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business COMMENT

The Fuse is lit, but more must be done

SOCIAL media watchers can be forgiven for thinking that the Brighton Fuse has been plugged enough.

The rest of us may wonder why it has sparked the sudden interest.

As Al Tredinnick points out on this page, the fuss is all around the creative, digital and media industries in Brighton. The robust evidence shows these industries are growing at a rapid pace and are set to outpace the city's tourism sector.

The excitement must be tempered however by the fact that the tourism industry itself does not add an enormous amount to the gross value of the region. This matters on a bean-counter's spreadsheet. In short, tourism makes the area look pretty but not prosperous.

It will be a far bigger deal when digital firms start nipping at the heels of the finance sector.

What is standing in its way? Poor office space and inadequate broadband provision.

Brighton and Hove City Council can help find solutions to the former and must do more to improve the latter. A proposed voucher scheme help firms install ultrafast broadband is being considered in Westminster but it will not arrive until well into next year, if at all.

The digital sector is shooting up – its growth must not be stunted.



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Agenda

OUR weekly feature sets the agenda for the Sussex business community. If you are running your own firm, you are the chairman of the board, or a community leader with something to say about the business scene, we want to hear from you. It might be something that affects people across the county or just those who work in your field, but we want your comments and views. Get involved – email john.keenan@theargus.co.uk or call 01273 544545 with your name, age, address and a short outline of what you would like to say plus contact details and we will be in touch.

YOU'D think interns needed rescuing from indentured servitude, after all the kerfuffle about them at The Big Debate last week, but my unpaid internship with Brighton Housing Trust was just the job.

Business people of Brighton and Hove voted in favour of limiting unpaid internships to six months on Wednesday after heated discussions at The Big Debate.

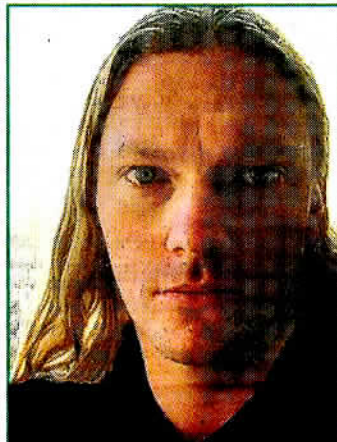
I agree that interns should be paid the living wage whenever possible – and internships kept short – but for me an unpaid internship has paid off.

I'm four months into a six-month placement as Intern Fundraising and Publicity Officer at Brighton Housing Trust on their Intern Programme.

BHT offers advice, accommodation and support to vulnerable men and women in Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings who are homeless or may have experienced homelessness, financial and housing insecurity or problems with drugs or alcohol.

My role is to help BHT's Fundraising and Publicity Team communicate the charity's messages, support fundraising activities and produce marketing and publicity materials.

I've written press releases, updated the BHT website, organised fundraising events and worked on funding bids – I'm not



By James Garside
Brighton Housing Trust

just there to make the tea, though as a Yorkshireman I do make a good brew.

The Intern Programme is an employability training programme funded by BHT and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation.

The programme was set up to help homeless or long-term unemployed men and women get the training, skills and experience they need to support them back into paid work.

It has allowed me to demonstrate my worth to potential employers, improved my job applications and interview technique, and moved me towards employment.

The programme began in January 2012 and had its first intake of interns in May 2012 – in the first year they worked with 38 men and women with half getting into sustained paid employment.

Part of the programme's success is due to the dedicated mentors that provide on-the-job support and individualised personal support from the programme coordinator.

The people I work with are great – I've attended three external job interviews whilst on the programme and they supported me at every stage.

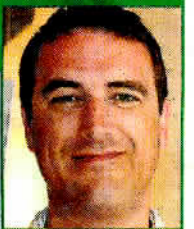
They've advised me of suitable job listings and encouraged me to apply for positions with the charity and BHT projects.

I'm devoted to working with voluntary groups and charities and hope to find employment with them in a communications or community fundraising role.

BHT has given me every chance to succeed in a competitive job market and done more than anyone else to improve my employment prospects.

Taking an unpaid internship is the best decision I've made – unpaid work is better than no work at all.

By Al Tredinnick Digicave



A COUPLE of articles ago I talked about the experience economy that we now live in. This economy brought on by generations X and Y and their need to collect and share experiences rather than material wealth.

This week saw the publication of a report by the Brighton Fuse, a two year study into what makes Brighton and Hove's vibrant CTD sector so successful (That's Creative Digital Information Technology in case you are wondering). The creative and digital economy is definitely leading the way in the country's economic recovery.

The size of the UK creative economy is now estimated as greater than the construction, manufacturing and financial services sectors, according to the 2013 National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) report. This growth is not evenly spread across the country and our city is obviously one of the most concentrated areas.

From reading the Fuse report you can see that deeply engrained in this growth is the fact that the city is such a creative place. As mentioned in the Fuse report, some of the most famous companies such as Apple can trace their achievements back to a true appreciation of the contribution of creative thinking in technology. Anyone who works with technical experts will know that there is actually already an incredible amount of creative thinking in techy endeavours. This is mostly due to having to solve mind bending problems all of the time often with limited resources. When you add artistic design into the mix you start to get something really exciting!

The experiential economy also demands a whole raft of involvement from the humanities subjects. These include the ever growing fields of user experience, social media management and gamification.

All of these experts are basically the designers and translators which marry technological problem solving capabilities with empathy for whoever is going to use it. Facebook is ultimately a database. It is a database with purpose however. That purpose is born of a fantastic insight (some might say lucky guess) into the fact that people might want to stay connected or share things outside of simple communication. This empathy for people's needs combined with a database has taken over the world.

Steve Jobs changed the way the world looks at devices by bringing in the legendary Sir Jonathan Ive. Once again beautiful design and great tech equals world changing results. Imagine how different it will be for our generations when we reach our old age and can sit there with our easy to use device and converse with everyone we have ever built a relationship with? Hopefully the isolation of old age will be a thing of the past for most.

I definitely recommend a read of the Fuse report which can be found at www.brightonfuse.com/the-brighton-fuse-final-report/ as it is great food for thought for anyone who is in business.

You might not be in the CTD sector but maybe closer ties with the creative talent hereabouts could help make your sector grow as fast as digital?

By Michael Divers Bold HR



FOR the past few months, I've joined the (not so) merry band of commuters on the 06.56 train from Brighton to London Victoria to work with new clients in London.

It's actually not a bad journey at that time of the day; the train is relatively quiet and you can get a seat without any difficulty. The 50-minute journey is productive time, as I prepare for the day ahead without interruption.

The journey home (around 18.30) is much more fraught and, unless you get to Victoria station early, you're not guaranteed a seat. The people on that journey appear to be incredibly tired and (understandably) desperate to get home to see their kids or to put their feet up in front of the TV with a ready meal from M&S. But the one striking thing about both journeys is that everyone appears to be so unhappy and they look like they would rather be doing anything else rather than going to work.

Now this is a sweeping generalisation but I wasn't surprised therefore to read a new survey from the recruitment specialist Randstad last week which suggested that, across the UK, some

(73%), closely followed by those in education (72%). At the other end of the scale, the figures for telecoms and admin were 40% and 47% respectively.

In terms of age, people appear to feel more fulfilled at the earlier and later stages of their careers. 67% of 18-24-year-olds and 66% of those aged 55+ said they felt fulfilled, whereas the 35-44-year-old bracket returned the lowest figure (57%). Women also tended to feel more professionally fulfilled than men.

It also indicated that job satisfaction has a clear impact on levels of engagement (and intentions to leave). And high turnover is, of course, one of the factors that leads to greater dissatisfaction.

This report reflects the views expressed in recent surveys that the levels of disengagement amongst employees in UK businesses poses a significant threat to our economic recovery. A disengaged employee is less likely to inspire colleagues or customers or deliver great service. They are unlikely to look for new and imaginative ways of doing things and they could potentially create barriers to businesses driving growth and making the most of the opportunities out there in the global market place.

Looking for ways to build employee engagement is not some sort of airy-fairy HR nonsense. It's good business practice and it's something we need to focus on urgently.

>>> DO YOU WANT TO SET THE AGENDA?

email john.keenan@theargus.co.uk