Digital Snapshot Report Survey Feedback

What are the major Challenges & Opportunities you face?

Challenges

Freelance

- Maintaining return business in a climate where marketing budgets are being spread very thinly. Often video services are dispensed with early on.
- Earning enough to afford rent, food & travel.
- Being able to persuade the big payers that I can still do what the big boys offer... the main problem is the big agencies offer a massive service that really boils down to a couple of people in the agency taking on the whole job. maybe an account manager and a designer working together. But the client thinks that the whole agency is put on their job when in reality that's not the case. (maybe sometimes).
- Finding that work *in* Sheffield.
- Getting clients.
- Servicing an additional two large corporate clients.

Micro

- Challenging market conditions.
- Managing current workloads and still winning new clients.
- Growing at a rate we can manage.
- Maintaining a pipeline of new business.
- Sales and marketing.
- Growing the business safely. Hiring a brilliant first employee. Not panicking.
- Diversification.
- Marketing / Finding businesses interested in our product.
- Not enough hours in the day, or sufficient range of skills easily to hand. To cope with this we are going to be looking for finance in the coming year.
- Keeping the business funded until it becomes self-funding or gaining investment.
- Growing too rapidly and not managing the growth properly.

Small

- Acquiring funding for Capital.
- Cashflow.
- Convincing clients that they need help with social media/digital content.
- Finding the time to promote ourselves.
- Brexit.

- being good at being a business.
- Attracting talent. Business confidence affecting client appetite for marketing.
- Filling vacancies with qualified digital professionals.
- as a small independent business, cash flow management is always the challenge.
- Increasing brand awareness amongst our target audience.
- If the market turns to cheaper, more rapid and less high quality solutions.
- Recruiting the right staff.
- Getting the right members of staff to do this while continuing to complete commissioned work.
- Retaining current contracts .
- Dealing with the 'growing pains' of continuing to expand e.g. increased workload, developing new systems to alleviate bottlenecks etc. The challenges of managing an office overseas with time differences, cultural differences etc.
- Uncertain economy re: Brexit inc uncertainty in EU funding for clients who currently rely on it.
- Gov policy in broadcasting (C4 privatisation/relocation/BBC budgets).
- Recruiting appropriately skilled/diverse staff in Sheffield.
- Poor transport links with London and Manchester.
- Recruitment (followed by funding and quality affordable office space).

Medium

- Gaining new business and retaining what we have.
- Space, we physically can't grow without moving away from the city center which we'd like to avoid.
- Finding the right staff.
- Cash flow.

Large

- n/a

Opportunities

Freelance

- The continuing popularity of VOD.
- Exhibiting in London.
- Growth and Development by forming a collective.
- Increasing network of potential clients *beyond* Sheffield.
- Servicing an additional two large corporate clients.

Micro

- Moving into VR.
- Larger, well established e-learning companies are being bought out by even larger companies. As a result, the culture in these companies is changing from funky, creative agency to corporate partner with shareholders to satisfy. Smaller companies (like us) are planning to fill that gap and offer clients a more agile, personalised experience with more creativity.
- Capitalise on a number of in-house initiatives.
- Introducing services and launching our own products.
- Landing a game changing project/client.
- Content production.
- Selling our new range of "off-the-shelf" game products.
- We have some exciting partnerships that are in the early stages that I am confident will develop much further in 2017. Also the marketplace for our location-based mobile product seems to be shifting and becoming increasingly receptive.
- Breaking the US market.
- Producing fictional and documentaries.

Small

- New ventures regarding Artist Development.
- Offering an new unique service.
- Target larger, well established clients.
- Growing the Social Media and Web Design offering.
- Get better at being a business!
- New clients and expanded digital marketing services.
- Expansion through natural growth, particularly in our marketing department.
- Increasing non UK market.
- Further growth.
- AR.
- Working more with partners to provide solutions for multinational companies.
- Cloud based learning solutions.
- Continuing to be recognised as an agency that can successfully compete with London agencies.
- Creating our own content.

- New work from existing and new clients in areas we have been developing (e.g: VR projects).
- We are opening an office in Kunming China in February 2017. We are positioning ourselves to help UK companies establish a digital presence in China and Chinese companies to establish a digital presence in the West.
- Broadening our range of services, improving efficiency, increasing size of contracts, international contracts due to weak pound.
- Growing our customer base and spinning out more startups.

Medium

- Expanding our existing client base.
- Taking advantage of developments within the community to tip from niche market into mass market.
- Video and animation services in addition to corporate sector.
- Digital transformation.

Large

- Further collaboration between creativity and data science.

Sheffield & its Reputation

Why is your business based in Sheffield?

Freelance

- It's a creative community where I already have a network. Furthermore, it's a relatively cheap base of operations for productions throughout the country and has a good tradition of creatives supporting each-other.
- I live here & the rent is cheap.
- Always wanted to live in Sheffield so started the business here too.
- Partner works at the University.
- I work from home in Sheffield.
- Lifestyle.

Micro

- Cost of Living/personal connections.
- This is where I was living when I set it up.
- It is where we settled as a family.
- The founders live in Sheffield.
- There are lots of companies providing complementary services to our own who we can work with.
- Great, supportive start up, creative and digital communities.
- Central location makes it easy to travel to London, Manchester or other cities around the UK.
- Sheffield is traditionally one of the main UK hubs for the e-learning industry.
- I am originally from Sheffield.
- It is local to the founders. It's where we want our families to live. But we did discuss other cities when we started out and thought that, as well as our personal reasons for wanting to be in Sheffield, it also had other advantages. Central location, good digital community/talent pool, some decent sized potential clients, lots of relevant (and free) events.
- We're all from Sheffield, really proud of our city, there's a great mix of people, companies and network. And clients. We'd not be based anywhere else.
- We provide local/community media specifically for Sheffield and Sheffield City Region.
- It's where I live.
- It's where me and my family live.
- It's our hometown so starting our business in Sheffield made sense, however, it does seem to be an ideal place for a company like ours. We couldn't afford to be based in London where the majority of our clients are, yet being based in Sheffield allows us to meet clients in London without too much hassle.
- Wonderful city full of wonderful people.

Small

- There is no business of our kind in Sheffield City Region, and all our founders are from the city.
- The best place to be located.
- Built around enthusiastic, young employees that are able to thrive in an affordable, culturally rich city such as Sheffield.
- We are all from Sheffield and find it a vibrant place to work.
- Affordable, good transport links, green, characterful, friendly.
- Location to clients and quality of living.
- Formed originally in Doncaster. Relocated for better access to clients and talent.
- To access the talent pool available from both universities.
- The founders live in Sheffield.
- Because my family is here.
- It was founded as a 1-person company by our Creative Director, who lives in Sheffield, and has since grown.
- We like the city: its geography, people and culture.
- One of the two owners was born and bred here. Sheffield is an exciting, fast-paced city, surrounded by breathtaking countryside. Why would we base our business anywhere else?
- The directors were primarily based here when the company was set up.
- Because it's our home and we have everything we need here.
- The founding directors studied at Hallam University and the University of Sheffield. They loved the city and made good connections with others working in the digital sector. The support they received from these connections helped them to get started.
- It's where the founder was based.
- I tried to escape after graduating from Uni and failed. Am now married and have a settled family here.

Medium

- It's where we live, wonderful lifestyle, cheap running costs, supportive community, beer, culture.
- Where directors live and there were initial opportunities for a business.
- We live here.

Large

- Sheffield is one of five locations we have in the UK, plus we have one in Australia. Sheffield is our HQ.

What would you tell people from outside the city about why Sheffield is a great place for creative digital businesses?

Freelance

- I'd say that there is an existing talent pool but it's not overflowing which means there is room to come in and find your own space and do some really innovative work that might not happen in cities that are already more established nationally.
- Sheffield is a creative hotbed. There are a lot of people in the city who make/are making things happen and work together. It doesn't take too long to start to get involved.
- It's a very bohemian city. Imagine Shoreditch but with real culture.
- There are good, friendly networks of people who are prepared to help you out or introduce you to others who can.
- A real DIY spirit.
- Cheap, central, critical mass of creatives.

Micro

- I would honestly probably tell them it's not a great place for creative digital businesses.
- Hmm. Not sure it is.
- Quality of businesses, competitive pricing.
- Sheffield keeps topping lists of UK cities to live in as a graduate.
- Lots of graduates stay here as the cost of living is better than other cities which means there is a lot of talent to choose from.
- Wages and office space are a lot cheaper than London.
- It is very close-knit from a personal and professional standpoint, with a vibrant creative digital sector. It's centrally located and well set up in infrastructure terms. It also has great city-centre accommodation for businesses.
- There's a community of professionals who are probably as capable as people from most of the other major cities in the UK and it's a good place to live and raise a family.
- There's something happening in Sheffield at the minute. Has been for the past few years. There's a brilliant mix of companies, agencies, startups around. The people are friendly. It makes a difference. There's lots of meetups happening. There's some really (really) talented people. It's brilliant.
- Creative, diverse, green, friendly, good transport links, home of national and international events, leading edge know how in local/community media.
- I think Sheffield is a great place to be, I'm not sure I could give a particular reason for why it's good specifically for creative digital businesses. Surely the point of being a creative digital business is that you can base yourself wherever you want?
- There seems to be a lot happening with startup businesses. It's pretty good active user groups.
- Some inspiring companies are based here like Warp Films and Sumo Digital.

Small

- Sheffield has a booming arts centre, from musicians and bands to painters, digital designers, event organisers and videographers.
- Centre of the UK.
- Overheads are low, and other parts of the country are easily accessible.
- Sheffield has a unique feel and a personality all of it's own which transfers down into the work produced.
- It has a talented and growing tech scene with lots of ex-Londoners who have digital expertise, in an affordable and green city with great transport links.
- Quality of life, great people, great place to do business.
- Broad mix of digital and creative businesses, working for clients nationwide. Plenty of local potential clients and business opportunities and good access to compete, often at lower cost, with other cities.
- The people and transport options make Sheffield a great place to locate a business.
- It's an entrepreneurial hub with a growing community of creators and talent, so there is already an established network that is constantly being built upon. We also have great beer, gin and local breweries which often helps.
- There is a strong sense of community amongst businesses in this sector along with a growing number of events for and by people who work in CDI. Sheffield is also geographically well placed - a couple of hours from London and within easy reach of Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and the surround areas.
- Lots of trees and parks. Close to the Peak District. Lots of students keep the city cool and hip.
- Great approach to partnership working, a willingness to combine forces from different skill sets to tackle an issue, a workforce who are happy and come to work with clear minds because they spend their weekends in the Peak District... an acceptance of design on a city-wide scale that we see in our architecture and art from Sheffield.
- The two universities, and the college, offer good creative courses, so there is an ongoing supply of eager juniors. There are great transport links, and Sheffield is known for its creative digital businesses.
- Kelham Island is one of the coolest places in the country and we're based there.
- There is plenty of space and time to make mistakes
- The cost of living and therefore developer wages etc. is far lower in the north than the south. This enables us to produce the same quality of work at a competitive rate. There is also an incredibly supportive, collaborative and socially conscious community of digitally minded individuals in Sheffield. By working together this community are able to generate truly innovative solutions and help fledgling companies get started.
- Small friendly tech community. Relatively low wage expectations. Relatively cheap office/shack space

Medium

- The city has a huge amount of raw to experienced talent, flies under the radar, there are some great creative digital companies compared to other more well known cities noted for their creative sites.
- It's well connected, friendly and laid back, there is an established DIY culture, people just get on with it. There are low running costs compared to London. Two excellent universities which are developing an excellent skills pipeline. Substantial businesses either underpinned by digital thinking or transformed by digital have been developed and flourished from the city. From mail order/retail (Folksy, Go Outdoors, EBuyer) to manufacture (Fripp Design) and Games (Sumo Digital, Boneloaf) etc... you know all this that's why you're writing this isn't it, yadda yadda...
- There's an existing pool of digital businesses and a reasonable skill pool to draw from and it's a nice city that is well positioned geographically. However, I'm not sure I would tell people that it is a great place for creative digital businesses or has a significant point(s) of difference that put it above other regional/core cities but maybe I'm unaware of why this is the case - it would be interesting to know why this is assumed from the question? It does seem like a loaded statement and I would expect surveys to be more balanced in asking open questions.
- Centre for expertise in varied digital disciplines. Great people and open culture.

Large

- I would end up talking to them about what a great place it is to live rather than any particular 'digital' reason.

Compared to other cities in the UK, how would you rate Sheffield's reputation as a creative digital hub?

What are your reasons for this answer?

Rating 1

- There are a handful of digital creative companies I am aware of, but that in no way makes Sheffield a 'Hub' of any kind. Most businesses I know of are located here for personal convenience more than anything else. Networking events, within the games sector at least, are largely attended by amateurs. Larger events within our sector are actually organised by organisations based outside of the city (GameRepublic, for example).
- My answer probably has more to do with my own limited understanding than reality. I did a bit of Googling but couldn't find anything compelling. I'm not really aware of Sheffield, or any city outside of London, having a reputation as a 'creative digital hub' in the UK. Maybe among some peers there's recognition that the universities are very good and there are success stories like Floow and Sumo Digital. But I don't know if that amounts to a city-wide reputation. Does it?
- Having spent most of my life outside of Sheffield I never heard anything about Sheffield's digital reputation. My family living outside of Sheffield would say the same.
- We're rubbish at marketing our city tech outside of Sheffield. The LEP/SCC seem to fail to appreciate the epic growth potential in the sector as well - seem too focused on manufacturing, which is largely dying.

Rating 2

- We do not sell ourselves
- We are often overshadowed by cities like Leeds and Manchester
- Not much going on compared to Manchester, Leeds
- Don't really see it promoted compared to Leeds and Manchester
- I do not have much knowledge around other cities and their reputation although I would look to Leeds and Manchester as having a better reputation in creative digital.
- I rarely hear people talking about Sheffield outside of Sheffield.
- I don't think Sheffield has a greater or lesser reputation than most cities, and if anything struggles with the general reputation of the city.
- There isn't really a hub within Sheffield, if there is I'm not aware of it
- We are currently having to look beyond Sheffield for partnerships, investment, big conferences etc. London mainly, but also Manchester.
- From dealing with / talking to clients and creatives outside of Sheffield, we don't have much of a reputation as a digital city (IMO). Our business has actually received more support and useful information from Barnsley (DMC) than anywhere in Sheffield. They seem to have a more collaborative and supportive community than Sheffield.

- We are way behind (in reputation, and numbers of successful digital creative companies) London, Manchester, Leeds, etc.

Rating 3

- I mainly occupy the filmmaking arenas but Sheffield has a mixed reputation depending on who you speak to. Some people see it is a city full of hidden talent and other consider it to be a community of amateurs.
- We aren't really aware of what the creative hub does (having said that we are a little insular).
- Everyone who comes here seems to have a great experience, but we still need to attract more people here, AND in conjunction with this- train local young people in the business so it becomes Sheffield born and raised, not only imported.
- We do not stand up well next to London (obviously), Manchester and Leeds.
- Cannot compare to London, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham have substantial hubs but we hold our own in other areas (like our world of Outdoor design and filmmaking where we are country leading).
- Other cities such as Leeds & Manchester have much more developed digital scenes
- We think we're much better than anyone else does.
- Take London out of the equation and comparing to say Bristol, Manchester, Leeds - there are less creatively focussed communities, companies, labs & meetups than those places. We do have some good stuff here, but we don't have a Pervasive Media Studio (like Bristol), we don't have an ODI office (like Leeds) etc.
- Having only really networked across London and Manchester, it's difficult to comment as I don't have enough info on other cities to really comment
- I don't have experience of other cities.
- People outside Sheffield don't really see it as a creative hub (virtually all our work is from london so we see this every day). People think we are a great business but are semi surprised when we say the word "Sheffield".
- London & Manchester (Newcastle?).
- I think there is a good community of digital creatives in Sheffield, but I don't often feel the events that are on are of enough relevance to me. In fairness, I suspect there is probably more going on than I actually hear about, but when I do hear about events that are interest to me, they are usually in Leeds, Manchester or London.
- I think Sheffield is good but it needs to shout about itself more. Most of the digital work still seems to be focused on London, Manchester or Leeds.
- It's hard to tell from the inside, but I think our reputation may not rival London, Bristol, or Manchester even if our talent does.
- We've still got a long way to go.

Rating 4

- There are other people doing things in buildings in the city centre that people turn up to- Algorave, Festival of the mind, DINA.
- It could be 5 but needs more shout.

- The experiences I have had with the design community in sheffield.
- I'm not sure what reputation other cities have. Manchester seems better at shouting about how good it is.
- I see it as a great digital hub but people who have never been or only visit think it's a bit of a dive. It is ugly and is going through a massive change which is making it look like one big carpark/building site/pothole, the trouble is you have to stick around long enough to see past that and see it has biggest village vibe in the world with friendly and creative people.
- could do better.
- It's v good but it could be better.
- The people and the support and collaboration between the smaller digital companies.

Rating 5

- Sheffield is home to every kind of creative artist, spanning all ages and denominations. There is a great community spirit among these people.

Other Comments

- Don't overcrowd/over fill a city with people who do the same!!!! The majority of my work comes from within Sheffield. Maybe try to encourage partnership & interaction with other cities! Nottingham, Derby.
- There are a lot of people and groups doing great things within the creative, digital industries in Sheffield. It'd be good to see more coordination between groups.
- Would love to see professional mentoring & funding for young women (teens and uni students) to build their own startups after school/education
- I am aware of their potential, but it needs more support in achieving it
- I think developing a city wide identity and pride in collective works is important for all businesses and attracting/retaining talent and city wide festival or links into existing festivals such as Tramlines/Outdoor City weekenders could be an excellent way to showcase Sheffield design talent.
- There is probably an awful lot more good work going on than most people realise
- "If we're trying to build a reputation as a 'creative digital hub' then Sheffield Digital is, in my mind, the best way to do that. Maybe we could do more to promote Sheffield Digital and get more companies signed up? I read the blogs and try to stay up to speed but I don't think when I speak to people about Sheffield Digital I make a clear enough case. I'd happily give up a couple of hours to listen to you guys talk and discuss how we can push for increased membership. Anyway, that's probably not relevant. Just a thought.
- Keep the momentum going!
- All in all I think we are a great creative city and we are only getting bigger and better so bring it on!
- Feels chicken and eggy at the moment, do we need more funded things, or more medium size established companies or more startups (hmmm, not sure we do)
- Sheffield council should recognise the industry, likewise chamber of commerce. It's all too bigging up the blue collar manufacturing for my personal liking. I'd also like to hear of what the city is doing to encourage diversity and representation within the field. Creativity by definition is made the better when output is influenced by all kinds of folk, backgrounds and circumstance. We need to encourage that within the city.
- We're still quite 'Sheffield' - we just quietly get on with what we're doing and probably don't shout loud enough about the good stuff.
- Great but disparate - people are down their own worm holes (e.g. we are guilty of this!)
- Appreciate the fact that there's people lobbying on our behalf. Not sure more fests & events are the way forward - more talking amongst ourselves.
- It would be nice if there was a regular creative digital festival in Sheffield - but I would probably only attend if it covered an interesting range of creative / tech / business topics. Something like the Reasons festival in Brighton would be best in my opinion, but I fear it would end up being more about the "digital" than the "creative".

- Our broadband needs to be better! Let's match our creative ideas with a strong infrastructure.
- Sheffield seems to be at the point of saturation - there are hundreds of new creative digital start-ups every year. Not all stand the test of time and reputation, but there's a lot of jostling for work, with established expertise vying with undercutting for new projects.
- It's a relatively new sector which is underrated but I think it will be appreciated more as it has a greater impact on the city (in terms of employment & reputation)
- There seems to be a lack of meaningful engagement from local authorities. Most of the initiative seems to be bottom-up, rather than top-down.
- Connect us more tightly together please!
- It has massive potential. I wish the SCC/LEP would inject some energy into it and partner with the passionate community to see it boom. We could take on the rest of the country and win...