

# Coventry University: **Helping Business through the Downturn**



## INTRODUCTION



On November 28th 2008 David Lammy MP launched **Standing Together: Universities Helping Business through the Downturn**.<sup>1</sup> Produced by Universities UK, GuildHE and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Standing Together showcased the ways in which Higher Education Institutions could provide assistance to businesses during the current challenging economic climate.

Coventry University has always believed in working closely with industrial partners, be they local businesses, national companies or multi-national corporations, and we are proud to be seen as a “business-facing” university. The global recession makes the work we undertake with business more important than ever. We can work with **your** business to help solve some of the problems

engendered by the current economic downturn in a variety of ways:

- **Identify new ways of working**
- **Provide access to staff expertise & student skills**
- **Subsidised training**
- **Provide access to funding**
- **Assistance with starting and growing businesses**
- **Supply flexible business accommodation**
- **Explore new markets - at home and abroad**

### Coventry University - Working with Business: Key Facts

- Collaborative partnerships with 100+ major companies
- Supported over 7500 SME's and worked with over 500 larger companies in 2007-08
- Over 120 start-up companies assisted each year
- Over 600 staff engaged in working with business
- Free office facilities and support for opening overseas operations in 23 countries around the world

<sup>1</sup> [www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/standingtogether.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/econsoc/standingtogether.pdf)

## INNOVATION, KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER & SUPPORTING BUSINESS

Innovation and enterprise is at the heart of everything we do at Coventry University, a fact recognised recently when the University was highly commended in the Entrepreneurial University of the Year category at the 2008 Times Higher Education Awards. We were also identified by the Higher Education Funding Council for England as one of eight universities demonstrating excellent practice in our Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) strategy in 2008.

Our commercial activities focus on innovation, design, high performance automotive engineering, health, environment and ICT. Through this activity we have, to date, supported thousands of small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and our project activity has been able to demonstrate hundreds of new jobs established and thousands of existing jobs safeguarded.

Our innovative outlook means that we are able to come up with new solutions to problems that a business has been facing for a long time – something that is useful in times of economic plenty but can prove invaluable to surviving times of economic hardship. Whether your business needs to develop a genuinely innovative product; think of a new method of working productively; or just needs a little extra help and support why not contact us and see how we can help you?

### New Ways of Working

**Location Independent Working (LIW)** is a form of flexible e-working that allows staff members to undertake work in the best location for the particular task they are working on. Coventry University itself introduced LIW on its Technology Park in 2002 and since then has continued to roll out the programme across the campus and has seen huge benefits such as:

- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Lower operating and administrative costs
- Additional income raised through letting out the additional space gained

A new way of working could make all the difference to your business, allowing you to cut overheads significantly without laying off staff. Why not talk to a consultant from Coventry University about the possibility of introducing a new working practice solution?



## Access to Expertise

With over 2,000 staff and 18,000 students Coventry University has significant expertise, as well as facilities and equipment, which can be accessed to help solve genuine business problems and to deliver economic, commercial, environmental, cultural or social benefits.

The University is recognised as leading in a number of key areas including:

- **Serious Games Institute** - bringing together the latest computer gaming technology and simulation to change and improve learning and training <sup>2</sup>
- **Institute for Creative Enterprise** - encouraging the development of new and existing businesses in the performing and creative arts <sup>3</sup>
- **Health Design and Technology Institute** - supporting the development of next generation healthcare products and services <sup>4</sup>
- **ACT-UK** - the UK centre for construction management training using virtual reality simulation technology <sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [www.seriousgamesinstitute.org.uk](http://www.seriousgamesinstitute.org.uk)

<sup>3</sup> [www.coventry.ac.uk/ice](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/ice)

<sup>4</sup> [www.coventry.ac.uk/hdti](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/hdti)

<sup>5</sup> [www.act-uk.co.uk](http://www.act-uk.co.uk)



## Business Support

We can also offer a wide range of business development and support services through Coventry University's many specialist SME development projects. These range from business innovation and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to international trade as well as our **Business Enterprise Works** (BEW) project. The Business Enterprise Works project has been established to assist business start-ups and provide business support to SMEs in Coventry and Warwickshire.<sup>6</sup> If you have an innovative or high-tech product or service idea BEW can provide you with:

- Access to flexible office space at Coventry University Technology Park
- One-to-one business mentoring to help you as you set up
- Training to help you learn all the basics as you start your business
- Membership of Network Plus, a networking series designed for new and small businesses



Business Enterprise Works

## Helping to Get Your Business off the Ground: Morphity Ltd

Morphity Ltd's Jugglefrogs idea is simple: an online community where homeowners can quickly and easily find trustworthy tradesmen following the recommendations of other users. The site has made Morphity another of the University's SME success stories for. The company won "The Big Idea" – a Dragon's Den style competition run by Business Enterprise Works – which gave them free access to office space on the Technology Park as well as our business incubation and support services. The competition win ensured the fledgling business received excellent press coverage and access to services that meant they were able to run a professional outfit from the start. Jugglefrogs also used BEW's business mentoring service to provide support and guidance as they developed. With the help of Coventry University, Jugglefrogs have recently accessed European Union funding, winning a £10k grant from the Innovation Networks programme.

Would you like to access funding, advice and support for your new business? Coventry University can provide all three...

## Breaking into New Markets: HDTI and Opal Contracts

Opal Contracts, a Birmingham-based manufacturer of window blinds and curtain tracks, approached Coventry University's Health Design & Technology Institute for assistance with developing their new product for commercial use. The company had thought of a new type of curtain-fixing clip which enabled the easy packing, storage and handling of disposable curtains – a product specifically targeted at the healthcare market as part of the drive to reduce the spread of infections such as MRSA in hospitals.

HDTI were able to assist with design improvements and the production of prototypes which informed the final design for manufacture. They also produced a series of animations demonstrating the product concept which Opal were able to use as a marketing tool. Furthermore, through HDTI, Opal were able to locate a suitable manufacturing partner. Opal's first contract with a major NHS Trust, worth £300k, was awarded in 2008 and the product is being evaluated by several other NHS Trusts.

With the help of Coventry University Opal were able to develop a product outside of their normal offering which will generate a considerable amount of profit. Could we help your business do the same?

## Flexible Business Accommodation

**Coventry University Technology Park** offers a range of accommodation for businesses in various stages of development.<sup>7</sup> Whether you are an innovative new business looking for a professional initial base; a design-oriented company looking for a creative working environment or an expanding company in search of the ideal West Midlands location we have the solution for you.

<sup>6</sup> [www.businessenterpriseworks.org](http://www.businessenterpriseworks.org)

<sup>7</sup> [www.coventry.ac.uk/cutp](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/cutp)



## SKILLS, TRAINING & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Subsidised Training

During the economic downturn the need to develop the skills of your workforce is more crucial than ever. Whilst difficult circumstances may make it necessary to rationalise and reduce the workforce to ensure you remain competitive it is also important to retain and develop those individuals within an organisation who are skilled and have potential for the future.

**ACUA Ltd**, our wholly-owned training company, offers subsidised training courses specifically designed to meet the needs of employers.<sup>8</sup> These are delivered in the workplace, each employer is also allocated a Learning & Development Consultant who works on-site and tailors the programme to meet the specific needs of your organisation and your staff. The training received is therefore instantly relevant to an individual's workload and the challenges they face. The course also provides a recognised Higher Education level qualification and there is the option to acquire an NVQ or a Foundation Level qualification through additional study.



## Capitalising on Student Skills and Knowledge

Coventry University places a high value on the future employability of its students. Many of our courses are tailored to suit the demands of industry and involve sandwich years, internships or projects with industry partners as a required element. These opportunities are beneficial to our students but also provide employers with an invaluable pool of skills to draw upon. Placement students bring cutting-edge knowledge and their input can help improve a business' competitiveness without breaking the bank.

We offer placements at undergraduate and postgraduate level on many of our courses. In particular our MBA Internship Scheme has been very popular with students and employers alike, providing host companies with a postgraduate student dedicated to undertaking a significant workplace project on behalf of their organisation. We work in partnership with a wide range of host companies including organisations within the private, public and voluntary sector both locally, nationally and internationally.



### CASE STUDY: COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE NHS PARTNERSHIP TRUST

In 2008 the Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust decided to enrol a cohort of staff on ACUA's Capability Improvement Programme (CIP). There were a range of staff targeted, among them clinical staff, ward managers and other promising individuals, all based at a variety of the Trusts' sites around the region. The CIP complemented the NHS's existing knowledge & skills framework which allowed the students to map their progress against their existing core job competencies.

The Trust felt the biggest benefit of the CIP was having a Learning & Development Consultant (LDC) on site - as the LDC observes the working environment, the challenges faced and the way individuals react to differing situations. The CIP is a mix of core management and personal development skills but is further tailored by the LDC to suit individual students using critical incidents and case studies from the student's day-to-day role. This helps to improve the speed of their learning and minimises any disruption to services.

For example: One senior manager within the Trust used an assignment topic to investigate his own role in determining the culture of his Department and the effect his management style has on other managers. As a result he developed a different way of working which empowered other managers within the unit to take more responsibility and accountability for their own work.

The subsidised workforce training ACUA provides can give your employees that extra edge and enthusiasm that will place your company ahead of the competition and position you for success now and in the future.

### MBA Internship: Riding for the Disabled

**The Company:** Riding for the Disabled is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities, through the provision of opportunities for riding and carriage driving. The aim is to improve health and wellbeing, delivering therapy that not only benefits mobility and co-ordination, but encourages confidence and self worth whilst having fun.

**The Project:** Being in a competitive charitable environment the organisation wanted an independent review of its current engagement with marketing and to understand if and how the organisation could benefit from a more marketing oriented approach.

**The Result:** "We have been very impressed and pleased with the whole experience of having a Masters Intern from Coventry University. The preparation and support from the University was comprehensive and helped ensure a successful programme. Most importantly, the intern was excellently matched to our brief and has produced a well-researched and comprehensive piece of work. I have no doubt that we will act on most, if not all, of her recommendations and that these will have a major and positive impact on Riding for the Disabled" Ed Bracher, Chief Executive Riding for the Disabled ([www.riding-for-disabled.org.uk](http://www.riding-for-disabled.org.uk))

Many companies have found Coventry University interns to be an innovative and cost-effective way of improving their business practice. Could we do the same for your business?

<sup>8</sup> [www.acua.uk.com](http://www.acua.uk.com)



## Helping you to find the right people

We also have our own commercial recruitment agency, **the futureworks**, which was established to provide quality, intelligent and flexible temporary and permanent recruitment solutions across all sectors and at all levels.<sup>9</sup> Whilst **the futureworks** sources full and part time opportunities for students, graduates and post-graduates, our service does not end there, **the futureworks** are committed to the highest levels of service and aim to provide the best quality recruitment matches for employers by visiting all potential clients to gain a thorough understanding of organisational structure and ‘best fit’.

### ACCESS TO FUNDING

Coventry University can help you access a number of funding schemes designed for you to get the most out of your business. This section highlights the current schemes to which the University can provide access, assist in applications and guide you through the funding process.

It is also possible to claim Tax Credits on Research and Development work undertaken with Universities. For further information please see the HMRC website - <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/randd/>

### Shorter Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs)

Shorter KTPs are intended to assist small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which have the potential for growth and have a project requiring expertise not available within the organisation. The Shorter KTPs are a great way for micro-sized organisations and SMEs that have not previously engaged with a university or college to do so.

Key facts about the shorter KTP:

- Deliver projects to address short-term, tactical business issues over a duration of 10 – 40 weeks
- A partnership between a local company, a regional university and a qualified associate (normally a graduate of the university)
- 40% - 60% of the funding for the project is provided by the government
- The Shorter KTP can stand alone, run in parallel with another KTP project, or can lead to another Shorter or Classic KTP

The Shorter KTP Programme in the West Midlands will be managed by Coventry University and delivered in partnership with the Technology Strategy Board and Wolverhampton University with collaboration from other universities across the region.

<sup>9</sup> [www.thefutureworks.org.uk](http://www.thefutureworks.org.uk)

## Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

Coventry University also offers companies the chance to become involved in Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, funded by the Technology Strategy Board.<sup>10</sup> A Classic KTP provides access to one or more graduates (known as KTP Associates) who will work full-time within your company on a project central to your needs. The KTP Associates are jointly supervised by company personnel and a senior academic.

**Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnerships** attract a government grant of up to 60% of the total cost of the project which includes the salary paid to the Associates, academic expertise and the administrative support provided by the University. The typical duration of a Coventry University Classic KTP is two years.

Classic KTPs provide resources and expertise to organisations that wish to innovate, expand or improve their performance and can help your company:

- find an innovative solution to help your business grow
- increase your competitive advantage
- access recently qualified people to spearhead new projects
- access experts who can help take your business forward

<sup>10</sup> [www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)



### Knowledge Transfer Partnership: Durabuild Architectural

Durabuild are a Coventry-based conservatory manufacturer and retailer firm best known for their Fawsley brand. They chose to take on a Coventry University student through the Classic Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme and have found the experience invaluable. They were looking for someone who could design and implement a new computer system to provide effective cost control and cost analysis, and as well as training all of Durabuild’s staff on the use of the new software.

The new cost control system developed by the student has now been implemented and will provide huge benefits to the company as they design, manufacture, install and guarantee all of their own products. The system will allow for improved estimation systems, better tracking of bought-in items and ultimately an increase in profitability. Durabuild Director Paul Martin strongly recommends a Knowledge Transfer Partnership to other businesses describing it as a “cost effective way to make change for the better”.

Interested in accessing Coventry University’s knowledge base in a way that could increase your productivity and profitability? A Knowledge Transfer Partnership, whether classic or shorter, could be the way forward.



### Access Direct Cash Support Quickly and Easily through Innovation Networks

The **Innovation Networks Programme** offers grant support of up to £15,000 to groups of at least three SMEs who are working together on the development of an innovative product, process or service. The programme, which is run by Coventry University and funded by Advantage West Midlands and the European Regional Development Fund, encourages collaboration between small and medium sized companies.<sup>11</sup> Collaboration can be essential for small businesses to gain access to skills that are not available in-house and over 90% of previous Innovation Networks respondents reported finding their partners useful or essential to their projects. The project has already assisted 280 networks resulting in nearly 300 jobs being created or safeguarded and over £14m of new sales. Owing to its success over the last six years, the Innovation Networks project has been awarded additional funding to run until March 2011.

<sup>11</sup> <http://2wm.co.uk/innovation-networks>

### Innovation Networks: Screen Management

Screen Management grew from the desire of its founder Angela Webster to encourage increased training and higher standards in the windscreen repair industry. Innovation Networks provided her with a way to get her ideas off the ground by helping her win a grant of £10,000.

Angela's company model involved skilled independent technicians from across the country signing up to be a member of Screen Management, thus allowing them to compete at a national level. Screen Management's centralised telephone system offers a national service, managing repairs from call-out to completion, but provides a high standard of local delivery. Because the company works with a network of local technicians their response times can be much faster – operating on a “same day/next day” basis dependent on when your call is received. Screen Management also provides support to customers with a fleet of vehicles that may need repairing and operates as a preferred supplier for insurers.

Screen Management are also launching training centres across the country to train their network of technicians so that they are able to the Institute of Motor Industry's Automotive Technician Accreditation. Angela says her ultimate goal is to “have a fleet of independent [technicians], with years of experience – all ATA Master Technicians who know how to fit a screen safely and correctly”.

If you have an innovative business idea which you could develop by working in partnership with other small businesses then the Innovation Networks scheme could help you.

### Knowledge Transfer Enterprise Grants

The **Knowledge Transfer Enterprise Grant** (KTEG) scheme is unique to Coventry University and offers external organisations the chance to work with University staff on a short project, of up to three months, aimed at improving the effectiveness of the external organisation's operation. We offer grants of up to £3000, which are match-funded by your company, allowing you to draw upon the experience and expertise of members of University staff and students in a cost effective way to solve a real business problem.



### Knowledge Transfer Enterprise Grant with Keight's Precision Tooling

During this project two academics from Coventry University secured a grant of just under £3000 to work with Keight's Precision Tooling in assisting with the research and development of a unique three position, multifunction walking stick handle.

An evaluation of the design was undertaken with walking stick users and professional therapists. The study found that the idea of a new design which challenged the existing range of choices for walking stick handles was viewed positively. However, the prototype design tested was not seen as fit for purpose. The evaluation showed two potential markets that could be exploited by redesigning the product:

- a specialist neurological application for users with balance problems
- a more generic redesign incorporating the feedback given by both sets of users

Suggestions for redesigning the product to suit both these markets were then made to the company so that the redesign could be progressed. It was also recommended that a further trial was carried out on the redesigned product before it was produced commercially.

### Exploiting New Markets: At Home and Abroad

#### Expanding Your Product Base: Intellectual Property

Coventry University Industrial Product Design graduate and keen sailor Steven Eltringham's innovative new design – the R-Pro Trapeze Harness – was designed by Steven with his fellow sailors in mind. Finding existing sailing harnesses uncomfortable and restrictive he set out to see if he could do better. The result was the R-Pro, an innovative new design which incorporates a quick release harness and buckle for increased mobility and a spinal support system for increased comfort. The product complies with ISAF regulations for competition trapeze sailing and Steven hopes that it will revolutionise the market. CUE Ltd and Stephen Eltringham are now offering interested parties the opportunity to acquire a global licence for the manufacture & sail of the R-Pro Trapeze Harness.

This is one of hundreds of cutting-edge ideas that our students and graduates come up with each year. Our Technology Transfer Office is able to facilitate negotiations regarding the licensing of these products for production – providing you with a vital extra edge over your competitors. We offer very competitive royalty rates to encourage rapid market entry.

## Expansion Overseas: Soft Landing Zones

The **Soft Landing Zone** programme is a joint venture between Coventry University and UKTI.<sup>12</sup> It consists of a network of global offices which could help your company access new international markets with minimum outlay at a time when the export market has been strengthened by the comparative weakness of the pound. The Soft Landing Zones are a network of high-tech offices located on Science Parks across the globe. They have been established in many high-growth markets such as China, India, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, Poland, Middle East, Romania and Sweden, and the network is continually expanding. We offer a package of support for small businesses who are looking to access growing markets across the globe, we are able to provide dedicated office space, access to IT and meeting rooms, but also provide 'hands on' support in developing your business, from local market reports, translation services, access to finance, accountancy and legal services.

<sup>12</sup> [www.ukbasepoint.com](http://www.ukbasepoint.com)

## Coventry University: A thriving centre of education and enterprise with big plans for the future...



Whatever your company needs to survive the economic downturn – from workforce training to student interns, research and development to graduate recruitment – Coventry University is here for you. We look forward to working with you in the very near future.



*'Visualisation of our new Engineering and Computing Building  
– scheduled for completion September 2011'*

For further information or for a no-obligations discussion please contact  
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Further information can also be found on our website  
**[www.coventry.ac.uk](http://www.coventry.ac.uk)** under Services for Business