost and limited choice. We also found a lot of the services out there were very similar and there was very little innovation in this area for over ten years.”

“Every child has a happy memory from school and at some point has a learning breakthrough that inspires them and stays with them for life. My goal was to create this for children all over the UK and also work alongside teachers, so once children have enjoyed one of our experiences they are more engaged and receptive to learning this next experience. After the amazing feedback we have received and numerous learning breakthroughs we have witnessed first-hand, we are proud to say we are making this a reality.”

Clever Cogs has merged National Curriculum learning with escape rooms, fast-paced team building, learning through play and problem solving challenges. It provides scenery, costumes, equipment and know how from a learning experience. Children also take part in mini break-out workshops throughout the day. These are called Create, Explore and Inspire. Every learning experience includes post event lesson plans to maintain the momentum. It also provides staff wellbeing experiences in schools or other chosen venues and packages include team-building sessions in a learning escape room, improving team wellbeing and morale content. These can be end of day sessions or after a children’s session. In three years the brand has gone from being a new concept on the drawing board to become full trading business that has just completed its second year of trading. “The business now has two full time members of staff and one part time. It also works with a team of education advisors and brand ambassadors and business partners. The forecast turnover for the 12 months to September 2020 is £120,000. Already, Clever Cogs has built a large customer base of more than 1,700 teachers and it has won the NatWest Entrepreneurial Spark #GoDo award before it even started trading. Last year, James Lomax won the 2018 UKFast Young Entrepreneur of the year award. He adds: “We have partnered up and collaborated with over 25 education businesses to share our values to keep innovating and shaking up education and we have a strong brand with a great reputation across the UK teaching community.”

Clever Cogs is now looking for investment to grow its team to support the high customer demand and to continue to innovate by improving its logistics and learning apparatus. It is currently in talks with schools and companies across Europe and the UAE to take the Clever Cogs Learning brand overseas within the next 18 months. It also aims to increase its range of learning experiences from six to 10 within the next 12 months. It is planning to launch its first Teacher and Child Wellbeing event in Feb 2020 for more than 150 teachers and education professionals.

“We are a company that believes in always innovating and pushing ourselves in every area of the business. Venturefest is a great opportunity to showcase how far our Learning Experiences have come and we are really looking forward to taking part in Venturefest 2019,” says Lomax. “Education is never finished, so we always need to keep creating new ways to engage and inspire children. This is why we will never stop innovating. We have built our entire business model around continuous innovation.”

Clever Cogs is an education business that offers UK nurseries and primary schools a fun, productive and engaging alternative to a school trip.

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Dicey Tech

Dicey Tech was launched in early 2017, after the founders Alex Alexandrescu and Sofiane Bebert graduated from the University of Manchester.

Alex Alexandrescu and Sofiane Bebert saw that industry was evolving more rapidly than education and that the focus of innovation was in industry where it was developing exponentially.

“By the time new information makes its way into school textbooks, that info will be obsolete,” says Alexandrescu. “We already see the disruptive effect of tech on the labour market, shifting from low to high skill, and from routine to agile roles. Businesses are aware of this and already see the availability of talent as their number one threat in the next 12 months. “We are bridging that gap by teaching students skills for the future in an engaging way, while getting them inspired and involved in their career trajectory. We create engaging learning experiences that leverage the creative freedom of 3D printing and open-source electronics to help students build both tech and enterprise skills.”

Dicey Tech innovates education in three main areas:

Tools: Co-created 3D printers and electronics;
Content: With projects inspired and co-designed with industry professionals across automotive, aerospace, rail, healthcare, manufacturing, and more;
Method: Using a constructivist approach, co-designed learning, whereby students start by learning first principles, then investigate, and finally apply creativity to solve problems and challenges.

“The idea came about from my experience,” says Alexandrescu. “After graduating with an MSc in business analysis and strategy, I wanted to learn how to code and get more into tech. I tried all sorts of online platforms but nothing really kept me engaged — until I bought a 3D printer. Knowing that I can make anything made me really curious and I really wanted to make a drone, so I learned how to design and code in about a month to make my drone. And this made me want to build a lot more things, because it was so engaging — that’s when we realised that this is how young students should learn about tech in school.”

Alexandrescu and Bebert’s first year was largely spent learning the ropes and developing their own, open-source, 3D printer.

“In our second year, we focused on delivering workshops with secondary school students to get feedback and gauge whether or not they actually learn better about tech and are more engaged when we add a physical, kinesthetic component to learning,” says Alexandrescu.

“We have refined our value proposition, focused our efforts, and we’ve made incredible progress since.

“In May we were selected for the PwC Scale NW programme — which was an incredible opportunity to meet executives and build relationships in industries we dream to expand into — and now we have a number of big projects on the horizon with the rail and manufacturing industries, and we are looking to raise a seed round to grow our team.”

Dicey Tech now has three full time employees and a network of eight teachers, engineers, and university students working on a part-time/project basis.

“In the first year the business had a turnover of £20,000 and this year is on track for £70,000. It has worked with more than 500 students across 17 workshops, has forged close relationships with eight schools, seven companies and a multi academy trust.

Clients include: Manchester City Council; Cisco, UKFast, Autodesk, MakeUK; Transport for Greater Manchester; Manchester Science Partnerships; Star Academies; Loreto College; and Manchester Academy.

And this has been achieved without any marketing spend or sales focus. Alexandrescu explains: “We’ve been - and still are to an extent - focused on product development.”

Dicey Tech delivers STEAM workshops and started creating curricula that links to specifications for design, engineering, D&T, computing, and science subjects. It also delivers CPD training for teachers.

“Currently, we deliver these workshops in person, but we are looking to migrate everything onto our e-learning platform to scale up delivery and build partner organisations that can deliver workshops across the country,” says Alexandrescu.

“Our focus is primarily on secondary schools, but we are looking to expand into adult learning.”

“Or, as it’s now been renamed due to the surge in interest, the Digital Taster,” says CEO Elizabeth Clark (picture right).

Dicey Tech started as a family business, with a surprise addition to the family, baby Ted, now six, Lucy Clark, a director, agreed to delay going to university, and instead help look after the baby and work with her mother. They were later joined by Elizabeth’s husband Glyn Padowitch, who was gaming director at Sily Bet, and finally Calum Clark, who had studied computer science.

The business currently has 12 members of staff, from France, the Congo, Cambridge and Ramsbottom.

“The business has come a long way since I was first optimising feeds in online advertising at 17, until I was faced with the decision about how to structure a main table at the age of 14. We have some of the most advanced proprietary tech in the world, all invented in-house, and with jobs that didn’t even exist when I started in the business,” says Lucy.

Currently, Dicey Tech has customers’ ads serving in more than 20 countries, its platform has been written in any language. This, says Glyn Padowitch, “is the equivalent of Microsoft’s Office Suite. Everything a retailer could want to do with advertising online and driving footfall to stores.”

Using the power of Machine Learning, it aims to reduce the customer’s workload and automate the tasks involved in building and growing sales in online advertising. It was designed to benefit an army of people working on enterprise’s account.

According to Dream Agility, clients such as Samsung, Chemist Warehouse (the third largest retailer in Australia), Music Magpie and boutique brands such as Cambridge Satchel, have all benefited from triple digit uplift by using the service. MLoD, or Machine Learning on Demand, is the latest addition to the family. “Think of it as sex without the relationship,” explains Elizabeth. “We’re breaking the traditional model of lengthy contacts, and letting clients decide to have service for as long or as short as they want.”

The enterprise version of MLoD was developed when one customer asked: “what if I want a bit more of a kiss and a cuddle?”

Now the customer can control all aspects of stripping the waste from the account. Unlike bid tech, which works on conversions (typically only 3% of the account), MLoD works on zero conversions (typically 10%-30% of the account). The challenge with Google is that the sales waste that cannot be scaled, MLoD continually trims the waste so the return on Ad Spend is maximised, beyond what bid tech alone can do.

The other addition to the Dream Agility portfolio is the Visual AI for the Pre-PIM market. It takes a human 25 minutes to create the product data to go into a PIM (product information management) system; meaning 25 months for just 10,000 products. Dream Agility says this can now be done in seconds per product, consistently, accurately and with a more granular level of detail.

Dream Agility is one of 30 businesses to sign up to the Global Scale Up programme, established by The Growth Company, to give SMEs access to a global market entry network alongside a combination of tailored coaching, international growth sprints and regular bootcamps.

Dream Agility is working with manufacturers and distributors into international waters, being resident in accelerators in Korea, Atlanta and Paris, the Dream Agility team have also helped Dream Agility achieve formal footing established internationally. It’s currently working with leading French retail, with Galeries Lafayette on their new Machine Learning on Demand service MLoD and Showroom Prive – developing the visual AI product DAVY into a pre-PIM service. Dream Agility has also been chosen to join Tech Nation’s first Applied AI growth programme, with a cohort of 20 highly contested places.

“We’re delighted that our innovations continue to be well received and look forward to the Ventures final where we can show everyone our new Visual AI,” says Elizabeth.
Eco-Mist Biotechnics

Cumbria-based Eco-Mist Biotechnics specialises in the development, manufacture and application of decontamination solutions.

Eco-Mist Biotechnics has researched and developed a range of exclusive healthcare and hygiene products that are specifically aimed at the eradication of some of the most dangerous known pathogens. These are directed against surface and airborne pathogens within the healthcare, food and drink, hotel & leisure, pharmaceutical, transport and retail sectors. They are designed to be used anywhere that humans and animals interact, leading to cross contamination. Director Graham Mylchreest explains: “The challenge has always been to achieve the best possible ‘kill rate’ with the minimum effect to humans, animals and the environment. And we were well aware that some of the nastiest bacteria, viruses, fungi and spores are often found in the most inaccessible places, like ducts, air-conditioning systems and water tanks. So, we knew we also needed a delivery system that would enable us to reach those areas that traditional cleaning cannot reach.”

To meet this challenge, Eco-Mist has developed the BioGard and AmbuGard dry misting systems. They have been made specifically so that customers can safely be installed and set up in almost any environment and operated by the end user or employees of the organisation with no need for specialist training or protective clothing.

The Eco-Mist Biotechnics Biocide range is bactericidal, mycobactericidal, virucidal, fungicidal and sporicidal.

It is also skin pH neutral, is alcohol and bleach free, non-flammable, non-irritant and has no COSHH implications. Mylchreest says: “The system that has been developed incorporates a non-toxic biocide disinfectant, which is a synthesised version of the chemical humans produce in their own bodies to fight infection, delivered as an ultra small particle dry mist to kill pathogens in the air and on any surface which comes into contact with the mist in rooms and vehicles. “The products have been developed by our MD, who is a chemist, to eradicate dangerous pathogens in rooms and vehicles, thereby reducing infection rates and just as importantly, reducing the need for antibiotics, which are losing their effectiveness through over prescribing and antibiotic resistance of microorganisms.”

Customers can choose to buy the cleaning products directly for their own use on a daily basis to keep infection contaminate under control or use Eco-Mist’s dedicated team to treat the contaminated areas if they encounter a problem. They can also arrange a maintenance schedule and have at risk areas treated on a regular cycle. Also, Eco-Mist’s technicians can carry out all testing and follow up treatment for the customer or train their staff to carry out the work themselves.

Eco-Mist’s team consists of three directors, a part-time account administrator and subcontracted support for order processing from another company owned by the managing director.

Eco-Mist currently has a trial underway with the NHS. It also supplies new build ambulance manufacturers in Portugal, Scandinavia, Germany and the Middle East. It has secured an order for 1,000 ambulance systems over five years with a Portuguese ambulance manufacturer. “We want to capture a large share of the ambulance manufacturing market – over 500,000 ambulances are predicted to be manufactured annually by 2025 – as well as grow our business through a distributor network in the UK and worldwide,” says Mylchreest. “We currently have three UK distributors with plans for 50 plus and five international distributors with the scope to appoint hundreds.”

He adds: “As we started to grow our business, we were introduced to Venturefest by our innovation adviser, who suggested we enter the competition. We were absolutely delighted to hear that others felt the same way we do and understood the importance of our work. We were quite taken aback when we qualified for the semi-finals and even more so when we found out we had made the final itself.”

“Being in the final of Venturefest not only gives us a sense of pride in our progress so far, it also offers validation that our systems, chemicals and ethos are recognised as important and commercially viable by our peers. Indeed, the fact that we have been shortlisted to pitch to genuine angel investors, offers us the chance of a fast track to scale up our business and bring our infection control solutions to genuine people in more sectors.”

Apart from the increased brand awareness that Venturefest brings, we hope to partner with an investor who can open doors for us in our key markets of healthcare and food production: two crucial areas where infection control is vital and has the maximum impact on human health. Without a platform like Venturefest, it is extremely difficult for SMEs to grow quickly and enjoy the support, guidance and investment from entrepreneurs who have the experience of achieving success themselves.”

Michael Mulvihill identified a significant gap in the market, came up with a modular building system that not only can be used for a number of different applications, but which reduces the way in which land and water can be retained and controlled on an industrial scale.

Mulvihill had spent the majority of his working life managing civil and ground works for major construction projects. His inspiration for the Neptune system came from one particular contract that he worked on the banks of the River Humber. There, extremely large and cumbersome sheet pile sections had to be lifted into place by a crane which was barged down the river to the site. He witnessed the sheet piles being blown by the wind as they were hoisted into place. He worried about the danger to which this exposed himself and his fellow employees. The following day, he arrived on site to find the crane had been blown into the river, and he saw the crane being hauled tipped into the river. That same evening late in 2013, he went home and began to sketch out the innovative benefits and key structural elements of the Neptune system.”

Chief executive, Marshall Reid, says: “Having done extensive research, we understand that this is the only test site of its kind in Europe capable of showing the innovative benefits and key structural elements of the Neptune system,” says chief executive, Marshall Reid. Live simulation tests were performed more than 150 times and during these tests it was realised that the system had far greater capabilities than originally anticipated. The tests have been carried out in accordance with British and eurocode standards and guidelines, and have many more ideas to use the Neptune systems, so by the time we hit the Venturefest finals, we will only have a few weeks remaining. The applications identified for the Neptune system range from holding tanks to flood defence systems, all of which can be temporary or permanent modular, future proofed structures.

Neptune is targeting a potentially huge market, which includes: water sector retaining walls; coastal and inland flood defence; water tanks; and landslide protection barriers.

Now, the six-strong Neptune team plans to complete the lab process and launch Neptune into a fully functioning trading company with a global strategy emphasising environmental effectiveness and protecting communities.”

And the business has already achieved one milestone by winning through to the Innovation Showcase final. Reid says: “Venturefest really can open up huge possibilities for new and growing British businesses. We are very excited to be a finalist in Venturefest. The Neptune system reduces the currently high carbon footprint by using significantly less concrete and sheet metal. One of the member of the panel suggested that this could be a ‘real game changer’ in flood defence construction.”
We are working extremely hard on scaling up our manufacturing capabilities.

NGPod Global

NGPod Global is a medical device development company dedicated to providing innovative solutions to the patient safety issues surrounding nasogastric tube placement.

A nasogastric (NG) tube is a narrow-bore tube passed into the stomach via the nose or mouth for short or medium term nutritional support. Using patented technology, Sci-Tech Darwinry based NGPod’s goal is to an international leader in the enteral feeding market by providing a bedside, safer, more accurate NG tube diagnostic device used to confirm the correct placement of a nasogastric feeding tube.

The NGPod team already has a successful track record in the medical device industry, having sold its last business in September 2017 to a large US multinational corporation.

NGPod Global is spun out of the group formed around the lightbulb moment he had in 2015 when the daughter of one of the inventors was in hospital with a misplaced feeding tube.

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NGPod believe the potential market for its product globally is around $2.5 billion with an annual growth rate of 6-8%.

NGPod has already worked with a number of NHS trust in the North West such as Royal Preston Hospital, Liverpool University Hospital and Liverpool Royal Hospital.

Thorpe says: “NHS Improvement has issued multiple patient safety alerts around nasogastric tube placement, which could offer huge cost saving potential for the NHS.”

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Thorpe adds: “It is a pleasure to reach the final especially when the level of competition this year was so high. When people outside of our industry recognise that what we are trying to accomplish is important it really validates the team’s hard work.”

Rhythm Digital

Pjing is a product developed by Rhythm Digital, a business set up by interactive designers Ed Baldry and Adam Palmer. Baldry says: “Our work helps people play, create, interact, have fun and maybe even learn something,” says Ed Baldry, creative director and co-owner of Rhythm Digital.

Rhythm loves to make digital things happen in real physical spaces. Every project involves experimentation, often using smartphones, touchscreen, big screens, cameras and motion controllers, all hooked up in new and interesting ways.

“Unlike the traditional approach to building digital projects, Rhythm designs and prototypes code simultaneously. This technique is essential to developing the natural interaction that is a signature of the digital experiences Rhythm creates.”

Since 2012, their instruction-free natural interaction has been used by brands such as Moët, Intel, the V&A, Deutsche Bank and Manchester City.

Rhythm now employs four people and over the last two years 5,006 Ping games have been played by 25,810 players around the world.

Rhythm expects this to grow.

Retail, venues and sporting arenas are all looking for new ways to engage audiences, increase dwell time, and improve the event experience,” says Baldry. “Brands are also looking for new engaging ways to interact with consumers.

Pjing is a totally new idea for crowd interaction. Everyone gets their phone out and joins a game happening on the big screen. Using their phones as controllers, the crowd join in the fun instantly – there’s no app to download. Pjing creates an incredible atmosphere at the event – the whole room joins in playing, shouting and creating a unique shared experience. Pjing takes the brand off the big screen and puts it into the hands of consumers.”

The market includes: corporate events, meetings; launches; conferences; fundraisers; exhibitions and trade shows; shopping centres; stadium sized games; theme park; and any event with a big screen.

So far, customers include: Deutsche Bank; Intel; HSBC; Fujitsu; F1; Astra Zeneca; Carphone Warehouse; Olympus; Puma; Carphone Warehouse; Intu, and Superdry.

In shopping centre trails, nearly 1,000 shoppers have joined games in a two hour session and at Revo, a large retail industry event, more than 800 delegates were playing for over two hours. Rhythm has won three Big Chip awards for Ping.

Baldry says: “All of our success has been achieved without a sales and marketing team. We are seeking investment to build that team and start selling Ping to more markets, including sports and advertising and to sell more internationally. Our dream is to have Ping games being played regularly at some of the gigantic stadiums in the USA and around the world.”

He adds: “We’re really excited to be doing this pitch at the Venturefest final, it’s the exposure we need as we start our search for investment.”

And Jay Roche, Ping commercial director says: “The Venturefest journey so far has been amazing. It’s helped us develop and shape our pitch perfectly through each stage to the final.”
Seven Bro7hers

Salford brewery Seven Bro7hers has teamed up with Kellogg’s to turn the cereal giant’s ‘less-than-perfect’ Rice Krispies and Coco Pops into beer.

Along with a ‘Throw Away IPA’ – made from process leftovers of Kellogg’s Corn Flakes – Seven Bro7hers Brewery has created a cocoa-based ‘Sling it Out Stout’ and a snap, crackle and pop ‘Castoff Pale Ale’.

The beers are made from discarded grains created in the cooking process at Kellogg’s Manchester factory. The new craft beers are made from rice-based flakes that have failed quality control due to being overcooked, uncoated or based flakes that have failed quality control at Kellogg’s Manchester factory. The beers are made from discarded grains created in the cooking process at Kellogg’s Manchester factory.

The Limited edition Kellogg’s Corn Flakes based beer ‘Throw Away IPA’ will also be available as part of the trio.

The three beer collection is for sale on tap across Manchester in Seven Bro7hers Brewery hang outs as well as stockists of the brewer.

Kellogg’s, which moved its UK headquarters to MediaCityUK in January 2018, neighbours the Salford-born brewers.

The McVoy brothers: Guy, 57, Keith, 50, Luke, 48, Daniel, 44, Nathan, 42, K8, 37, and Greg, 35, started their brewery in 2014 – inspired by their dad’s home-brewing efforts in their cellar over the years.

Keith McAvoy, said: “Working with Kellogg’s on the production of our first sustainability-conscious beer ‘Throw Away IPA’ was amazing.

“To carry on with this partnership and create two new exciting craft beers is even better. We are extremely proud to be working with Kellogg’s and being part of the fight against food waste.”

Seven Bro7hers was founded in 2014 and since then has opened its first

“Kellogg’s is always looking for innovative ways to use surplus food. The collaboration with Seven Bro7hers is a fun way to repurpose non-packaged, less-than-perfect cereal. This activity is part of our new ‘Better Days’ commitments which aim to reduce our impact on the planet.”

The Sling It Out Stout brew – which was perfected over five days in the brothers Salford brewery – uses 80kg of Kellogg’s Coco Pops to replace malted barley, during the mash process and the cereal creates the chocolate flavour.

A similar process is used for the ‘Cast off Pale Ale’, using 80kg of Kellogg’s Rice Krispies to replace malted barley with the cereal creating sweet notes in the beer.

The partnership has now also expanded to include the University of Salford, which is working alongside the brewery to investigate more ways in which its brewing process can become more sustainable.

In March 2018, the McVoy sisters decided to get in on the act by starting their own distillery. Four Sis4ers Gin. Now the 11 siblings believe they are the biggest single family in the alcohol business in the world.

Alison Watson, head of marketing, said: “Our drive, passion, success and experience in the last four years means we aren’t just hoping for the best in this booming industry – no, we know who we are and we know where we want to be.

“We are now part of the Kellogg’s 10-year Better Days plan and the commercial impact has been incredible with global interest in the products, with a plan to not only sell across the UK but also export.

“We plan to continue brewing the three sustainable beers and develop the range further. And, due to the demand for the product, we are continually increasing the amount of ‘upcycled cereal’ from Kellogg’s.”

Beehive in Manchester, and is opening another at Middleton Locks, Salford. Last year turnover was more than £1.3m and is set to hit £2m this year.

The beers are stocked by Selfridges, Boots and Coop Stores amongst others and the brewery is now looking to start exporting. The beers have attracted worldwide media attention from CNN, The New York Times, Reddit, Wall Street Journal and have made waves on social media channels.

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Wattl

Wattl is a collaborative video discovery platform that aims to bring all the videos together that anybody might want to watch.

Emma Ryan, Wattl’s co-founder and chief executive says: “We make finding content you want to watch easier. We also make it easier to have your content discovered and we’re going to disrupt the online advertising and influencer market too.

“There used to be just a few TV channels, then cable and satellite came along. In the same way we now have many separate digital platforms to discover lots of different types of content, but we’re moving to a new era of media. This is where digital platforms will be the major disruptors in the TV and video market. The next steps will see all driven discovery platforms providing smart content discovery and intelligent recommendations. We’re on a very clear mission to make content more accessible to people around the world and that is one thing I love about our very visual product.”

Wattl’s user interface has a patent pending. Using infinite scroll and user curator it bypasses existing platform algorithms, such as YouTube, to deliver an enhanced content discovery.

“Wattl does not position itself as a rival to YouTube, more as their best friend

Wattl video technology in house. Wattl’s target audience are people who currently consume all their content on their smart devices.

Wattl’s analysis is that the current problem for broadcasters around the world is that Gen Z (people born between 1995-2014) are not watching mainstream TV but are consuming all their media on phones and tablets. That means their screen time each day is spent on two or three different video platforms and none of the broadcasters content is viewed. This has serious long term revenue implications for media companies, which have recognised that they need to have their content on the platforms where their target audiences are spending their time.

Wattl aims to provide a solution blending professional broadcast content with user generated and viral content on one platform, bringing similar content together in collaborative worlds. With applications from media to e-commerce, Wattl’s goal is to become the premier video discovery platform in the world.

Wattl ran a pilot with Rakuten TV in 2018 and, building on its future plans as a video discovery marketplace, it has affiliate agreements with The H & Group, Miss Selfridge, the Watch Shop and Under Armour.

Wattl is a live app available on iOS and Android. After releasing very early versions it launched on both platforms in 2019. Still in a beta phase the business is looking to secure seed round funding to prove out product market fit ahead of scaling and growth with future funding rounds.

In 2019 Wattl surpassed 30,000 discoverable videos, had 3,700 users, representing a 221% increase from the previous year, and has had 4,000 sessions on its platform, which represents a 160% increase from 2018.

Matthew says: “Wattl’s video wall technology has been challenging to implement but we’re excited that it is now available for people to use and will be showcased at Venturefest North West.”
Fund innovation within your business

Innovation and business development are rife in the UK; however, this usually requires a significant investment from businesses which can be difficult to source, especially for start-ups and SMEs.

One of the most commonly known forms of tax relief is Research & Development (R&D). This is awarded to businesses that invest in innovation, usually in the form of developing new systems, processes, products, materials, devices, or any changes to the way a business works.

Despite being available in the UK since 2000, it is still largely under-claimed. The latest statistics released from HMRC in September 2018 show that despite the abundance of innovation being carried out by businesses, only around 43,000 R&D claims were made in 2015-16. This is around 0.8% of the total number of businesses in the UK.

The UK government is also looking to increase R&D expenditure as a % of GDP over the next decade from 1.7% in 2016 to 2.4% in 2027, so there is an awful lot of focus on ensuring companies are continuing to invest in, and be given the appropriate reliefs for developing new innovations within their sector.

Catax are experts in specialist forms of tax relief and have been helping businesses claim back R&D since 2014. The average claims we see for R&D are in excess of £56,000 – a sum that would make a big difference to most companies’ annual accounts.

One of the most common reasons for not claiming is lack of awareness – many businesses are unaware that they are eligible for R&D tax relief. HMRC was careful to define R&D in such a way it could apply to varied work across multiple industries – the idea was to turbocharge innovation across every sector.

Another lesser known relief is the Patent Box. This form of tax relief, which was phased in from 2013, offers a reduced rate of corporation tax of just 10 per cent on profits made from patents. This represents a near halving of the rate of corporation tax payable on IP related income, so can make a huge difference to a business’s balance sheet.

If your company has registered patents, it would be worth checking how much income they bring in, something that Catax would be able to help advise on. The Patent Box can apply to sales related to or stemming from the patents in a multitude of ways so a good understanding of the rules is needed to ensure nothing is missed.

If a company makes sure it is claiming R&D tax credit for initial work to develop innovative products and services, then protects and capitalises on the resulting IP through licenses, sales and the Patent Box tax relief, it should see a major boost to its income which can be reinvested to fuel further innovation and growth.

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Research & Development tax credits give you the ability to revolutionise and transform your business.

Catax are experts in specialist forms of tax relief and have been helping businesses claim for over ten years, uncovering a total of £242 million for our clients to date.

The average claims we see for R&D are in excess of £56,000 – a sum that would make a big difference to most companies’ annual accounts.

Contact us today to uncover your hidden value.
What is a patent? A patent protects new and non-obvious technical inventions, including products and processes. It gives the patent owner the right to prevent others from making, selling or using the invention in the particular country (or group of countries) where the patent is granted.

What can I get a patent for? Patents are by no means only available for ground-breaking inventions; many everyday items such as stationary or kitchen utensils are patent protected.

What is a trade mark? A trade mark is a sign that distinguishes the goods or services of one trader from those of another. It is an essential element in creating and developing a brand. Usually those of another. It is an essential element in creating and developing a brand. Usually those of another. It is an essential element in creating and developing a brand.

How can I protect my design? In order to register a design, a design application can be filed at the relevant national and regional registration office where protection is required.

What is an NDA? An NDA is a Non-Disclosure Agreement. This is a confidentiality agreement between two parties that prevents the disclosure of shared information with a third party. It is always preferable, where possible, to apply for IP protection before disclosing your invention to anyone. However, sometimes discussions regarding the invention may need to be made prior to applying for protection. Such discussions should be made under an NDA.

What is a patent attorney? A patent attorney is an expert in preparing patent applications and in managing the complex process of getting an application through to grant of one or more patents.

I have an invention/a new product. What should I do first? The most important first rule is not to tell anyone about your idea until you have investigated protecting it. If your idea is disseminated too early, it can become impossible to secure ownership of it. Decide whether you are willing to invest the time and money needed to exploit the idea commercially; e.g. by putting the idea into practice yourself, or by selling or licensing it for someone else to use. Your local business accelerator or incubator may be able to help you at this stage. In order to stop competitors from copying your idea without your permission, you can file for IP protection. Dehns can advise on the most appropriate route for protecting the idea, within a budget and timescale that’s appropriate to your business plan.

Dehns is a leading European firm of specialist patent and trade mark attorneys, with more than 200 people across seven offices, in addition to a strong, well-established network of global partnerships. The firm’s practical and commercial approach to intellectual property helps turn inspired thinking into patents, trade marks and registered designs which become valuable commercial assets for clients.

Get in contact today for a no-obligation discussion to see how we can help you to get more out of IP.

mail@dehns.com
020 7632 7200

Research shows that companies that export have increased growth potential, are more productive and have better paid jobs. Here are 5 critical success factors for making 2020 your export growth year:

1. Define your export growth ambition and question barriers
At the heart of success is having a strategic plan. This should start with consideration of what you seek to achieve in the year ahead and beyond. Are the barriers you are facing perceived or real?
Talk this through at team and board level and bring in a third party (such as an International Trade Adviser) to challenge your thinking.

2. Research, adapt and localise
Conducting thorough market research and overseas market selection support can help you to avoid costly pitfalls and inform a strategic, rather than reactive, approach to exporting. Obtain specialist advice and support to gain insight into the most reliable and profitable routes to market e.g. via agents/distributors, targeted direct sales, e-exporting, licensing etc. and prioritise these. Most products and services can be sold overseas but may need some adaptation. This applies to both their design and marketing. Often you will need to adapt your offer to meet local market needs such as: language and cultural, legal and environmental factors. This can be achieved with the right insight and advice.

3. Invest and innovate
Companies that invest in research and development, including via universities and overseas partners, are more able to compete overseas as well as in domestic markets. Investing in an office or overseas operations (outward direct investment) can also help by, for example, being able to gain a strong foothold in a market, manage currencies, payments and legal factors more easily and take advantage of economies of scale.

4. Grow and nurture a team with an international mind-set
Create an export-ready team by considering your team’s skills and capability to do business across cultures including experience of working in different cultural contexts and in languages other than English. Consider internationalisation of your website and seek professional advice on this. Recruit people with language skills, work with professional translators and interpreters and seek advice on language, culture and content localisation for non-English speaking markets too such as USA, Canada and Australia.

5. Remember, you can do anything – but not everything

Ask for expert advice and support can make the world of difference to your expediency in export growth and, ultimately, profitability. Our funded services, such as the Global Scale-up Programme* can help you to overcome perceived and real barriers to international sales growth and develop an export action plan. We can also help you to connect with expertise from our partners and network of embassies and trade offices internationally and refer you to services such as UK Export Finance.

Contact me to discuss your export growth ambitions and hear more about The Growth Company’s Global Scale-up programme run in partnership with the DPMG, Santander, DWF and Manchester Airport. Sara Knowles, International Trade Team Leader Sara.Knowles@trademv.org

*Applications for the next Global Scale-up Cohort open in January 2020
How to scope out a basic project and agree on the application areas and understand how your products could be enhanced through the use of the material.

LEARN
We run several open sessions at the GEIC throughout the year, including tours of our state-of-the-art labs, which are often the entry point for companies that want to learn more about graphene. These are great sessions to understand the basics of graphene, generate your own ideas on application areas and understand how your products could be enhanced through the use of the material.

SCOPE YOUR PROJECT
Once you have a project in mind, our application specialists will spend time discussing your products in detail to understand the particular challenges you have and how the potential use of graphene could improve overall performance. Here we will work with you to scope out a basic project and agree the areas that should be researched.

Get started with graphene
Graphene is a remarkable new material that has an amazing amount of unique characteristics and properties, that include superfine such as the strongest and stiffest material currently known to us; the most electrically and thermally conductive; the most stretchable; most impermeable; and the thinnest material that can be imagined, with the highest surface area.

BASIC RESEARCH
The GEIC houses 6 unique labs, each of which specialises in a different research programme. You can gain access to the labs and our specialist staff, who will undergo some basic initial research into how graphene could enhance your products.

EXTENDED R&D
We can offer long term R&D based collaborative projects whereby our teams work to develop your product or technology. Here we operate closely with our partners to extend the basic research, committing more time and resource to the project.

PRE-PRODUCTION PROTOTYPE
We have the ability at the GEIC to produce low volume, pre-production prototypes that allow you to fully test your new products before committing to the expense of volume manufacturing. These prototypes are made to the highest quality and provide a true representation of what the finished article will look like.

PREPARE FOR MANUFACTURING
Once you’re ready to move forward, our experts will work with you to understand how your manufacturing partners can adapt their tools and techniques ready for the production of your new graphene-enhanced products.

GET FURTHER GRANT AID
If your project could benefit from further subsidised grant aid, then our professional bid team can help write and lead on your proposals, potentially providing you with funds to take your product through to full manufacture.

Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre
The Masdar Building, Sackville St,
Manchester M1 3BB
www.graphenevents.com
0161 275 3982
erdf.team@manchester.ac.uk

Fifty years ago, the world came together in awe as the first astronauts stepped foot on the moon. This once so far dream became a reality thanks to scientific and technological developments, which have since been harnessed to bring exponential advancements to humankind, both in space and here on Earth.

Although it may not at first seem obvious, space-related technologies are depended on in many industries today, from monitoring critical infrastructure and synchronising power grids, to managing agriculture and the transfer of vast quantities of mobile data. In fact, from the moment we wake up, to the moment we arrive at our place of work, we’ve usually already interacted with around twenty five individual satellites in space.

Worth over £14.8 billion in the UK alone, the thriving space industry is set to grow to a level that outperforms the economy in the coming years. In the North West, the wealth of cross-sector opportunities presented by this growing space industry can be accessed by businesses through the Science and Technology Facilities Council at Sir John Daresbury. Having paved the way in space technology for more than 50 years, STFC manages funded business programmes on behalf of the European Space Agency (ESA) that offer myriad innovative solutions for businesses to gain a competitive advantage in an ever-changing global market.

Support is available for any business utilising space-related technologies, whether that’s downstream applications of space technology or satellite application in a non-space environment, or upstream technologies being developed for use in space.

Programmes available include:
• ESA Business Incubation Centre UK - supporting early-stage space-related companies with an incubation package of technical and business support, office and lab facilities, networks, and grant funding
• ESA Innovation Partner Network – providing a free service for space companies to find new customers in new markets for their technologies and know-how
• ESA Business Applications Regional Ambassador Programme – offering funded and tailored support to help new commercial services integrating space assets to reach the market

Integrating space assets such as telecommunications, earth observation, navigation, and human spacecraft technologies with existing terrestrial assets and legacy systems are providing new commercially driven solutions for the businesses across many sectors.

Space rocket your business to success
Agritech company, Earth Rover, has developed an autonomous robot system technology that takes care of high value organic vegetables. The robot tracks the growth and benefits of crops using data collection and satellite navigation, thus reducing labour cost and food waste in farming production. Applying space technology in medical devices, GiveVision was supported in identifying space technology for incorporation into its smart glasses for the visually impaired.

Could your business benefit from space technology too? Visit the Science and Technology Facilities Council team at VentureFest North West, email innovations@stfc.ac.uk, or follow us on Twitter @STFC_B2B, to find out!

Worth over £14.8 billion in the UK alone, the thriving space industry is set to grow to a level that outperforms the economy in the coming years.
Collaborate with a university

1. PROBLEM / PAIN POINT
We understand that it is often difficult to get innovative ideas moving because of problems with developing and commercialising them. A lack of finance, human resource, specialist know-how, time, technology, strategy or appropriate facilities can all be barriers.

2. WHEN TO USE
Do you have a technical challenge that you do not have the skills expertise or equipment in-house to solve? Are you seeking additional capacity and expertise to challenge and stimulate your thinking?

3. WHAT YOU GET
Advice and guidance on how to access leading edge academic expertise can benefit your business. A dedicated Innovation Specialist to help you shape and strengthen your project to attract academic interest, access funding and, accelerating the time it takes to bring new products or services to market.

4. SOLUTION
Your innovation specialist will help you to collaborate with the University to address technical challenges, access research or testing that provides tangible outcomes, support with transferring knowledge, data and expertise into your business and access to innovation funding.

5. OPPORTUNITY
We can work with you on a one-to-one basis, from an initial diagnostic to identify challenges, through to developing a route-to-market plan to support in commercialisation. We can help you achieve your business objectives, whether you require research to be carried out in a particular area or need access to leading edge expertise for a critical project, we can work to shape, scope and deliver a tailor made solution that meets your business needs.

6. BUSINESS MODEL – LETS WORK TOGETHER
We can flex our business model depending on your need, resource and capacity. If you need help in defining your project, exploring an idea or understanding how working with the University can help you can attend one of our innovation master classes to define a technical brief or explore how we can work together more effectively.

Contact us on 0161 247 2186 or email conversation@mmu.ac.uk

www2.mmu.ac.uk/business/
Develop your digital roadmap

1. WHAT YOU GET
Creating a digital roadmap is one of the first and most important planning activities for any business investing in digital technologies. There are multiple tools available to businesses, but a roadmap is one used by Made Smarter advisers to help businesses begin their journey.

2. WHEN TO USE
Roadmaps help a business to navigate complex requirements and make good decisions about technologies, processes, people and investments. Ultimately a digital roadmap will form part of your business strategy and will contribute greatly to your growth and competitiveness.

3. APPROACH
Gather insight on your current digital readiness – this is about understanding what technology you have, how digitally capable your workforce is, the challenges you face and the opportunities ahead. Collaborate with other leaders across your business and partners to build a joint plan for using new technologies.

4. INSIGHT
Digital readiness diagnostic tools provide essential insights to understand your potential to grow your business with digital technologies. You can use resources such as the free-to-use Digital Readiness Level tool https://drl-tool.org to assess where you are now.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
Think broadly about aspects of your business and your value chain where digital technologies could make a difference. Ask the real experts in your business and partners: What is working well? What needs to change? What do people see as the biggest problem?

6. VISION
Now consider potential solutions to your challenges and opportunities. Where do you see yourselves next year? Seek perspectives from people across the business, drawing on operational as well as digital expertise. Is there a problem you need to solve? Do you have a lot of manual processes? What do you want to change?

7. ACTION
Your digital roadmap is a joined-up plan for action across the vital aspects of your business value chain. This is your pathway to strong digital returns, and it can help you avoid setting off in the wrong direction and making expensive mistakes. Prioritise actions and set out a clear strategy to rolling out digital projects over the short-, medium- and long-term. Be clear about the resources you will need for each activity and how you will work collaboratively with your suppliers, customers and other partners.

8. MOMENTUM
With your digital roadmap in place you can move forward with confidence. Have you secured commitment from your team for your digital projects? Are your KPIs clear to all? How can you be agile and learn as you make progress?

9. TEAM
Who will champion each project to get the most out of it? Do you have the skills in your team and partners for your digital transformation? If not, then why not? Consult Made Smarter who can provide fully funded advice from industry specialists to work alongside you.

10. RESULTS
Track progress overall and in project sprints using your digital readiness diagnostic tool and other key performance indicators.

Abbay Group, successful Made Smarter applicants, are now seeing a projected profit increase of 41% “Investing in digital technologies will truly transform our current business, increasing profitability - while remaining highly competitive - while allowing us to develop innovative products in-house that will drive growth and sustainability and facilitate further diversification of our product portfolio” Chris Jones, Managing Director. www.madesmarter.uk

WHAT YOU GET
An understanding of the prospect’s position in the buying process, developing insights to develop a targeted, specific communications strategy.

A FOUR-STAGE BUYING PROCESS
The steps each of us goes through to decide to buy has not changed since people started selling for others to buy, although it was formalised as theory in the 1960s and 1970s. An archetypal four-step buying process can be described as shown on the right.

BUYING PROCESSES AND YOUR SALES & MARKETING OBJECTIVES
Clearly, different sales approaches and marketing collateral is needed for the different stages in the buying process.

The buying processes and sales & marketing objectives are outlined in common to both offline and online sales and marketing.

Buyer's journey:
1. WHAT TO LOOK FOR
2. HOW TO DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM
3. WHAT TO DO
4. WHAT TO DO
5. HOW TO DECIDE
6. HOW TO ACT

Define problem and search for potential solutions
- Customer recognises that they have a problem, need or want
- New information received
- Circumstances change
- Run out of previously bought service / product
- Active search for information to help make right decision

Evaluate alternatives
- Evaluate alternatives
- Comparing features and benefits to determine which solution best meets needs
- Rational and emotional evaluation

Decide which to purchase
- Cost compared with budget available, credit
- Opinions from others
- Promotional offers
- Availability
- Service agreements
- Try before buy
- Brand

Post-purchase activity
- Continued evaluation against what value they expected
- Recommendation to others
- Feedback to seller, directly or via online media

Contact us on 0161 359 3050
www.businessgrowthhub.com

How to sell to people in the way that they buy
Position yourself in your market

Market positioning is an effort to influence customers’ perception of a brand or product, relative to the perception of competing brands or products. Its objective is to occupy a clear and advantageous position in customers’ minds. By doing so, there are opportunities to sell more products at a higher profit margin.

You can use this approach to understand and manage how customers perceive your products, relative to your competitors.

"Determining your existing market position is as important as competitor analysis."

1. DRAFT A POSITIONING STATEMENT
   There are four questions to ask yourself that will give a set of basic facts about the identity you have determined for your business. The positioning statement comes from turning the answers to these questions into a statement: (i) Who are you as a brand and what do you stand for? (ii) Who are your target customers and what do they want or need? (iii) How will you reliably meet those needs? (iv) Who are your competitors and what do you do differently?

2. COMPARE AND CONTRAST TO IDENTIFY YOUR OWN UNIQUENESS
   Differences between your own messaging approach and communication channels and those of your competitors reveal openings in the market that your positioning message should address.

3. COMPETITOR ANALYSIS
   Investigating and analysing the competition helps to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your own business measured against the competition. Understanding the differences between a business and its competitors is central to finding gaps in the market that can be filled.

4. DETERMINE CURRENT POSITION
   Determining your existing market position is as important as competitor analysis. This is because you have to understand your own market position to be able to properly compete for your share.

5. COMPETITOR POSITIONING ANALYSIS
   In tandem with the competitor analysis, competitor positioning analysis identifies the conditions of the market that influence how much power competitors are able to exercise.

6. DEVELOP A UNIQUE POSITIONING IDEA
   With all the analytical data in hand, you should have a better idea of who you are, who you are not, and who your best audience is. It’s time to make a statement about those facts.

7. TEST THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR BRAND POSITIONING
   Testing should consist of qualitative and quantitative data gathering. It may also include focus groups, surveys, in-depth interviews with customers, etc. The results of the testing should then be used to help define your market positioning plan.

Contact us on 0161 359 3050
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Passionate about business

We support businesses at all stages of their growth journey with our broad range of services. We offer expert one-to-one and peer-to-peer business support, events, specialist programmes, funding and much more.

Call us today on 0161 359 3050 or visit www.businessgrowthhub.com to find out more.
A unique opportunity to meet with investors, other entrepreneurs, and innovators

Richard Jeffery
Director of Business Growth at GC Business Growth Hub