

magazine

SYNC 

Northern Ireland's Tech & Business Community

AUTUMN 2014

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Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Sync NI magazine



foreword

from Mark Bennett, CME Group

Retrospective - is a term frequently used in the world of Agile software development to describe a meeting where the project team comes together to reflect on what went well, what could have gone better, and more importantly, what do we want to do differently the next time around? With a little more than two years under our belt since CME Group first opened our new technology center in Belfast, it seems an appropriate time to do bit of my own retrospective -- a look backwards and with an eye to the future.

So, how have things gone? "Splendidly" would be an apt word to describe the past two and a half years. Our leadership has been exceptionally pleased with the build out and growth of our office here in Belfast. As we've grown, our local team has become a critical part of our Global Technology Organization and has expanded to support several additional business areas, including Accounting & Finance and Marketing. It's been said so often that it's becoming cliché to mention, but the quality and dedication of the workforce in Northern Ireland is simply exceptional. It's what keeps CME Group and our peers firmly committed to Northern Ireland. Without talented employees to help carry an organization forward, there is no point in being here or anywhere else for that matter.

That brings me to the next question: where do we as a business community need

to continue to place much of our focus? Not surprisingly, I'm going to tell you it's about the people and particularly our youth making their way through school. We need to continue to grow the talent pool within Northern Ireland to levels well beyond where they are today to support the anticipated future job demand. It's critical that we have an ongoing strategy to reach young people and drive home the importance of science, technology, engineering, and maths.

It's just as important that we reach their parents, who have a tremendous influence on the careers their children will ultimately choose. The strong partnership and collaboration between business, government, and academia in Northern Ireland is one of the great strengths here. Ultimately, a strong workforce supports continued business growth, more jobs, and a stronger economy.

The bottom line is that there are myriad of great reasons for doing business in Northern Ireland but at the top of the list are its people. It's a key part of what has made CME Group successful here and, with the right focus, will continue to be a major driver for business growth in this region of the world.

We may not always have as much sunshine as we'd like but the future is bright in Northern Ireland. Keep up the good work!

Mark W. Bennett

Managing Director, CME Group
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Co Antrim Couple Wins Prestigious INVENT 2014 Award

Google Maps for Cemeteries' Crowned NI's Next Big Innovation Award

After battling it out against almost 100 other innovations, and embarking upon an intensive six month business programme, the winner of the Northern Ireland Science Park's INVENT 2014 search has finally been revealed.

In a tightly contested competition run by NISP CONNECT, sponsored by Bank of Ireland UK, Plotbox was announced as the most promising innovation with world class potential at a prestigious Gala Dinner in Titanic Belfast. Plotbox, owned by husband and wife team Sean and Leona McAllister from Portglenone in County Antrim, is a cloud platform for cemeteries and crematoria to manage all their operations in one place.

The software has been likened to 'Google Maps for cemeteries' and has huge global potential, with the death industry estimated at \$20 billion annually in the US alone.

After being whittled down from the Top 24 in May, the 12 finalists made their final, and most important, pitch in front of judges including Rob Hardemen of Seagate and Alex van Someren from Amadeus Capital, and over 500 prominent guests from the local business scene. The finalists included private sector firms, university-based researchers and even a 16-year-old school student.

NISP CONNECT Director, Steve Orr, said: "Since we launched INVENT 2014 back in February, the sheer enthusiasm and interest in the competition has been unprecedented. To have 92 entries this year, tripling the number in 2013, demonstrates that our hunger for innovation here is rife. Right from the beginning we were enormously impressed with the ideas, concepts and inventions, all with great potential to become successful commercial businesses.

"The last six months have seen the Top 12 receive bespoke mentoring to refine and challenge their businesses proposals, all really gearing towards the climax of the competition last night [2 October], and ultimately towards a commercial launch.

"The judges were overwhelmed by the talent and remarked that any one of the 12 could have won, but it was the huge potential of Plotbox that really made them stand out. It's true when they say 'there are only two certainties in life- death and taxes."



"It started out as simply as Sean and Leona's local cemetery asking them to help them with a cemetery map. They discovered that if people want to find a grave, often they have to trawl through reams and reams of information from many different places and really, it just wasn't effectual or indeed, cost effective. It just goes to show that innovation can happen in any sector and in any industry."

Julie Ann O'Hare, Director of Business Banking at Bank of Ireland UK, said: "Our ambition is to grow Bank of Ireland's business in Northern Ireland. We will continue to do this through supporting Northern Ireland's businesses in achieving their growth ambitions. Innovation fuels growth.

"INVENT 2014 is a great example of how by harnessing and directing the energy of innovation, commercial benefit becomes a reality. Bank of Ireland UK congratulates Sean and Leona on their success to date and as great ambassadors for both the programme and the Northern Ireland economy in the future."

The Gala Dinner was addressed by William Wright CBE, founder of Wrightbus, who, as part of the INVENT competition, was named as the 2014 Innovation Founder, an award celebrating the achievements of some of Northern Ireland's most successful entrepreneurs.

For more information please visit www.invent2014.co

That's The Spirit



Shortcross Gin, Northern Ireland's first premium craft Gin, is certainly creating a buzz throughout the hospitality sector. The product is already being served in top restaurants throughout Northern Ireland and is now stocked at the prestigious Fortnum & Masons department store. To find out more about our favourite new tippie, we caught up with Fiona and David Boyd-Armstrong, the husband and wife team behind Shortcross Gin

▶ Tell us about ShortCross Gin – What is unique about your product?

Shortcross Gin is distilled at Rademon Estate Distillery, the first craft distillery in Northern Ireland. Shortcross is crafted in small batches on our bespoke copper pot still, amongst our botanicals we forage apples, elderflower, elderberries and wild clover from the forest and gardens at Rademon. We are entirely unique in that we distil, hand bottle, hand label and wax dip each individual bottle. Every label is also signed, dated and the batch and bottle number recorded, creating something very special.

▶ How would you describe the taste of your product in five words?

Exceptionally aromatic smooth long finish.

▶ Where did the inspiration for your product come from?

We took inspiration from our travels. We travelled all over the UK, Ireland, Europe, North America and as far afield as Asia to build our understanding of distilling and the spirits industry. We visited a vast array of distilleries from those

that you could fit into your living room or garage through to those of an industrial scale producing tens of millions of litres of pure alcohol per year. However, what truly inspired us was the sheer quality and passion that craft distillers put into each and every bottle. It was fantastic to see such focus on new flavours and recipes. This really emphasised to us how our own views and pallets had been consumed by big brands and products.

▶ Can you tell us a bit about the technology behind the production process?

Although distilling itself is an old technology we employ modern concepts which help us to create an exceptionally aromatic and smooth spirit. Our Still was custom made to our bespoke specification by the oldest family of German Still makers, so we like to think of her as something very beautiful and special. We aim to do things a little differently so we have combined the best of old & new technology; with a 450L Copper Pot Still & two Enrichment Columns. Our Enrichment Columns are truly special, with each housing seven individual bubble plates enabling us to set just the right level of reflux when we distil which helps to create a smooth and aromatic spirit.

To ensure the highest quality spirit possible we also make all our measurements using a precision electronic density meter supplied by Anton-Paar. This enables us to control the precise level of alcohol that is used throughout the distillation and bottling of Shortcross Gin. We also use a range of high precision scales to aid the delicate process of preparing special



botanicals recipe to help ensure the balance of flavours is just right every time.

▶ How has it been starting a business in Northern Ireland? What support have you received?

Like all new businesses starting out there have been many hurdles to overcome, we have made many mistakes from which we have learnt from and found a better method of completing our task in hand. However, I think it's the support of local people and businesses which have been key to our success.

After our initial capital investment we also received assistance through InvestNI through the GAP (Growth Accelerator Programme) to develop and grow our business. The GAP support has enabled us to plan to expand our small team and we are now recruiting for two posts.

▶ What has been the highlight of your business journey so far?

We launched in April and delivering that first box of Shortcross Gin felt like a momentous moment, we had our fingers crossed someone would then purchase a bottle! Needless to say they did purchase a bottle and the reception we received locally was unbelievable, this alone has been fantastic. This cannot be shown better than when Peter Hannan, owner of Hannan Meats introduced our Shortcross Gin to the buyers of Fortnum and Mason when he was dining at Newforge Country House. This led to an introduction and then ultimately a listing, which was pretty spectacular.

▶ As a new business, what have been your main challenges?

Where do we start, there have been so many, but these challenges alone have made us stronger, as we are a small

business we have always sought solutions in a cost effective manner, perhaps doing things a little differently. However, with hindsight as a new business the two main challenges have been the creation of our brand, and secondly, time, as a small team of two, there is never enough time.

▶ Your brand has a strong social media presence, how important has this been to your marketing strategy?

For any new or existing business it is an essential business tool. Without a doubt social media has and will continue to play a key part in the growth of our business, we continually evaluate and analyse our activities to ensure we are reaching the correct channels.

▶ What advice would you give to someone starting a new business?

Nothing can ever be achieved by just thinking about it, just go for it! Help, advice and support is available, the biggest barrier is asking for it!

▶ What are your hopes and ambitions for the future?

We anticipate growth and further development of the distillery through our initial key export markets of Europe and North America. We wish to be recognised as an innovative distillery that hand crafts premium spirits.

▶ Where can we get our hands on ShortCross Gin?

Shortcross Gin is now available through our distribution network of JNWine.com and Prohibition Drinks or for those further afield Fortnum and Mason. An interactive map of full stockists is available on our website

▶ And finally, how do you both drink/serve your Gin?

Shortcross Gin makes a great Gin & Tonic – serve over ice with a good quality tonic such as Fevertree or Thomas Henry and finish with an orange peel garnish.



Accelerating the UK's Digital Economy



CATAPULT

Connected Digital Economy

Increased "digitalisation" is bringing new opportunities to almost every sector of the economy, CDE Catapult is helping companies understand and exploit digital technologies. To find out more about their work, we spoke to Neil Crockett, CEO of the Connected Digital Economy Catapult.

► Could you tell us about CDE Catapult and its work within the Digital Industry?

The Connected Digital Economy Catapult, is a national centre set up to rapidly advance the UK's best digital ideas. We are one of seven Catapults funded by InnovateUK (formerly the Technology Strategy Board).

We enable digital SMEs and start-ups to bring their great ideas to market, more quickly and ultimately help grow the economy.

By 2018, we will have made a difference to 10,000 UK organisations, generating £365 million of linked economic value.

► CDE Catapult is not a funding agency, what kind of support does it provide for businesses and organisations?

We use our expertise to build platforms that many UK businesses can use to innovate on at speed, and with less risk, and thus accelerate digital products to market.

We do this through collaboration with a range of partners interested in the success of the digital economy, including large businesses, start-ups and small businesses, Innovation Clusters, and the research and academic community.

► How important is digital innovation to UK businesses and communities?

The UK is one of the world's strongest digital markets. In fact, the connected digital economy represents 14.4% of our national GDP. The opportunity for the UK is massive. We have a chance to become a world leader in the digital creative industries and in the new wave

of technologies, such as the internet of things. For us the Digital Economy covers both Creative and ICT and the very exciting "fusion" areas between the two.

► What challenges do digital startups face when bringing ideas to market?

When trying to address major challenges, businesses often reach a point where they need to cross some 'chasms' on the way to bringing their products or services to market.

We are supporting data and content innovators in four challenges areas: creating trust in the use of personal data, the Internet of Things – linking data to innovators and next generation connectivity, building diverse data and content sets and the re-use of creative content – first reducing licensing friction.

► How can SMEs in Northern Ireland harness digital opportunities?

Northern Ireland has some great

expertise in areas like data science, cyber and digital creative and harnessing all three in fusion can deliver real economic growth. Northern Ireland's SMEs also have a really exciting opportunity to get involved in the data revolution.

Being from Northern Ireland myself it's a region I'm really passionate about.

We recently sponsored the DANI Awards and I am involved in the Matrix Digital Panel.

▶ Collaboration is key to your vision and strategy. Why?

The Digital Catapult never works alone. We believe the answer to the UK's ongoing digital success lies in convening the many existing initiatives and stakeholders across the UK digital economy – especially getting larger public and private organisations to help

the next wave of UK innovation.

It's about convening what's good rather than always inventing something new. In our convening role it really helps that we are only here for the benefit of the UK economy and to make the UK a better place to live.

▶ Tell us about some of CDE Catapults current projects?

We are working on a number of exciting projects. This includes the Greater Manchester Data Synchronisation Programme, where we are opening up local authority data to drive innovation amongst SMEs.

We are also working with the Copyright Hub to create a service that allows copyright holders to more easily offer their content for reuse. Another is playing our role in the development of the world's first large-scale demonstrator for

5G telecommunications.

▶ The new Digital Catapult Centre opens in November 2014, what can we expect from this new space?

The Centre will be in London's King Cross and will offer a space for technologists, creatives, businesses and academia to showcase products, connect and collaborate.

It includes state-of-the-art collaboration solutions, innovation labs, development spaces and a Data Sphere. We are also planning to open a first wave of regional centres in the near future and use immersive video conferencing to link innovation clusters, like the one in Northern Ireland, to each other in new ways.

To find out more visit
www.cde.catapult.org.uk and
 Twitter: @CDECatapult

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Idea Worth Spreading At TEDxStormont

Following on from the success of last year's TEDxStormont event with Gary Lightbody, Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness, TEDx Stormont 2014 featured a range of individuals who came together to talk about 'Getting There' and to share how together as a society, we can overcome modern day challenges here in Northern Ireland and beyond...

TED is a non-profit organisation devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics — from science to business to global issues — in more than 100 languages. The TED talks first appeared online in 2006 and quickly took off. TED has now surpassed a billion video views and TED Talks are being viewed at a rate of 1.5 million times a day — which means that a new viewing commences 17 times a second.

The locally and independently organised event brought TEDx



back for a second time to Stormont, with twenty three high profile individuals and performers from Northern Ireland and beyond taking to the stage in the Great Hall and sharing ideas with over 200 guests and around 10,000 viewers watching via a live stream.

TEDxStormont offered something for everyone. Launched by Finance Minister Simon Hamilton and compered by broadcaster William Crawley, TEDxStormont featured leading thinkers and doers representing such diverse fields as politics, law, media, sport, science, entertainment, visual and performance art, music, and business among others.

Speakers and Performers on the day included: Lord Alderdice FRCPsych, David Meade, Seán Sherlock, Rt. Hon. Jeffrey Donaldson, Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, Julia Immonen, Jillian



Haslam, ACC Stephen Martin, Beverley Beattie / Allan Leonard, Julie Freeman, Bridgeen Rea, Dana Masters, Joris Minne, Fergus Cumiskey, Dave Gill, Seo Linn, Katharine Phillipa, Rachel Smith, Dr John Sturrock QC, Richard Wasson, Jarek Zasadzinski and Denise Watson. Live Drawer Brian John Spencer was also there on the day to immortalise the speakers in caricature.

The talks varied from the political to the emotional to the musical. Special highlights included Julia Immonen's talk, 'Wish it, Dream it, Do it' and her fight to help end modern-day slavery. Talking about how she would be cycling through slave ports of the past and present day, covering Birmingham, Bristol, Oxford and London, the final stage of her cycle will see 300 people join the team, on Anti-Slavery Day to cycle the final 120km Olympic route. Julia even exited out of the Great Hall on her bicycle!

Rachel Smith had an emotional TEDxStormont talk, 'Writing for the future. Recording conversations at the end of life', as she told us how she writes stories with people to help their children understand what is happening and what will happen to the family. Belfast man and ex-Lord Mayor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir gave a 'Homecoming' talk in the afternoon session, on the Belfast diaspora across the world and how we need our 70 million-strong family to help build the peace in a better Belfast.

The TED talks combined animations, video and sound along with the words of the speaker to spark deep discussions and connections in the crowd, in the iconic Parliament Buildings, with the hope that guests would leave the event and continue to discuss and explore these ideas and connections they have been exposed to through the various TED talks.

The TEDxStormont talks are now available to watch on the TEDxStormont Youtube page.

Career Insight: Laura Moreton from NaviNet

Boston-based, healthcare communications giant, NaviNet Inc. set up its Belfast development centre in 2009. SyncNI caught up with Senior QA Engineer, Laura Moreton, to find out what it is like to work for the company.

► What is your company's elevator pitch?

As America's largest real-time healthcare communications network, it is NaviNet's mission to advance the efficiency and quality of care by delivering health plans, providers, patients and partners the advanced solutions, services and expertise needed to streamline business processes and drive industry-leading innovation.

► How did you get started in the industry?

I studied ICT at GCSE and A-level and really enjoyed the subject. I went on to complete a BSc Hons Computing degree at the University of Ulster. The course was challenging, taught me a wide range of software related skills and included a placement year. The placement at a Belfast based software firm really cemented my desire to pursue a career in the industry as I loved the culture, people and of course the work which challenges me on a daily basis.

► What is a typical "day in the life" for you?

Within NaviNet we work under the Lean Software Development Methodology which organises the Engineering Department into Feature Teams. Each team typically consists of three Software Engineers and one Test Engineer. Our work is tracked on the Kanban boards which are central to our working methodology. As the QA Engineer it is my responsibility to ensure the quality of each user story from initial analysis through to design and implementation and finally, verification. A typical day for me includes reviewing design artifacts produced by the developers, and designing, creating and executing both manual and automated test cases. Each morning we have a standup meeting with the key stakeholders to ensure the team is progressing well with our project. The wider QA function also regularly meet as a team to share ideas and knowledge based on our own experiences within our individual feature teams.

Working in a cross functional team alongside Software Engineers is challenging but also very rewarding. All Test Engineers are empowered to have input into all stages of the development process questioning any practices which may be detrimental to the products' quality.



► What has been your most innovative/exciting project to date?

Over the course of the past 2 years NaviNet has been transitioning from a professional services house, creating tailored solutions for each of our customers, to a product based company with the creation of 'NaviNet Open'. It has been very exciting to be part of this transition which has been a massive milestone for NaviNet as an organisation. It is very rewarding to be part of a company which is innovating and growing so quickly.

► What trends in the industry really excite you?

Context driven testing which challenges the idea that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to testing is not necessarily the most effective. In the future the most effective Test Engineers will be those who have multiple skills that are appropriate in different contexts and who can interpret which skills are relevant in a given situation. I feel that this trend is an encouraging discussion on the roles and responsibilities of testers in an increasingly automated and dynamic software environment.

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Leading The Digital Revolution

With digital technology powering global trade, local businesses are now taking steps to act on the vast opportunities available in this sector. The Digital Action Plan launched by Momentum earlier this year aims for Northern Ireland to be "renowned internationally as a 'world leader' in the provision of digital technologies and services". So how far do we still have to go?

'DIGITAL MATURITY'

According to DNI2020, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN-HABITAT, UNESCO and the International Council for Caring Communities all cite Northern Ireland's digital infrastructure as a model to be followed globally.

However, recent reports such as the Lloyds Bank UK Business Digital Index indicate that a sizeable portion of the SME community are not exploiting digital opportunities to their fullest potential. This year's Business Digital Index measured how effectively SMEs and charities are exploiting social media, online sales and digital advertising. The index also measured the depth of basic online skills and training, and investment in digital infrastructure.

The index found that across the UK:

- 29% of SMEs and charities believe being online isn't relevant for their business
- Only 50% have a website and on the whole, those that do are only providing basic functionality
- A third of businesses are without basic online skills and 75% don't invest any money in improving digital skills.

"It is clear that digital technologies, tools and skills are being exploited by small businesses and charities alike, but that nearly all could be doing more to realise the full potential benefits. This means thousands of UK businesses and charities could be jeopardising their future growth prospects because they don't see the benefits of digital technology. It is also apparent from the research that the UK's SMEs and charities have an urgent need for a deeper understanding of the 'art of the possible' in the digital domain."

Lloyds Bank UK Business Digital Index found.

'THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE'

Digital DNA is an organisation with ambitions to support the SME community in digital adoption locally. In November



of this year Digital DNA will deliver a week-long programme of activity which will showcase how the digital economy and technology more widely can help businesses to grow and access new markets.

In 2013 the conference included speakers from New York Stock Exchange, Google, Facebook, Deloitte Digital, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, NT Dokomo and counted over 300 delegates. This year the aim is to deliver an expanded programme involving young people, workshops, social events and also a full-day conference specifically for the tourism industry in Ireland.

Leading figures from digital media giants - BT, Google, Twitter and Paddy Power - are among those coming to Titanic Belfast to share their insights. National and global innovators in customer relationship management, email marketing, social media, cloud technology, advertising and selling online, SEO, web design, app technology, lead generation and mobile will show how these powerful tools help businesses from every

sector improve operations, increase revenues and realise increased profits. Sponsored by BT, Deloitte Digital, Wellington IT and Invest NI, the full Digital DNA programme will also



feature experts drawn from innovation-led enterprise, venture capital, academia and digital media communities across Northern Ireland, while case studies from successful local enterprises will demonstrate the effectiveness of digital media solutions.

Digital DNA founder Gareth Quinn – who was recently recognised at the DANI Awards for his contribution to the Northern Ireland economy through Digital DNA – said: “The Digital DNA programme is dedicated to boosting the productivity and profitability of Northern Ireland businesses through innovation and inspiration. Last year’s event was a huge success for the industry, and I was particularly pleased with the tremendous contribution made by young people who displayed their skills in app technology. With more content and knowledge on show at Digital DNA 2014, we anticipate that even further lessons will be shared this year.”

One of the innovators addressing Digital DNA this year is Paddy Power’s head of retail technology and business systems Edgardo Savoy. Edgardo says there’s a lot of exciting

technology available for SMEs to make a real impact in their operations and how they engage with customers.

“We operate in an extremely competitive market and it is vital that we understand the needs of our customers and respond quickly to their demands,” he said.

Paddy Power has deployed significant resources into its technology but, according to Edgardo, some of the best tools out there for customer engagement and feedback remain free and relevant to the SME environment.

“Being out there and having a channel for customers to engage with the brand and the people behind the company costs little,” he said.

“My advice to SMEs is to build customer engagement to evolve the business offering and look for efficiencies. Start to create strategies around what customers require. A common mistake in digital is for companies to develop assets that are too generic and not targeted to the audiences they want to go after. The relationship customer’s want with service providers is a more deeper, more personal relationship. Have the confidence to embrace opportunities to engage in a conversation with your customers.”

Digital is now integral to Paddy Power and is integral to its campaign. The ‘We Hear You’ campaign took jokes based on tweets to the Paddy Power account – this was taken to an analogue audience as part of a recent TV strategy. This activity alone led to over 50% growth in new customers and a 29% increase in net revenue. Paddy Power even set a new Guinness World Record with a social footprint increase of almost 1000%, to well over 600,000 fans.

Edgardo Savoy, Paddy Power’s head of retail technology & business systems





Rich Dale, Flowlens and Gareth Quinn, Digital DNA

OLI

The Digital DNA Tourism conference on Friday November 7th in Crumlin Road Goal – partnered by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland – will seek to provide members from the tourism industry and those wishing to benefit from Northern Ireland's growing tourism economy with an understanding of the role technology can play in the success of tourism-related business.

James Hanna of Oli, specialising in Innovation within tourism and heritage, said: "We have seen digital positively impact tourism in Northern Ireland but there is still much more opportunity to be taken advantage of – hence why Digital DNA Tourism is vital for the industry."

FLOWLENS

One of the local case studies showcasing at Digital DNA is Belfast-based Flowlens. Founded in 2006, Flowlens is a "business improvement company" working particularly with companies in manufacturing and export sector.

The company has created a flexible, customer lifecycle management software platform which unites the CRM and Enterprise Resource Planning functions needed by SMEs. Their platform is designed to reduce costs and risks of larger alternatives.

The company – which now has 14 employees – is expecting to expand into new markets in 2015.

CEO Rich Dale said: "A lot of companies have grown up using spreadsheets to manage processes and are at a stage to mature into digital solutions. Our mission is to help our customers unleash their potential, replacing the complex processes, spreadsheets and systems that hold people back."

He added: "We see compromises, wasted effort and wasted cost because businesses have to make up for shortcomings in traditional, legacy software. Instead of people looking at reports on spreadsheets and Word, our system has real-time reports which allow us to see real data in real time and ensure businesses can manage the metrics that matter."

The company has supported global leaders based locally such as Servitech – a leader in life-raft manufacturing. Like many fast growing businesses, the company's service function was over-reliant on paper-based and legacy IT systems, unfit for purpose in supporting the business as it grew. Flowlens deployed their platform to track Servitech's global fleet of life-rafts, manage 650 service stations worldwide and ensure legal compliance in a range of jurisdictions across the world.

Looking to the future, Rich said: "We have a number of opportunities in Ireland and UK - there's a lot of demand for what we're doing in manufacturers and we're very confident about how next year is shaping up."

Interested in Digital DNA? Find out more at:
www.digitaldna-ni.com or follow @Digital_DNA_NI

CREATE:2014 – The Art of Doing

An event with a difference took place in Derry last month, cue CREATE:2014, a creative conference solely organised by 6 young people from across Northern Ireland. The event was the first of its kind in the UK and proved that you are never too young to be successful in the business world. The main aim of CREATE:2014 was to encapsulate the present and future opportunities in the tech industry.

The opportunity to create the unique event was facilitated by Generation Innovation in collaboration with CultureTECH. The collaboration offered six, 8 week internships for 16-18 year olds from all over the country. The team was made up



of Sarah McBride (CEO), Jordan Earle (Programme Director), Matthew Carson (Sponsorship Director), Joshua Kempton (Marketing Director), Gareth Reid (Events Manager) and Kennedy Keeney Robinson (Social Media Director). The young team had complete control of the organisation of the conference and faced challenges like finding a venue, identifying speakers and raising sponsorship.

The team smashed their initial Kickstarter funding goals and managed to raise over £5000 for the conference. Social media helped the young team attract the attention of the business community in Northern Ireland and this resulted in offers of help and sponsorship from companies like Intel, TotalMobile and The Cloud Simplified.

The team managed to secure an array of top speakers including Michael Sayman, the creator of the App 4snaps, Kate Russell from BBC Click and broadcaster, Davy Sims. Over 150 students from local schools attended and were able to learn alongside delegates from the tech and creative industries. The event introduced students to the exciting career opportunities and encouraged them to consider a career in the creative and tech industries. The advantage of having an event created for young people by young people was obvious, the young audience were really engaged in the talks and workshops.



The CREATE:2014 team with Claire Burgoyne, NISP CONNECT Programme Manager

“I was incredibly impressed with the team from the moment they first contacted me. They were professional, enthusiastic and more organised than many people I deal with who have been running events for years! The fact that they came up with the idea and took the initiative to crowd fund it makes them exceptional in my opinion. I think the example this sets to those who attended the event is one of the most valuable lessons any young person can learn; that they can achieve anything they can dream of if they set their mind to it. I suspect a higher percentage of young people in Northern Ireland will finish school with an exceptional attitude over the next few years because of the influence of the Create 14 team.”

Kate Russell, BBC technology reporter & author
<http://katerussell.co.uk>

Claire Burgoyne, NISP CONNECT Programme Manager highlighted the success of the event.

“Any doubts that this might be too big a challenge were soon wiped away when the winners of our competition gathered in Derry in early July 2014. Their energy and imagination has been outstanding from day one. By the time the big day came on September 17th our six teenagers had flown in a dazzling array of top speakers. The result of CREATE:2014 has been to underline the impressive tech, networking, design and entrepreneurial skills of the younger generation here in Northern Ireland. CREATE:2014 was a pilot but the impact has ensured that many more events will follow.”

Generation Innovation is a programme supporting those young people from Northern Ireland with the highest potential to succeed in the new economy. Applications for Generation Innovation 2014/15 can be downloaded from www.generationinnovation.co.uk

The Cloud Simplified Launches Simple Start-up Incubator

A leading IT solutions provider has announced an exciting free initiative to help NI & UK start-ups survive those crucial early months.

Lack of finance is one of the primary reasons why as many as one-in-three new start-ups fail during the first three years - and one of the major expenses for any fledgling business is getting essential technology in place. Now, thanks to a Lisburn-based IT company, Northern Ireland & UK start-ups can take advantage of a host of technology resources and support designed to help them survive those crucial early months. And the great news is that it's all free.

Simple Start-up Incubator is the brain-child of The Cloud Simplified, the world class cloud computing platform provided by Xperience Group, an established IT solutions provider with



Aislinn O'Conner, Eoin O'Reilly & Shaunagh Devlin

offices in Lisburn, Belfast, Peterborough and Glasgow. The exciting new initiative provides participants with twelve months of essential services - from free website hosting and cloud services through to discounted laptops and PCs plus free technical support and advice. Start-ups even get to spend a day at the IBM Innovation Centre as well as access to IBM software via IBM BlueMix, both also completely free.

The criteria? Any Northern Irish or



Left – Right Kate Russell (BBC's Click), Nicola McNair (SyncNI) Sarah McBride (CEO Create 2014), Eoin O'Reilly (The Cloud Simplified)

UK start-up of less than six months old or participants of a state-funded organisation such as Techstart NI, Invest NI or the Propel Programme. The catch? There isn't one. As Xperience Group's Eoin O'Reilly explains: "Our founders have never forgotten the invaluable support they received when, as a couple of professors from Queens University, they had a vision to create a company that would provide cost effective and personalised IT solutions for NI businesses.

Now, after forty-five strong years of business, Xperience Group would like to give something back. This is why we are offering to provide start-ups with a helping hand, free of charge."

Northern Ireland's Tech & Business Community, Sync NI, will be providing the Simple Start-up Incubator with dedicated space on their website.

Incubator participants will also receive PR support and the startup that attracts the most views on the Sync NI website and social media platform will be provided with a complimentary six month membership pass to use

the platform as a significant marketing resource. Simple Start-up Incubator was launched at Create:2014 on 17th September 2014 with the help of Sarah McBride CEO of the Create:2014 team and Kate Russell, presenter of BBC's flagship technology programme 'Click', who was the main speaker for Create:2014 on the day.

Create:2014 was a one-day creative conference designed, curated and produced by six young people from Northern Ireland to inspire the next generation of local creative minds. "We've been really inspired by what the team at Create:2014 is doing" says O'Reilly, "So it seemed the perfect launch-pad for our new Simple Start-up Incubator."

Any new start-ups that would like to register for one of the free places available for 2014 & 2015 should visit: www.thecloudsimplified.com/startup-incubator

For more information please contact:
Eoin O'Reilly – The Cloud Simplified (An Xperience Group Business)
eoin@xperience-group.com

Dream No Little Dreams

Allstate Northern Ireland recently held a Global Leadership Conference at the William J Clinton Leadership Institute at Queen's Riddell Hall. This was a fitting venue for Allstate NI because of the Institute's link with its parent company, The Allstate Corporation, in the US. More than 150 of Allstate's global managers gathered to hear from a number of key speakers at the event, including current President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast, Professor Patrick Johnston, who encouraged leaders to "dream no little dreams."

In his speech to Allstate's leaders, Professor Johnston emphasized the importance of leadership as having a "passion for making a difference, a passion that goes beyond the individual to the collective." Professor Johnston likened his experience as Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University and said, "Like Allstate we view our people as our most important ingredient – We take time to invest in our staff, focus on leadership, meritocracy and transparency, and do it in a way that lets everyone have a collective ownership."



learn to take the time and patience to reach your destination." Professor Johnston concluded his presentation to the group by saying, "leadership is about courage, conviction and putting you second – not first."

Professor Johnston made such a lasting impression not only on Allstate's employees but on Suren Gupta, Allstate's executive vice president of technology and operations, that he invited Professor Johnston to speak at a leadership meeting at the company's US headquarters.

Suren Gupta thanked Professor Johnston for his contribution to both events and said, "Professor Johnston is inspiring, both to me personally and to our global leadership team. His passion and commitment to research and development and making a difference in people's lives is simply outstanding.

"Allstate NI already has a long standing relationship with Queen's but we hope to expand that into new arenas within research and development and are currently working on an exciting project relating to cybersecurity. It is the unique collaboration between education, government, business and the talented workforce that makes Northern Ireland so attractive as a destination."



Allstate NI has recently embarked on a global leadership program for people who work with employees across the US, Northern Ireland and India, providing crucial development for leaders who now work across multiple time zones, manage teams virtually and face cultural differences.

Research shows good local leaders do not necessarily make good global leaders and that different mindsets and skills are required. Professor Johnston talked about his experiences of working in Washington, DC, and globally to establish Queen's University as a world class research centre. He encouraged Allstate's leaders to, "not be afraid to make mistakes but also



Allstate.
 NORTHERN IRELAND

If you would like to find out more about working at Allstate NI visit www.allstateni.com or for more information on the Leadership Institute visit <http://www.leadershipinstitute.co.uk>



The Rise Of iBeacon



RF proximity

mybeacon

RF Proximity Ltd. is a small Northern Irish company based at the Northern Ireland Science Park in Belfast. The company researches, develops and delivers integrated software and hardware solutions including location-aware mobile applications. The company is currently working with several leading multi-national companies on a wide range of applications including retail iBeacon solutions, asset management systems, healthcare and security applications.

iBeacon technology is currently one of the most talked about innovations but what is it? It has been hailed as one of the most transformative mobile technologies to come along in the last decade. The technology lets businesses set up transmitters which can alert nearby smartphones of their presence. It sounds relatively simple but the technology is tipped to transform how retailers, event organisers, educational institutions and transport systems communicate with people. The technology is already being used by industry giants like Virgin Atlantic and Starbucks.

We asked Developer, Paul Doherty to tell us about his experience working with exciting technologies in RF Proximity.

The Developer's viewpoint...

Some programming jobs can be quite repetitive and tedious. This can sometimes be the case when working on large projects where different teams work on parts of the solution or when re-branding the same program over and over again.

Working with RF Proximity is the exact opposite! As a small diverse team we work together on developing end-to-end solutions so I find myself meeting customers, project planning and working very closely with other team members who are developing new electronic devices. You get a real feel for the projects and how your work is contributing to the overall success of the business.

It is also exciting and challenging to be working at the forefront of new technologies. For example, the company developed one of the first non-retail iBeacon products (a car parking solution called U-Parked Here) – as an App Developer it isn't very often that you get to be first in the world with an App in the App Store! It's also great to be working with a company with a truly global reach. For example, I recently completed a mobile App for a large American company to use at a trade show in Chicago – another first that used iBeacons to help the company's staff meet up with customers.

Although we are a small team we are working with some of the world's biggest companies so our work varies from day-to-day. This week I am working on a retail solution that is being trialled by Unilever and next week I am going to England for a project initiation with Network Rail.

To find out more about RF Proximity

Email: hello@rfproximity.com

Twitter: [@rfProximity](https://twitter.com/rfProximity)

Go Berserk



Imagine, with no previous experience, after just three lessons you have made your own website with pictures, videos and links and put it online for free. Now imagine that you've done that and you're eight years old!

Who we are

"We started in 2012 from a kitchen table in Belfast with an idea, a website and the backing of four major IT firms"

Go Berserk is a company that is passionate about teaching children real code to make their own websites. We believe this will help them take advantage of the IT jobs and opportunities in the growing digital economy. We've also seen how learning code increases the confidence and reasoning skills of every child, particularly children who are considered to be low achievers or children with special educational needs.

Where we came from

What a journey it has been, so far! Last year, we accomplished our goal of placing one free copy of Go Berserk in every school in Northern Ireland and with orders coming from Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland to as far afield as America and Australia we have been blown away by the level of support. It is marvellous to hear from educationalists how Go Berserk facilitates an exhilarating and interactive learning path. Our first online code tutor, which allows anyone to correct errors in any HTML code they have written, is quickly making its mark in schools throughout the province.

This year's achievements

This year, we were awarded the

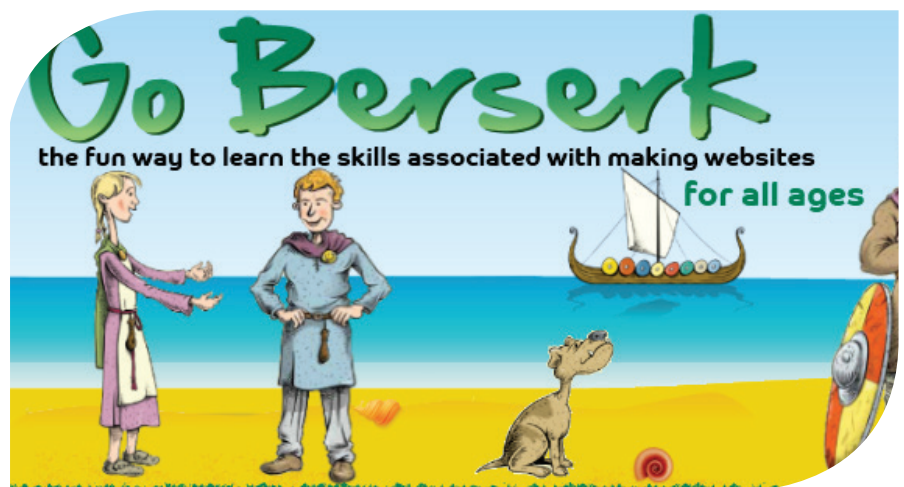
Blackboard Teaching Tech award and a Bronze Award in the Learning Awards. Based on our work in Northern Ireland we were chosen by the US Embassy to tour organisations in four US States to see how they were teaching coding and computer science in schools.

With help from DCAL in April we give a class-set of Go Berserk books to every school in Derry and offered training to teachers in each of the schools for free.

This enabled Derry to deliver on its digital legacy from City of Culture 2013, and has made it the only city in the

"When the designers of Scratch in MIT, the developers of Kodu in Microsoft and representatives of Google Education saw Go Berserk their response was "WOW".

set to launch a book on how to design professional websites including Facebook and Twitter feeds. Early 2015 will see us unveil a further two additions that show how to make games for any platform using HTML5 and CSS. By the end of next year, we'll have released books on Java, VB.NET, Csharp, Python and PHP – all designed for eight year



world where every school has resources and training to teach real coding! We were very happy to discuss all of this in the keynote address for the first Computers at Schools Conference in Northern Ireland.

Where we are going

We are currently working on the next four books in the Go Berserk series: as a direct follow-on from the existing resources, a book which teaches eight year olds how to make more advanced websites with Javascript and CSS.

Towards the end of 2014, we are

olds and all in paperback and e-book formats.

We are committed to helping our children increase their confidence, and release their creativity by learning real code. We've seen how this can transform children's self-belief and enthusiasm to learn, and would love to see every child in Northern Ireland have this experience.

For more information

Website: <http://www.go-berserk.com/>
Twitter: @GoBerserk1

NI Digital Industry Shines at DANI Awards

The best of Northern Ireland's Digital and Creative talent celebrated industry excellence at the fourth annual DANI Awards on Friday 19th of September. The venue for the Gala evening was St Columbs Hall, Derry and the host for the night was actor and comedian, David Schneider.

The DANI Awards is organised by Digital Advertising Northern Ireland and brings together clients and agencies, recognising the best work in the Digital and Creative industries.

🎯 Digital Culture

Winner - Thing by Paul McNally and Engage

Commended - Inheritance by Amanda Doherty

Stravaganza NI



🎯 Not for Profit

Winner

NI Hospice Buy a Brick by Mammoth Digital

Commended

Zambia by South West College
Aware Defeat Depression



🎯 Website of the Year

Winner - Digitalprinting.co.uk

Commended - Todd's Leap, Equality Commission, Consumer Council

🎯 Web App

Winner - Funeral Times by The Web Bureau

Commended - Rushmere Shopping Centre by Ardmore

🎯 Viral

Winner - Firefly

Commended - Fred J Malcolm by Show & Tell, Ulster Rugby by Little Giant Films

🎯 Mobile

Winner - Get Invited

Commended - Danske Bank, Barking Buzz by Engage

🎯 Social

Winner - Your Dog Your Job by Belfast City Council

Commended - Sport Changes Life by Mammoth Digital, Total Mobile

🎯 E-Learning

Winner - Creative Centenaries for The Nerve Centre by Whitenoise

Commended - Big Video Challenge, Adapt Learning

🎯 Online Strategy

Winner - Sliderobes

Commended - Firefly, Forestside Shopping Centre by Ardmore

🎯 Gaming & Animation

Winner - The Ideas Factory by Whitenoise

Commended - Beep Blip Games, Fab Lab @ The Nerve Centre

🎯 Exporter

Winner - Rug House

Commended - Linwoods, Firefly

🎯 Rising Star

Winner - Firefly Friends

Commended - Flint Studios, JyroBike

🎯 NI Digital Hero

Winner - Gareth Quinn

Commended - Daryl Conway, Betty Mc Nerlin

🎯 Digital Agency

Winner - The Web Bureau

Commended - Whitenoise, Engage

🎯 Digital Person of the Year

Winner - Barry Adams

Commended - Louise McCartan, Victoria Hutchinson

Event Spotlight

Web Summit – Where the Tech World Meets //4th - 6th Nov 2014, Dublin



It's been called "the best technology conference on the planet". Within three years Web Summit has become one of the world's most influential and international tech events.

This year Web Summit 2014 will showcase over 500 world-renowned speakers, 10 stages including the Digital Marketing, Internet of Things, Enterprise, and Builders Summits, 2,000 worldwide startups invited to exhibit their ideas, 200+ satellite events, 1,000 experienced investors, and 800 of the best tech journalists. For three days this November, Dublin will

once again become the international tech capital. Big-name speakers include former Apple CEO John Sculley, the founders of Hailo and Dropbox, David Carr of the New York Times, actress Eva Longoria and Irish rugby player Jamie Heaslip.

The event is a networking paradise for attendees with guests ranging from Fortune 500 companies to the most exciting startups in the world.

For tickets and more info visit www.websummit.net
TWITTER: @WebSummitHQ

Big Data Week //20th - 23rd April 2015, Belfast

Belfast's role as a 'big data' centre is set to strengthen next year when it plays host to 'Big Data Week' for a second year. The festival will provide an insight into technology trends and will attract Big Data experts to Northern Ireland.

There will be many Big Data Related activities held throughout Belfast culminating in the main conference event in the Titanic Building on 23rd April.

The conference will be coordinated once again by Belfast-based Analytics Engines. More information will be



available when the website launches next month.

TWITTER: @AEacceleration
TWITTER: @bigdataweek

Upcoming Events

1 Belfast Media Festival

BY Belfast Media Festival with Special Guests

WHEN 6th - 7th Nov 2014

WHERE MAC Belfast

TWITTER @BelfastMedFest

2 Friday Night Mashup

BY Friday Night Mashup

WHEN 5th Dec 2014

WHERE Belfast

TWITTER @FNMashup

3 Women in Business Awards 2014

BY WIBNI

WHEN 20th Nov 2014

WHERE Culloden Estate and Spa

TWITTER @wibni

Would you like your event highlighted in the Sync NI Magazine or online at www.syncni.com?

Email the Sync NI team at info@syncni.com to find out more.

Logging Off...

This Autumn has been a busy time for the NI Tech and Business scene – it has seen a whirlwind of events, job announcements and entrepreneurial excellence. We have enjoyed a jam-packed schedule of events – highlights have included Invent 2014, TEDx, FNMashup and of course CultureTECH festival which once again celebrated our vibrant and thriving Tech scene.

This edition of the Sync NI magazine has placed a strong emphasis on events – we see them not only as networking opportunities but also as the lifeblood of our economy in NI.

Over the past few months we have lost count of the number of job announcements that we have covered, it has been truly uplifting to attract leading Tech companies to Northern Ireland. Just a few of the international companies that have decided to set up base here are Chelsea Apps Factory, Rapid 7 and Puppet Labs. With all this good news comes the question 'How do we maintain and improve on tech investment in Northern Ireland?'

The answer to this lies firmly with our current and future workforce! In the foreword to this magazine, Mark Bennett said that 'the workforce in Northern

Ireland is what keeps companies committed to here'. It is clear that we need to nurture and grow the talent pool in Northern Ireland if we are to continue competing for investment on an international level.

Earlier in this magazine you will have read about CREATE:2014, this event encapsulated the present and future opportunities in the Tech industry. Not only did it introduce a young audience to the exciting career prospects in Tech but what really impressed us was the fact that it moved the NI Tech and Business community to collaborate to inspire a future workforce. The young organisers managed to raise a whopping £5000 with support from local companies. It is this type of collaboration that will continue to drive our economy.

Another driving force for the NI economy is digital technology. With digital technology powering global trade, local businesses are taking steps to act on the vast opportunities that come with the digital economy. Digital support and knowledge sharing is on the increase; companies like CDE Catapult are rapidly advancing the UK's digital potential. In November Digital DNA will bring leading tech companies to NI to advise businesses on how they can make the



most of digital opportunities.

Julian David, chief executive of TechUK said 'Get it right and the action we take over the next five years can secure our digital future for the next 30'. The future is bright in Northern Ireland, but we will only reach our full potential if we work now to secure our future.

Thank you for reading and check out www.syncni.com for a daily roundup of the latest happenings in the Northern Irish Tech & Business community.

The Sync NI Team

Sync NI Can Help Your Business

Digital Marketing

Brand Exposure

Recruitment

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Wellington

Professional Recruitment



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**The
New York
Times**

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gizmag

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