



MEDIA SANDBOX

**An evaluation of the success of this
new collaborative working model**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are strong indications that in the future, the market for digital products and services will stratify into two broad layers of business – those who can innovate and create IP, possibly in partnership with their clients; and design and build agencies whose fees will start to drop because they will only be able to compete as commodity service providers.

Innovation is the distinguishing x-factor that will help SMEs within the digital sector in the region maintain and develop competitiveness and avoid becoming a cluster of lifestyle businesses – this will be further strengthened if the SMEs themselves can fundamentally build such activity into their own business models.

Furthermore, it is still largely a disadvantage to be based in the South West when competing for work outside the region. The centre of gravity for digital remains very much in London where the vast majority of the larger agencies are based and the capital remains a magnet for talent, innovation and large commissions. There is also significant competition from other regions – the West Midlands is as equally well-represented as Bristol in the *New Media Age* Top 100 survey of digital agencies and Brighton and Manchester both have a handful of large digital players as well.

Media Sandbox was developed as an experimental commissioning scheme and working model to help SMEs respond to some of these challenges. Although the initiative was based in Bristol, it was important to engage with potential participants throughout the whole of the South West. In fact, Media Sandbox attracted submissions from outside the region as well because of its unique collaborative structure and sustainable community development potential.

Creating a funding scheme around a community framework has created opportunities for knowledge sharing and skills development on a level that hasn't previously existed and also has the potential for long-term sustainability. As a result, future Media Sandboxes could have a key role to play in enabling SMEs in the digital sector remain competitive and develop growth potential, both of which are even more important during periods of economic slowdown and recession.

Although it could be argued that the only way to innovate and therefore to create growth is to devote a core area of business planning to research and development, for most of the six winning commissions (and for many in the sector), it remains a secondary consideration. Augmenting commissioning schemes like Sandbox at the core business of these SMEs frees up valuable thinking space that could lead to the development of exciting products and services in the future, as well as being able to demonstrate the importance of such activity.

Of course, a number of learning points have arisen throughout the duration of Media Sandbox. While the community itself appears strong, the scheme itself could probably benefit from the introduction of more structure for participants in phase two, which will help them manage their time better without their creativity being restricted by too many constraints. Filtering out over-ambitious projects at the selection stage and perhaps confining the scheme to start-ups should also be investigated.

However, the first Sandbox has been so positively received overall, that iShed and South West Screen are now well-positioned to broker more involvement from a

greater variety of industry players and investors, as well as to maximise the PR opportunities arising from such tie-ups and the value chains created by commissions arising out of future schemes. It will also be possible to explore the potential of developing the Sandbox model even further in complementary sectors within the creative and cultural environment.

It is clear that the digital sector is in a strong position to embrace future opportunities, but that these can only be fully realised through continued support, increased profile and greater investment to catalyse strong and sustainable growth. In creating initiatives like Media Sandbox, iShed and South West Screen are ensuring that Bristol can take advantage of the opportunity to be at the heart of and a catalyst for future development of the media-based industries in the South West and beyond.

CONTEXT – THE CASE FOR A NEW COLLABORATIVE WORKING MODEL

Overview

There are more media-based organisations and individuals in the South West than in any other region outside London. Many of these are located in and around Bristol, several of which are significant players in the global market.

However, the vast majority are SMEs or smaller and their capacity for growth can be stifled by a lack of resource to invest in vital research and development; and hence some of their ability to stimulate creativity and catalyse innovation. Although some of the larger SMEs are able to cost R&D into individual client projects, it can make their pricing uncompetitive, which is compounded during slower periods in the economy. Furthermore, start-ups and sole traders, who could bring innovative new approaches to the market, are in an even weaker position, often having no track record that a client is prepared to buy into and therefore little time to invest in R&D.

This position is backed up by anecdotal feedback from the digital sector around the nature of the networks and communities that have grown up to support it. Although Bristol has a number of such groups, none have previously been in the position to offer funding, access to major industry players, such as HP and a physical space where members (albeit a small number) can not only meet regularly and share ideas, but work together on a daily basis; all key infrastructural benefits that have been offered as part of Media Sandbox.

The Government's Creative Economy Programme identified that:

Too often, cultural infrastructure in the UK has been conceptualised and positioned as focusing either on cultural production or cultural consumption. Rarely both. Through the co-location and connectedness of spaces of consumption and production – the galleries, bars, theatres, workspaces, support services, shops, arts centres, cinemas, universities – genuine creative districts are established, which have the ambiance and attitude required for genuine competitiveness.

Government Creative Economy Programme

It goes on to conclude that creative SMEs require supportive networks to work together and establish convergence opportunities with other sub-sectors and suggests that there is still a need for such networks to be fostered and sustained by means of an infrastructure fund. Media Sandbox is perhaps unique in delivering such support, albeit at a pilot level.

Media Sandbox overview

Bringing together leading technology, artistic and media talent, Media Sandbox is a commissioning scheme to support South West companies/organisations to research emerging possibilities in digital media. The theme for 2007/2008 call was pervasive media and awards were made to six research projects exploring this cutting-edge theme.

Media Sandbox was managed by iShed, and designed by iShed and South West Screen with support from South West Regional Development Agency, Business Link and Watershed.

Media Sandbox is an entirely unique opportunity for SMEs to begin the process of collaboratively creating radical new products and processes that stimulate understanding and potential usage of next generation digital media. The scheme offers funding, showcase events, business support and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. Each of the six 2008 projects benefited from:

- A £9,000 R&D commission
- The opportunity to focus intensively on development of new idea
- A programme of business support
- Early access to emerging technologies
- Promotion and exposure as part of a larger scheme
- Inclusion in national PR campaign
- Being part of a community of potential collaborators for future projects

The scheme was announced at an Ideas Lab in November 2007, which was attended by around 100 individuals, partnerships and agencies from across the region and beyond, who were invited to set the application criteria for the scheme collectively at the event. These were defined as follows:

- The wow factor – is the idea inspirational/ambitious?
- Originality – how innovative or ground-breaking is the idea and is there a clear research question?
- Feasibility – is the idea viable both financially within the budget and technologically?
- Benefits and values – is the idea user-centred and accessible to audience that is being targeted?
- Legacy – what will be delivered when the commission ends? Is it commercial, sustainable, and/or have the potential to grow?

In addition, Ideas Lab participants also designed guidelines for the submission of proposals:

- Consider forming consortia proposals with other organisations, individuals and partnerships.
- Be clear about the scope of the pilot and what the deliverables are.
- State how the success of the project will be evaluated.
- Ensure that at least one partner is based in the South West.
- Avoid copying ideas that are already in the market place, or submitting those that already exist in traditional media formats.

Media Sandbox participants for 2007/2008 were selected by Toby Barnes, owner and Managing Director of Pixel Lab Studios, Paul Bason, Digital Media Innovation Director at University College Falmouth, Mark Leaver of South West Screen, Clare Reddington of iShed and Nigel Charman of Business Link.

The six winning commissions were announced in January 2008 and the scheme itself ran from January through to May.

iShed & the Pervasive Media Studio

iShed is a new venture by Watershed to **initiate, enable and support cross-sector collaborations and creative technology initiatives** such as the Pervasive Media Studio, a collaboration led by HP Labs and Watershed, with support from the South West Regional Development Agency.

Built on the legacy of the Mobile Bristol programme, the Studio is a unique undertaking that has sited world-class research at the heart of the city to stimulate, inform and reinforce the creative economy of the UK and beyond. It brings together the talent, ideas and research of the technology, communications and creative industries sectors to pioneer new forms of digital media. This open innovation platform offers project development space, a wide variety of events and seminars and a creative learning programme for education and community groups. Space in the studio was offered to all of the Media Sandbox participants as part of their commission, and it became the permanent home to four of the six projects.

PROJECT PROFILES

Happy Packages | Thought Pie

This new collaboration from two Bristol-based companies, Thought Den and Mobile Pie, drew on the enthusiasm for communication and sharing that is already so ubiquitous online. Users were encouraged to engage with each other on the streets of Bristol using technologies such as SMS, Bluetooth and GPS.

A core aim of the research phase was to establish which of these technologies would be most effective in achieving the aim of delivering packages of 'happiness' to mobiles. Media Sandbox gave the team the opportunity to explore these technologies in a more playful way, which the team believes to be key at a time when users are seemingly overwhelmed with content. It was also the platform that initially brought the two companies together, as both had attended the Ideas Lab in November 2007 with the specific aim of meeting new partners.

Thought Den have been creating digital content in Bristol for almost three years and strive to deliver work that is intuitive, intelligent and engaging. They are driven by a desire to find the best way to establish a rewarding relationship with the end user and believe the best forms of interaction should remain intuitive and uncomplicated. Thought Den has worked on a range of rich media products for brands such as Jack Daniels, JVC and DEFRA.

Mobile Pie is a mobile content development studio based in Bristol. Specialising in games and entertainment they help brands and licensees take full advantage of the mobile platform. Their work is innovative and inspiring – previous projects have resulted in their being a finalist in the International Mobile Game of the Year Awards at 3GSM and gained them a 4Talent New Mobile Developer of the year prize.

Happy Town | Plot & BDH (Burrell Durrant Hifle)

This project explored the potential of pervasive media to support people being happy. Media Sandbox enabled Plot and BDH to carry out extensive research about the fairly subjective area of happiness in order to establish how best to enhance aspects of what people already do that makes them feel happier.

The team explored wearables and short-range radio technologies as a means of celebrating the existing relationships between people, or as reminders of the things people do that make them happy. The team also produced offline collateral such as stickers and other print to support digital activity and is currently prototyping a set of simple responsive wearable items that recognise and react to the presence and proximity of others.

BDH (Burrell Durrant Hifle) is a multi-disciplinary media agency, directing and designing commercials, trails, brand films, short format films, single and series docs and interactive content. As well as being both Grammy and Emmy nominated, the BAFTA award-winning company's other accolades include a D&AD Gold Pencil and thirteen Royal Television Society Awards. BDH counts EMI Music, BBC Television, Channel 4, Discovery Channel US, Sony and Sainsburys among its client base.

Plot is a London-based innovation agency that helps a diverse range of new media, NGOs and traditional mobile businesses develop new ways of approaching creative strategy.

Harmonize | Licorice Film

This ambitious team building game designed and led by Jon Williams, along with a small team of four other freelancers, combined virtual reality with real locations. Play involved one member of the team being on the street and taking the role of 'the seeker', armed with a PDA and a two-way radio; while the remaining team members worked together using a large screen installation.

The project would utilise Hewlett Packard's mspace technology and a custom web-based interface and would allow the team behind it a unique opportunity to explore behavioural dynamics of team play across physical and virtual worlds. Unfortunately, there were a number of barriers to overcome, not least that the project was perhaps too far ahead of the interface of technologies required to drive the live event. This, together with the lack of time and resource available for user-testing beforehand, resulted in the live event not taking place as planned.

Jon Williams has worked with Licorice Film on a number of pervasive gaming projects, including co-creating the *Meigeist* Alternative Reality Game (ARG) and developing gaming content for HP's mediascape technology. He has also worked as a freelance motion graphic designer, developing online promotional content for feature film, band promos and individual companies.

Harmonize Executive Producer Hazel Grian has worked as a director, writer and performer in film, animation, radio, and street theatre. Hailed as a "funny film-making genius" by Simpsons' creator Matt Groening, Hazel is now increasingly focusing on developing cross-platform entertainment. She created the successful ARG *Meigeist*, which in early 2007 was avidly followed by a worldwide online community of some 30,000. Later that year, Hazel was story and scriptwriter for season one of *KateModern*, the BAFTA-nominated interactive drama hosted by Bebo and produced by the US creators of hit online series *LonelyGirl15*. She has also scripted a British Red Cross HIV awareness campaign that resulted in a home page takeover on Bebo and has recently launched *The Sky Remains*, an ARG in partnership with Hewlett Packard that has its own social networking site and includes a worldwide GPS treasure hunt.

Physical Cartooning | HMC Interactive & Aardman

Although merging animation with live action is a technique that has been used by the film industry for years, the digital team at Aardman were keen to explore whether this could happen in reality and a cartoon character come to life like never before.

Working with Plymouth-based HMC Interactive, the team were able to examine a number of different interactive delivery systems that could be located in various sites around Bristol.

HMC Interactive is an award winning multimedia production company, based in Plymouth. With a passion for exhibition and educational output, HMC have enjoyed

success with a range of projects for clients such as National Museum of Scotland, Battle Abbey Visitor Centre, the Royal Observatory, the National Waterfront Museum Swansea and Cadbury World.

Aardman is a multi-Oscar winning studio and a world leader in character led 3D animated film production making animation for idents, short films, commercials, web series, web content, TV services and feature films. Best known for Wallace & Gromit, Shaun the Sheep, Creature Comforts and Angry Kid, Aardman's recent commercial clients include British Gas, CocaCola, Johnny Walker, Kelloggs, Hovis and Budweiser.

Power to the People | Altern8

Power to the People (PTTP) was originally conceived as an open access framework through which members of the public could control large-scale installations themselves and went through several iterations before settling into its final form as a demonstration 'playground' for Instant Graffiti.

The playground concept came about as the original ambitions had to be scaled back somewhat due to time and resource constraints, but proved a valuable tool through which ideas could be tested, demonstrated and developed. Altern8 designed PTTP to work in a similar way to HTTP and wrote the equivalent of a web server, which would handle all the user requests and control the playground appropriately, while managing queuing multiple requests at the same time; allowing users to interact and keeping the playground running within whatever rules the playground designers set.

Instant Graffiti projects animations onto buildings, or a screen, through a simple interface similar to an Etch A Sketch™. The flexible, web-based animation system is open source and modular and acts as the foundations of a collection of building blocks that can be joined together in a variety of ways.

Altern8 is now exploring some commercial applications of PTTP to complement its plans for purely cultural installations. The wiki (<http://wiki.mediaplaygrounds.co.uk>) collaborative website has led to an interesting collection of suggestions for potential applications of PTTP, including ferrofluid sculptures and programmable, interactive lighting installations, as well as being an easily accessible location for the technical documentation associated with the project.

Altern8 Ltd is a software design and consultancy business that has been trading since 1998.

Swarm | Simon

Simon is a collaboration that was entirely catalysed by Media Sandbox, having been initiated at the Ideas Lab. The two partners, Simon Evans and Simon Johnson combine the skills of artist, game designer and developer between them and their research project grew out of a shared interest in swarm behaviour and how this could be applied to gaming.

Initially, the team set out to develop interesting swarm games through the understanding of swarm principles. They were surprised to find that their research led

them in the opposite direction – reaching the principles through the development of a series of captivating and exciting games.

Their swarm games involve a number of players, each with wireless devices in a public space – in fact the more players, the better. The rule sets are simple – stay close to your team mates, but away from everyone else – and game communication is between players and their devices with no centralised control. This not only makes the games efficient to run and easily scalable, but also deals with the current lack of public wireless network infrastructure.

The games developed during the project included networked mass player SMS games, paper-based street games and swarm games played on HP ipaq PDAs. These were tested and run through monthly iglab events (see last paragraph below), which also revealed some useful learning points around rejecting traditional hierarchies as a means of structuring swarm games and how best to organise the logistics of such testing. In particular, the team found that organising the developmental process around people and play and learning to trust the potential of the games to reveal real insights into the project research area was also extremely valuable. The research culminated in the creation of a new game, Comfort of Strangers, in partnership with HP Labs, where players in busy city spaces gain points for identifying and keeping close to their team mates and lose them if they don't manage to avoid players on the opposite team.

Comfort of Strangers was launched at New York's Come Out & Play Festival in June, followed up by further performances at London's Hide & Seek Festival later that month. The success of this Media Sandbox collaboration has been further formalised by the partners, who have since set up Simon, a street games company. The first commercial application of their collaboration is a student induction game for the University of the West of England that was being piloted at the time of writing.

Simon Evans leads a digital design studio specialising in design for mobile platforms. His work with mobile networks extends into art that has been shown at FACT in Liverpool and at the ICA in London and which uses game play techniques to create pervasive media experiences.

Simon Johnson spent the two years prior to Media Sandbox touring internationally with locative games. In 2008, he set up iglab (the interesting games lab), the UK's first offline/online community built around locative, street and pervasive games and also directed igfest, the South West's first street and pervasive games festival.

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Overview

In evaluating the success of Media Sandbox, it was important to explore the following questions in relation to the scheme:

- Are initiatives like Media Sandbox a valid mechanism for attracting new talent and ideas to the region and in terms of the work produced, has the bar been raised?
- How far has Media Sandbox proven the case for SMEs to engage in R&D?
- Has Media Sandbox made a positive contribution to whether Bristol and the South West as a whole are perceived as innovative and experimental environments?
- Is there more value to be gained in terms of running a commissioning scheme within a community framework, than within other business models?

Each of the teams behind the six projects was interviewed in depth by aliBi. All the respondents were asked the same set of questions (appended in Appendix I) and encouraged to be as frank and as open as possible about their experiences of being a recipient of a Media Sandbox commission in terms of both what worked well and what didn't.

The interview responses were analysed together with relevant desk research and anecdotal evidence, such as informal feedback from stakeholders.

Attracting new talent and raising the bar

One of the most significant aspects of the Media Sandbox scheme appears to have been the Ideas Lab that was held in November 2007, which brought together a variety of talented groups and individuals from large agencies to freelance artists who ordinarily may not have met.

Out of the 14 organisations and freelancers involved with the final commissions, only one had worked with Watershed before and three were based outside Bristol (in Plymouth, Gloucestershire and London). Undoubtedly, many of those involved with the project are excellent networkers, but not everyone found out about the scheme through the more usual networks in the city, such as Bristol Media and Underscore. This would suggest that the scheme was successful in reaching out to new talent, as well as encouraging applications from larger, more established organisations, such as Aardman, who wished to use the commission to explore how it could best exploit pervasive media techniques and digital channels which it hadn't really done before.

It was also clear that the collaborative environment that grew up around the Pervasive Media Studio itself (see *Gaining value from commissioning work within a community environment* on page 14) was a strong catalyst for the development of ideas and the different projects as a whole, resulting in stronger outcomes for all six projects.

“We found it to be an involving and rewarding experience – some immediately understood the ideas and worked together quickly and productively, excited by the chance to create what they so clearly see. Others enjoyed mixing with people of different specialisms, with the media and the technology people bouncing ideas off each other, yet being aware of differing viewpoints. The environment was also really good for new thinking and experimentation.”

Sandbox participant

Proving the case for R&D

SMEs operating within the digital sector have previously identified that the single most important factor for driving growth is to find ways of becoming more competitive, thereby increasing their overall commercial worth. They seek to do this by:

- Attracting and retaining the most talented and highly skilled staff.
- Finding opportunities to innovate and experiment in a creative environment in order to develop and protect IP.
- Ensuring high quality through consistent standards.

However, incorporating R&D within standard working practices clearly continues to be a secondary consideration for many in the sector, although some of the larger organisations do endeavour to integrate such activity where feasible.

Therefore schemes such as Media Sandbox, which enable SMEs to make space for R&D, as well as involving creatives in new media forms that are yet to fully emerge, have a vital role to play in demonstrating how focused R&D activity can facilitate the development of strong competitive advantages, which in turn will result in better products and services and therefore a better outcome for the consumer.

Media Sandbox participants spent more time on the research phase of their projects, which appears to have paid dividends in terms of staff development, market intelligence and insight, although it should be emphasised that in all cases, the commission was essentially seed funding as far more time was spent on R&D than was budgeted for.

“Working on the project was as much about discovery as creating new products and services. We feel we couldn't buy this knowledge and intelligence elsewhere even if we wanted to and that the final outcome will be stronger as a result.”

Sandbox participant

Raising the profile for innovation and experimentation within the region

Because of Media Sandbox's unique structure and properties, there existed a significant amount of news and feature potential that would in turn create a number of profile-raising opportunities within both national and regional media, as well as through networks and peer-to-peer communication.

"Nothing like this is happening in London or elsewhere."

Sandbox participant

There is no doubt that the blogging and other peer-to-peer communication being carried out by both the participants and project management team made an important contribution to building advocacy around Media Sandbox. The project management team, for example, used progress to date to interest other major industry players, who might then come on board as partners for future Sandbox initiatives; while some of the participants were attracting notice from around the world that could potentially lead to future partnerships or knowledge transfer.

In parallel to this activity, Franklin Rae Communications were commissioned by South West Screen to deliver the Media Sandbox national media campaign. Unfortunately, funds were limited and although the project management team met with Franklin Rae early on in order to benefit from the agency's expertise in structuring and timing the campaign, the latter elected to focus most of the activity on the early stages of the scheme, leaving them no resource to secure valuable media coverage of the final outcomes. This was further compounded by the intangibility of public relations activity, which requires a level of close management and frequent communication to maximise results that the management team simply weren't able to resource.

However, Franklin Rae did broker a relationship with Michael Nutley, Editor in Chief of New Media Age on behalf of Media Sandbox, which resulted in Nutley joining the selection panel and two features highlighting the scheme. The remainder of coverage generated by the agency was all online and included pieces in *Media Guardian* online, *Digital Arts* online and two technology forums. Regionally, the project management team worked with South West Screen and generated a double page spread in the *Bristol Evening Post* media supplement, interviews on local radio and a feature in *Venue* between them.

Although the advocacy work was valuable, it would be fair to say that media coverage relating to Media Sandbox was somewhat of a missed opportunity on the whole. While the coverage that was secured was positive and supportive, ensuring that the right messages reach the right people needs to be much more heavily exploited in the future. The right profile will in turn support the development of a climate in which innovation and experimentation can take place.

Gaining value from commissioning work within a community environment

The sphere of influence for the larger project participants was clearly very different for that of the smaller ones and this created an interesting dynamic within the community.

As projects developed, the larger participants were more likely to develop issues with IP (which was why some took the view not to apply for the second tier of funding), whereas the smaller ones developed such a level of trust between each other, that they were even proof reading each other's funding applications.

This shared trust was at the heart of the community and all of the participants have stressed that the creation of the community and a permanent physical space in which they could all be based together, was the strongest aspect of the overall scheme and the overriding factor that helped to make Media Sandbox a success.

"We were slightly sceptical about the offer of working space at first, but now we are complete converts!"

Sandbox participant

Interestingly, the participants who chose not to be permanently based in the Studio also supported this view.

"Even though we weren't based there, we felt like we could pitch up at any time and it would still feel like a proper home for the project."

Sandbox participant

Practically, although they understood its value, participants didn't generally enjoy having to complete a regular blog, although this is such a vital part of project communication, that it must be a part of future initiatives. Also, perhaps unsurprisingly, tools such as the mailing list, were generally more useful to and used by those participants based outside Bristol than those within the city, or the Studio itself.

The participants who attended the regular events found them helpful, both as tools in themselves and as milestones around which they could focus project activity. However, a number of comments were made about the final event and it would be worth thinking through the structure of this further as those who had decided not to apply for the second tier funding felt less involved because much of the content was focused on those who had.

Finally, the legacy of the environment created by the Studio itself is one of the most significant outcomes. A number of the participants mentioned that they were continuing to collaborate with people and organisations based in and around the Studio that wouldn't have come about without Media Sandbox and this suggests that the community is far more likely to remain sustainable.

"The Studio feels like a really exciting intellectual experiment – we still visit from time to time to catch up with others or try ideas out."

Sandbox participant

Other learning points

Project processes were sometimes so fluid and organic that in many cases participants built in neither goals nor monitoring benchmarks. Some participants felt that they had to be entirely unconstrained in order to be creative, whereas others would have been more comfortable with more structure. In reality, the latter is

probably the more desirable – provided it is not so restrictive as to affect content development.

Most of the participants who took up the offer of Business Link advice did not find it to be as useful as they had hoped, primarily because it was too general. Although business support is beneficial, any advice in this area for future initiatives would need to be much more focused on the sector to be of value. What the participants really wanted in business terms, was the opportunity to have access to more major industry players in a similar way to how several developed a relationship with HP, along with advice about how to monetise the development of what individual commissions had achieved so far.

Knowledge transfer and skills development

The research results strongly suggest that Media Sandbox is a model of best practice that is easily transferable and could be run elsewhere on a number of levels.

“Media Sandbox should definitely run again – it really supports the development of Bristol as a regional centre of excellence.”

Sandbox participant

The scheme has helped to catalyse a type of network that is fairly rare in that there have been real tangible benefits for the digital community and which also appears to have a greater potential for sustainability.

Those who have benefited from the scheme have learnt a variety of new skills, particularly around collaborative working and have also benefited from Media Sandbox's unique partnership with the academic and business communities.

“It's great to be able to bounce ideas around and encourage one another and having HP around was really helpful and inspiring too.”

Sandbox participant

Recommendations for future initiatives

It is recommended that the scheme introduces more structure for winning commissions to manage themselves more effectively. Any enhancements to requirements around project management, particularly around the setting of milestones and goals, communications and user testing needs to be focused, without losing sight of the core aims of the scheme and overly restricting creativity and content. Having a dedicated adviser for the scheme (particularly if more commissions are included in future Sandboxes), could also be of benefit.

As Media Sandbox grows and attracts more and stronger applications, the selection criteria and process will also need to develop in parallel. Filtering out over-ambitious projects at the outset and just retaining those pure R&D ideas and/or just offering places to start ups may also need to be considered.

Finally, brokering more partnerships and steering those involved towards finding routes to market, as well as developing the profile-raising potential of the scheme will

also be advantageous both practically for future participants and in advocacy terms for iShed, South West Screen and the region.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW FORMAT & METHODOLOGY CAVEATS

Interview format

Each of the six participants took part in an in-depth interview, where they were asked the following questions:

Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of employees • Year established • Annual turnover • A one sentence company description/summary • Estimation of previous time/money spent on R&D by each partner • Have any of the partners been recipients of previous R&D grants and/or worked with Watershed before?
Your project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you hear about the project and what motivated you to apply? • What were you expecting? • How did you go about scoping the project? • If the project was a collaboration, how did the partners find one another (for outside Bristol projects)? • Have you worked collaboratively before? • Was working remotely an effective way to collaborate (largely came together through monthly events/dinners)? • Aside from content, what were the fundamental changes, if any, that occurred in terms of direction/processes during the life of the project? • How did the project/partnership evolve? • Do you feel you achieved your aims and objectives? • How did you measure this? • Were there any other significant outputs? • What are you planning to do next and how has this been influenced/facilitated by being involved with the Pervasive Media Studio and, more specifically, Media Sandbox?
Working practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How helpful was it to be working as one of six groups in part of a 'community'? • Do you think this has longevity?
Quantifiable outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you able to quantify the value of the time spent in R&D? • Estimation of total hours spent on Sandbox project and cost of this time if it were for a client • On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Business Link support? – Events (and how these created project milestones)? – Website? – Project tools such as the mailing list and blog? – Project team and how they supported you?

Future development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you think the scheme should be developed in the future?• Would you apply again?• Is R&D now something that you will incorporate into standard working practices?
Any other comments?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning points, how these have been embedded, additional collaborations or opportunities?

Methodology caveats

In preparing this report, the data from the interviews was supplemented with desk research and informal interviews with a variety of stakeholders both inside and outside the sector.

It should be emphasised that any data and figures quoted about individuals and their businesses have been supplied by them alone and have not been subject to independent verification.