

DELIVERING DESIGN AT A DISTANCE

LOSSES & GAINS

THE WINNERS & LOSERS OF DESIGNING AT A DISTANCE



Our personal lives and living spaces have taken centre stage in our livelihoods.

Daily video calls broadcasting our kids, our pets, and the clutter on our kitchen tables, have forced us to pay more attention to the people we work with. It isn't just business anymore, it's our whole existence on show, messy as it is. Yet context is a great community builder. We're humans, not automatons. A little collective softening should do us all the power of good.

As lockdown lifts and working from home looks likely to stay as part of a new hybrid world of work, the media is awash with talk that a golden age for workers is on the way, promising the long-awaited balance between their work and their home lives and family commitments. For businesses and brands, particularly for those delivering creative products and services, the next transition will be about how we retain our re-discovered 'humanness' at scale. What will we lose and what we will gain in the next shift to hybrid working? What needs to be learned and unlearned? And how can we bridge the gaps?

"...a golden age for workers is on the way..."



THE HUMAN TOUCH

Despite the many benefits of the shift online to people and businesses the world over, it's never been more apparent that our 'humanness' is deeply connected to real-world interactions and the power of people coming together for the health of ourselves, our networks, and businesses, our cities, and communities.

Over the last year, we've had to put more trust into technology that enables us to communicate and collaborate effectively with each other. Now we've got to learn how to deliver and engage, with empathy, across digital and live platforms.

For creative businesses and individuals, part of this is about recognising that hybrid working is different from flexible working. Hybrid working is about work that is divorced from place and time, and it means acknowledging that some, or all, of your work, can be done remotely long term, by people with the right skills, who are located in a different place to where your workplace or project is based. Because of this, hybrid working is also very much about balancing the employee experience with the broader needs and aspirations of the business.

Lancashire based arts organisation, [Imitating The Dog](#), are renowned for their touring and site-specific theatre work which fuses live performance with interactive digital technology. Despite the intrinsic digital element to their work, before the pandemic, the majority of their project development work had been undertaken in a traditional way - created in physical spaces in collaboration with other people. We spoke to Julie Brown, Executive Director for Imitating The Dog, about how the pandemic has impacted their work and creative process.

"Because we deliver work internationally, and we deliver site-specific work, we've always had some people creating elements of it remotely, but generally speaking we were all in the room creating together. I don't think we would ever have imagined that we would make a piece of theatre art that was entirely made by people who were never in the same room before Covid. We were able to respond quickly because we were able to adapt some of the software and technology, we were already using in the stage space and for our site-specific work, but we've also used a lot of new tools.

When the pandemic hit, we were in the middle of a project with university students in Utrecht. We were making a live opera with an entirely digital set. We'd been over twice to start delivery, but it was a twelve-week project. There were flights and hotels booked. Of course, it had to stop, but it couldn't stop because it was part of the students' degrees. So, we had to rethink it. The project expanded into two parts. The first part – the original opera we were commissioned to deliver - was reimaged as a digital opera. The entire design, music, performances were created digitally and resulted in a one-hour virtual rehearsal called [TROUBLED WATERS](#), and it was great, but because we hadn't had that 'end' feeling you get with a live project, it didn't feel like it was finished. So, we worked with the students to develop an additional idea that responded to the pandemic specifically – an interactive online game, called ['Fragments Of A Visitor'](#) which fused video games and web-based fiction to create a playable experience. The projects weren't linked, but they both came about because of the

pandemic and because of the value we wanted to create for the students in lieu of not being able to work with them in person. We wanted them to have a commensurate experience to what they'd been expecting before Covid hit."

For organisations like [Imitating The Dog](#), who have been used to working with distributed teams and were ostensibly 'ready to make the switch' to remote collaboration and creation, the transition to remote collaboration and delivery has been a 'relatively easy' obstacle to hurdle than it has been for others who have been used to more traditional working patterns.

"One of the most important aspects was being able to make work with our associates," said Brown. "We work with many different freelancers, and we wanted to keep making worth with them and to make sure there were opportunities for them to work with us. Creative people still have ideas and want to do things, so where does that go?"

Switching to a remote creative process allowed freelancers to continue to make work with Imitating the Dog during what was, and still is, a very difficult time for the arts sector's cultural workforce. As more companies have followed suit to offer remote work contracts, it's a trend that shows no sign of waning. Indeed, [an analysis undertaken by recruitment specialists, The Adecco Group](#), shows that the number of job adverts that mention remote work opportunities increased by 126% over the period between May 2020 through April 2021, compared to the prior year.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPATHY

For freelancers, increased opportunities provided through remote working is a double-

edged sword. On the one hand, there's much to be gained from the opportunities that have opened up to work further afield: the chance to expand your portfolio, develop a new network, gain invaluable new experiences and skills, and potentially, better fees. On the other hand, competition is likely to have increased exponentially. The stakes have been raised on the prerequisite skills and experience and a slick digital presence.

"What freelancers sometimes forget is that it's worth analysing the culture of the business you're freelancing for," said Andy Walmsley, Co-Founder of [Wash Studio](#) in Preston. "If you come in and go, 'Right, great. I'll do my two days of work and then put my invoice in. Thanks very much,' it gives the impression that you're not really interested in the work and that it's more about the time for which you're going to get paid. Creativity is not just a time game. It's about the experience you're helping to create and the team experience that you're a part of, too. If you're freelancing, it's almost as much about aligning your mindsets and developing a connection with the people you're working with, as it is about your ability to do the work."

These are heartening words for emerging creatives lacking in real-world experience, and for those who prefer a more human connection. Without the opportunity to prove your commitment to collective responsibility that comes with working in a traditional office environment, an open, positive, and upbeat attitude, coupled with a genuine interest in the work and an authentic engagement with your temporary teammates, can go a long way to bridging the gap and securing repeat work in the future.

THE TALENT PREMIUM

For businesses, the ability to outsource to an expanded talent pool that provides the same, or potentially better, quality service, and which also reduces scheduling and capacity issues, is an obvious win. Scottish app developer, [Waracle](#), says it's transformed their business.

"Most of our production side uses an agile, iterative incremental management framework that has enough touchpoints and structure in it to be able to manage the developers who are working remotely or not, so when the pandemic hit, that side of our business was ok," Pete Gordon, Waracle's Principal Consultant, told us. "The bits that were missing were how do you do the design bit remotely and how do you win new business remotely? How do you get enough trust to do a new business sale with someone you haven't met and that you've never done business with before, in lockdown? Initially, like everyone, we hoped it wouldn't last long. But very soon we could see this was us for the long haul, so we just adapted. What I've found is that everyone is in the same boat, including clients, and because it's a level playing field in that sense a lot of things have actually improved.

So, there's now a real power to the business. Now we're fully remote, I can hire someone in London who can work in Glasgow and someone in Glasgow who can work in London and they're perfectly happy. Beforehand, all that locational stuff, recruiting talented people who were located near to the client's site was a real headache to manage.

Problems would arise when one project ended, and the next project started, and you would find that the great team you had

working together on the first project suddenly could no longer work together on the second project because the location of the new client site was too far away. So, a lot of those problems have gone away. I think it's great that we can run a workshop in Edinburgh in the morning and Switzerland in the afternoon and I don't have to move. So, that's a huge advantage for global access and dealing with people in different locations and even time zones."

Yet, as talent becomes a premium, the talent pool in secondary regions like Lancashire becomes smaller and more competitive because, as Justin Knecht, Director of design thinking consultants, [What Could Be](#), warns, "big companies will draw the talent away."

Based in the US, where tech companies have been working remotely for years, Knecht has seen the impact on talent recruitment and retention first-hand when he worked for [LUMA Institute](#) in Pittsburgh. "Engineers have had been at the forefront of remote working for years. They were the earliest adopters because technology enabled things like [GitHub](#) and [repositories](#) and [open source](#) so that people could collaborate from a distance. In the US, when the big companies like Google and Facebook moved in, they drew the talent away, so when we started to hire talent for our team in Pittsburgh, it was almost imperative that we had to look outside of the Pittsburgh Metro area to build a team of half a dozen engineers. Despite the pressure it puts on businesses looking for new talent, I feel that accessing the global talent market is a huge benefit to learning how to work in this way."



Knecht's early personal experiences of how big companies distributed recruitment strategies impact the local talent market correspond with much of the thinking in Slack's new e-book, [Reinventing Work: New Imperatives For The Future of Working](#), in which Brian Elliott, VP of Slack's new venture, [The Future Forum](#) says,

"Companies that thrive in the new era of work will fix these imbalances. They will embrace the opportunity to hire the best talent from more distributed, more diverse backgrounds, and they'll understand that retaining that talent requires changing historical habits and routines."

DIVERSIFYING WORKING PRACTICE

Expanding and diversifying your talent pool to embrace remote collaboration and working provides an opportunity to reappraise working practices. New people bring new skills and a fresh array of perspectives which can lead to benefits like better problem solving and increased productivity to impact the whole business.

The idea of bringing new perspectives into the company can feel intimidating for some, but a white paper from San Francisco-based online decision-making platform, [Cloverpop](#), shows that diverse teams see a [60% improvement in decision-making abilities](#).

"Unfortunately, non-inclusive decision-making is all-too-common," said author, Erik Larson. *"Effective decision-making increases with greater diversity in a team. All-male teams were shown to make better business decisions than individuals 58 percent of the time, while gender-diverse teams outperformed individuals 73 percent of the time. Teams that were geographically diverse and included members with different genders*

and at least one age gap of more than 20 years, were the most successful – making better business decisions than individuals 87 percent of the time."

Traditional working patterns dictated that to solve a problem, people would be called to a meeting to think about the problem and to come up with a solution at a designated time and place. This approach would pull on everyone's time and on company resources to bring multiple attendees together in one room. Another good example of how a diverse remote workforce benefits businesses is the necessary shift to asynchronous working, alleviating the need to draw on everyone at the same time, in the same place.

"Working asynchronously, you're breaking the pattern that creates gridlock," said Pete Gordon at Waracle. *"Instead, you provide what people need so they can go off and do the work individually before returning it to the shared body of knowledge, which now exists digitally. For example, if you're writing a document in collaboration with others using Office 365, you can all contribute to the document, and what happens is some people are better at reviewing, some people are better at generating particular sections of the content. You might have someone from sales putting the numbers in, or a designer come in and lay it out, etc. People come in as and when their skills are needed, and so it's actually the artifact that's moving through the process as opposed to bringing in people, to form a project team."*

As many of us have only recently discovered, digital collaboration spaces, such as [Mural](#), [MIRO](#), and [GoogleJam](#) have

taken asynchronous working to another level through their support of 8 Bit Office Apps, such as [Slack](#), and [WhatsApp](#), to help keep everyone in the loop, maintain team interaction and support complex projects. Whilst scrum software tools, such as [Trello](#), [Monday.com](#), and [JIRA](#), have allowed distributed teams to continue to work on and manage complex projects remotely.

A NEW TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Of course, asynchronous working requires a different type of management than traditional working patterns have used.

“There's a shift away from that older Victorian style of management into much more empowering people to do things,” continues Gordon. “Understanding that as long as people are motivated and they're clear about what they have to do, people will do it. And if you don't want to do it, you just shouldn't be in the company. You should go somewhere else. People who are familiar with that older style of management are struggling with giving up their control of the workforce, but the people who really engage with remote collaboration apps get a lot more out of asynchronous working patterns. Decisions take longer, but they're more considered. The quality of the work that comes out of the end is better. People are not rushing. You're not just pulling people into a room and going, ‘Right, brainstorm, now! Go!’ People can go away think about it. It fits better with a blended work pattern, and by that, I mean your family and your work being together - your quality of life.”

[Ruth Melville](#), an independent evaluation specialist, and strategic development practitioner, agrees and believes the next evolution to fully remote, or hybrid, working is

“about realizing you need skills that you didn't value previously. These might be tech-based, but they might even be presenting skills or marketing skills. The skills you undervalued before, the ones you didn't pay enough for, are now the skills you need. You have to recognise the shift and the value these skills bring, and this links back to leadership, because if the leadership in the organisation is hierarchical, valuing creativity, creative skill sets, and those with creative roles, it becomes very difficult to do.”

Indeed, one of the biggest gains of the shift to remote working is the way that it has spotlighted the creative process to bring an increased recognition of the necessity and impact of creativity and creative thinking on working practices.

LEVELS OF EXCLUSION

However, in shining a light on the creative process, there is also now greater recognition of how inequality has become an obstacle to feed into, access, and participate in that process.

Aside from the fact that digital exclusion across the country - through lack of data, broadband connectivity, or a device - is far more prevalent than many realised before Covid-19, the level of digital inequality in the county raises questions around how people living in areas of greater deprivation, or areas with poor digital connectivity, are already at a disadvantage in being able to train and work in jobs requiring digital skills and access to the internet, which reduces their ability to compete locally, nationally and globally. The knock-on effects are two-fold. First, businesses and employers in those areas will find it more difficult to recruit the workforce and talent they need

locally. Second, inward investment will reduce, negatively impacting overall economic sustainability.

Until Government and policymakers take up this mantle, businesses and employers need to step up to support their workforces to develop better digital skills and to equip them with space and technical equipment to increase their capacity to deliver at the level needed.

Equally irrefutable is the evidence that those with disabilities have been the biggest losers in the move to remote working. People with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions have been [campaigning for flexible work](#) for years. Figures released by [UNISON](#), the UK's largest union for disabled workers, based on responses from more than 4,000 disabled workers across the UK, show that half worked from home during the Covid-19 crisis. This is a huge increase on the one in twenty (5%) who said they usually do this. However, more than half (53%) said they had received no reasonable adjustments from their employer to help them to work from home. Only a minority (5%) had help from [Access to Work](#), the government's agency that funds adjustments for disabled workers.

Employers are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or physical or mental health conditions so that people are not substantially disadvantaged. This may mean making changes to working practices and policies, such as avoiding planning key meetings or events at times that may be awkward for workers with disabilities or physical or mental health conditions, and by the same token, those with caring responsibilities. Or it could mean providing special equipment or technology to ensure workers have equal access to work-based systems, information, and conversation.

If you are embracing a completely remote, or a new hybrid, way of working, investing in the right technologies and a more considered approach to working arrangements can support better access to internal and external tools and systems to enable more people to experience more of the conversations and opportunities on offer. Failure to do so will not only impact who can create, but it will also affect the diversity of thought and experience within your organisation, already identified as a crucial factor to organisations' productivity and profitability.

FUTURE IMPERFECT

As we prepare to head back out, many businesses are feeling the pressure to return to this new world, all guns blazing with everything figured out, but innovation cannot happen without mistakes. The next few months may continue to feel uncomfortable, yet as a new era dawns for creativity, it is vital that we retain our 'humanness' and hold on to the empathy and connections we've developed over the last year if we are to continue moving forward on all counts.

"Everyone's been a bit more sympathetic and open, haven't they?" said Andy Walmsley, Director of [Wash Studio](#). "Situations change and people make mistakes, they always have done. We're only human. But I've noticed there's a lot more tolerance now. Before COVID, people behaved differently. If things weren't right or didn't go to plan – a schedule had to change, or a shoot had to move, they'd get irritated quite quickly. Whereas now, they're more likely to say, 'Oh, well, can't be helped since Covid'. So hopefully, we'll retain that tolerance of each other and the



sense that things still aren't going to be perfect for a while, at least, and that's ok."

Indeed, one of the best things to come out of the pandemic is that people are valuing the opportunity of a testing period, and within this, the need to be more risk-taking. Software developers, in particular, have been quick to respond to businesses' new-found valiance, working hand in hand with organisations to adapt their software in real-time to support users to address urgent short-term needs and to help them push their tools to create innovations that create significant long-term opportunities.

"One of the tools we adopted at the start of the pandemic, and which has since gotten a lot of traction and been instituted company-wide was Miro," Richard Eisermann, Head of Design at Philips Connected Health Care told us. *"We chose Miro because of their ability to implement capabilities very quickly and their openness to suggestions. So, if we wanted to add the capability for JIRA or other digital tools, they would just create the APIs in a matter of days. They were very receptive and responsive to building the tool that we needed at that moment."*

Imitating The Dog reported a similar story. Their live-action graphic novel, Airlock, screened as three episodes as a part of the BBC Arts, Arts Council England & Space co-commissioned Culture In Quarantine program during the UK's second lockdown was powered by Isadora, an audiovisual effects software from German developer, TroikaTronix. It was recorded in one take as though it was broadcasting live.

"Originally, we were going to make and broadcast 'Airlock' live from everybody's

homes," said Julie Brown. *"We decided it was a bit risky because if one person's internet had gone down it would have been awful. In the end, we made it using Skype and software called Isadora, which allows us to place live performers in different places. So, we had five actors, each in a different place. A director in one city, an Assistant Director somewhere else, and two technicians in two other places, who created a live mix of what the actors are doing using a combination of Skype and the Isadora software, so it looked like they were facing each other, kissing or touching, even though one actor was in Glasgow, and one was somewhere else. In general, the digital artistic community is incredibly supportive and the community of Isadora users is perhaps the most supportive of all I've come across. TroikaTronix does a lot to foster a sense of collaboration between people using their software, running free tutorials, 'guru' sessions, and an active forum, which increased our understanding of how to use and edit the tools enormously. So, while on the one hand, it was an unprecedented time and people were figuring out how to work while developing the new skills to do so, on the other, that community, that support network of peers, artists, technicians, coders, already existed. As an early user of some of the tools, we fed into the technical development of Isadora in terms of how the tools were performing and about how we were using them artistically. We couldn't have made Airlock in the way that we did without Isadora, and being able to engage with TroikaTronix during that time really made it possible for us to make the work we wanted to make."*

THE NEW APPROACH TO NEW BUSINESS

As a sales technique, the role of 'partner' has come into its own over the last twelve months and organisations like Miro and TroikaTronix, who have gone above and beyond to service their customers' needs during these unprecedented times, will undoubtedly reap the rewards, but so will their customers. It's a win, win approach, and though many argue that the pandemic has made short work of spontaneity, which is so crucial to creativity, it proves there is still room for opportunism. If combined with a willingness to experiment and a commitment to listening closely within genuinely collaborative supplier-customer relationships, these positive assets can go some way to restoring the sense of happenstance and experimentation that often occurs in a design studio to create a space for innovation to flow.

Cold leads, or new, new business opportunities have always been the hardest to win, even more so in a remote working situation, so how do you establish enough trust to do a new, new business sale? Steve Gumbrell, former Head of Marketing Strategy and Business Management for Transport For London, now an independent brand and marketing consultant, offered some insights:

"I've worked client-side and in agencies but having spent ten years as a client with marketing budgets as big as £12.7 million, you realize how stressful being a client is," said Gumbrell. "You can talk a good fight in the pub about all these things, but actually, a lot of people just made the safest decisions they possibly can. And I think that in situations where you're



creating and designing at a distance, people who are used to using certain agencies or companies are probably more likely than ever to stick with who they know. This doesn't feel like a time when people are out there taking chances with people they don't know.

I was brought up in agency life and the one thing you've protected was your expenses budget because you couldn't replace being in front of the client. And I still believe that. Zoom calls can never be quite as good as actually sitting in front of people with all the nuances and the sense of having shared some physical space to establish whether there is going to be a meeting of minds. In the absence of being able to do that, it comes down to identifying ways of getting 'in front' of the client through other means. So, word of mouth is still really, really important.

Recommendations and referrals from trusted colleagues and friends are the goals. Failing that, being aware of when new marketing heads come into a post, or when agency reviews are taking place, can proffer opportunities with new prospects, and connecting up with agency pitch consultants, such as [Oystercatchers](#), who act as intermediaries between brands and agencies, can be a good way to get on the pitch list for some big creative briefs too.

Whatever way you achieve a face-to-face conversation with a prospect, when you get there, the same principles still apply. You need to really make sure you understand what the client really, really wants. It takes a bit of questioning and conversation to really establish quite what people do want. Sometimes it's not always what they first say they want."

As daunting as the challenge to delve deep into the big organisational issues might be, determining those insights for your own business is one of the biggest opportunities or gains still to be exploited. A year of fight or flight has exhausted the best of us. Some of the strategies and learnings from trial-and-error approaches to remote and digital delivery might be unsustainable in the long term, but others will improve and change the way we work for good.

Now it's time to set a more sustainable, inclusive course, and to ask ourselves how we meet the new challenges of work in a post-pandemic world. So, we've put together ten questions to get your thinking started on how you might capitalise on the gains and mitigate the losses from the last twelve months to create, or recalibrate, a more robust service blueprint for your business.

TEN QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU BUILD BACK BETTER

1. What experience do your employees need to be able to show up for work and perform productively? If you work alone, what do you need to do?

Consider flexible schedules and policies, working arrangements, technology requirements, access support.

2. How can you create more diversity across your workforce and business relationships?

Consider talent recruitment and retention and procurement policies and processes.

3. What practices and policies do you need to introduce to help avoid stress and burnout, minimise sick leave and reduce dips in productivity and profitability?

4. What technology do you need to invest in to enable and encourage all colleagues, regardless of whether they work remotely or at HQ, to collaborate and communicate effectively both digitally and in-person?

Consider access needs, issues around digital exclusion, and training.

5. What type of office space and set-up, if any, does your business need, and what do your employees working remotely need?

Consider redesigning or relocating based on who and how people need to work in the space, additional anti-infection requirements, additional tech security measures, and homeworking space budgets.

6. What systems will you need to put in place to help you manage and communicate with a distributed or hybrid workforce and keep them aligned to your business goals and priorities?

7. Where are the knowledge or capability gaps in your business that require expert support?

Consider which skills you need to help you create more value and whether these need to be hired in or bought in.

8. Which of your existing or long-term customer, partner, and supplier relationships could help you address the new needs of your business and offer you opportunities to capitalise on long-term?

9. How has your customer journey changed and what offline and digital experiences will best support them?

Consider where the opportunities are for face-to-face interactions, how digital channels can be maximised to provide equivalent service support, and which processes could be automated.

10. How will you generate and process new leads or prospects?

Consider how to create more advocates, the relevance and importance of virtual communities, and how you could be more actively engaged amongst these.

THE CREATIVE STEP

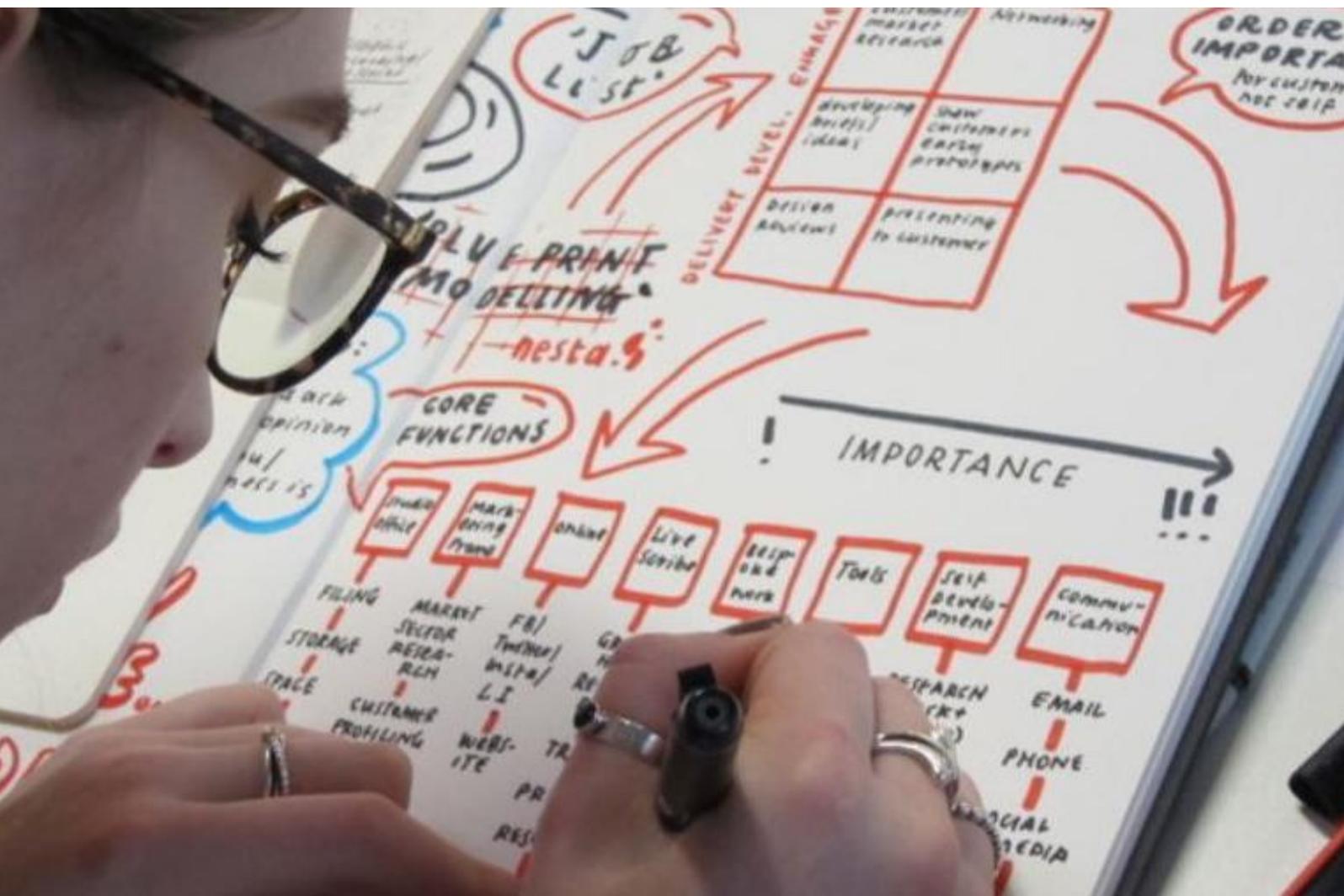
At Creative Lancashire we want to make the county's creative sector the fastest growing in the country by giving the next generation of creative businesses the tools to thrive in the future. Our aim is to build an internationally renowned creative community that is built on local talent.

The Creative Step, our bespoke development programme dedicated to the specific needs of the sector and founded on the understanding that the unique qualities and requirements of creative enterprises are not currently met by mainstream business initiatives, is now recruiting for the next cohort which starts on Tuesday 14th September 2021.

"Having proven the programme offline in 2019, we're now fully functioning remotely using our own tools and techniques to create an equally compelling online experience.

For more information visit [Creative Lancashire online](#).

Or for an informal conversation about The Creative Step, Creative Lancashire, and other sector-specific programmes, contact Ed Matthews Gentle at emg@creativelancashire.org



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Alex O'Toole is a Lancashire-based independent, Writer, Creative Director, and Producer. For twenty years, Alex has worked nationally and internationally across Europe, the US, and the Middle East to develop creative concepts, produce artistic programmes, write narratives and manage design projects for the creative and cultural industries. She writes on commission for creative projects across all mediums, and about creativity, the role of the arts, and the business of being an artist. Her work as a strategist and creative director for the creative and cultural industries is geared towards developing partnerships and growing audiences to maximise opportunities for long-term sustainability. As an arts producer, Alex's larger-scale participative projects are created through Fable Arts, a socially engaged arts organisation. She is currently the Chair of Arts Lancashire.

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Read more about Cait and her work in our Creative Spotlight article.

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JONATHAN BALL

Jonathan Ball is a Lancashire-based independent designer who has built his career on using the practice of human-centred design to help organisations achieve new levels of innovation. After a successful career in product design, he now works independently through Designmine, in collaboration with colleagues at What Could Be and a global network of like-minded associates to deliver across a range of diverse projects, including the Creative Decision Making Playbook for BBC Digital and the Design Thinking Accelerator programme for V&A Dundee. He is a longstanding Design Associate for Design Council and was a part of the team that developed the Double Diamond and created the Design Opportunities Tool for their business support programme, Designing Demand. He is also a Certified Lead Instructor for LUMA Institute in Pittsburgh.

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Richard Eisermann has worked as a designer and strategist for three decades, making it his mission to always challenge preconceptions of design. Trained as an industrial designer, he is currently Head of Design for Connected Care at Philips and was previously Vice President for Integrated Experience Design and Development at Lowe's, the home improvement retailer, and Design Director at Whirlpool. As leader of the design team at IDEO, and through his own design consultancies, Richard's work has taken him all over the world to develop and deliver award winning innovation programmes and public services for governments and for businesses including EuroStar, Europcar, Nokia Siemens Networks, Amtrak, Cassina and Bodum amongst others. In his role as Director of Design and Innovation at the UK Design Council he led the development of the Designing Demand programme, a UK-wide business support program for manufacturers and technology start-ups. He has lectured at many design and business schools around the world including The Royal College of Art, and his writing has been featured in publications including Design Week, Blueprint and the DMI Journal.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IMITATING THE DOG

Julie has a long career as an independent theatre producer and arts manager for venues, festivals and light art, including the long running Light Up Lancaster Festival, for which she is currently the Artistic Director.

In 2018 Julie joined Imitating The Dog, whose multi-platform theatre work is renowned for testing the nature and conventions of theatre. The company has a unique reputation in the UK, Europe and internationally for fusing live performance and digital technologies in theatre spaces and site-specific locations, creating shows with the National Theatre of Greece, Oldham Coliseum, Raisin and Willow, The Singapore Repertory Theatre, the Georgian National Theatre, The Dukes Lancaster, Marche Teatro, Italy and Leeds Playhouse amongst others.

As Executive Director, Julie helped lead the organisation to become one of Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and works at a strategic level to develop the company and all of its creative projects and learning opportunities.

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Ruth uses research and evaluation techniques to bring together the experience and approach of the academic sector with the intrinsic knowledge and experience of creative practitioners and participants. Her work supports research design and strategic development for a range of organisations in the public and voluntary sector including Future Projects, Suffolk Artlink, Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre and she is a critical friend for the Transported programme of Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme. Since 2010, she has been the Monitoring and Research Advisor to Aarhus 2017 European Capital of Culture, leading up to the year of activities in 2017 and she was Programme Manager and Senior Research Fellow of Impacts 08, the Liverpool European Capital of Culture Research Programme, a major five-year cultural policy research programme developing measures for understanding and evaluating the economic, social and cultural impacts of culture-led regeneration, which is seen as setting a standard for cultural impact assessment in the UK.

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Andy Walmsley, Creative Director (Wash Studio) & Founder (The Artistry House) As well as heading up Wash Studio, one of the north west's most respected creative studios and ideas agencies, Andy is also the co-founder of The Artistry House, a living design workshop space for collaborators and creativity, based in Preston, Lancashire. As a Creative Director developing concepts and campaigns for film and motion, TV advertising, brand, design and environmental design projects, Andy's thirty-year experience spans large global companies, including Hyundai, MG Motors and Jaguar, national retail brands, including Dorset Tea and Northern Dough, the higher education sector, public bodies, and many SMEs. He's a key figure in Lancashire's creative industry with an ongoing commitment to collaboration and creative community building. Andy is also a Design Champion for Creative Lancashire.

www.washstudio.co.uk

STEVE GUMBRELL

INDEPENDENT BRAND & MARKETING CONSULTANT

Steve has helped transform businesses through insight-based customer, brand and marketing strategy, planning and campaigns to drive awareness, understanding, purchase, reputation, advocacy and brand-love amongst audiences across four continents - for more than 30 years. He has won and led major accounts with Budweiser, Courvoisier, Kellogg's Fruit 'n' Fibre in his roles within marketing agencies; and headed-up marketing strategy client-side for TGI Fridays UK, Transport for London and others, managing in-house teams, and research, brand, creative, media, digital and PR agencies. For the past three years, Steve has been deploying his diverse experience on a number of interesting contracts, including campaign-planning for British Heart Foundation, customer strategy for bids for Keolis, copywriting for customer relations teams at Toyota GB plc and providing marketing advice, and 'critical friendship', to local craft beer and cider producers including Greyhound Brewery and Silly Moo.

[Steve Gumbrell on LinkedIn](#)

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DIRECTOR, WHAT COULD BE

Justin has spent the last two decades leading design teams and implementing innovation programmes in the private, corporate and public sectors. While at LUMA Institute in Pittsburgh, he oversaw the design and development of LUMA Workplace, which is used in thousands of organisations around the globe to apply human-centred design methods as a means to repeatable innovation. Justin continues to teach the LUMA System as a certified lead instructor. At What Could Be, At What Could Be, Justin is part of a collaborative team who developed the Design Thinking Canvas, a repeatable framework to shape innovation strategy and support collaboration with stakeholders from vision through to execution to deliver better work.

www.whatcouldbe.com

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LOSSES & GAINS:
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