Creative Economy Coaching Programme

Evaluation Report

A project developed and delivered by Becky Wright
March 2014
"It is aimed at the creative market so we all speak a similar language - some seminars I have been on are aimed at different market places and the jargon is incomprensible." Photograph taken at the Branding Workshop

Acknowledgements

Be Curious gratefully acknowledges the time that has been provided by Becky Wright and the participants that have taken part in the Creative Economy Programme in taking part in the surveys. I would like to thank them for their contributions and insights and for their enthusiasm, energy and willingness to share their thoughts and knowledge of the programme and its activities.

Their feedback has been a vital contribution and has informed the recommendations in this report.

Cover photos: Life Universe and Branding Workshop Photo by Becky Wright
This programme was run by New Leaf Life Design in collaboration with: Paul Elliot Smith Word Gets Around offering two digital media workshops, Barnaby Adams Cuckoo Design Studio offering branding workshop, Pam Knight PR, Marketing White Knight Marketing, Katie Venner Project Advisor, Deborah Durrant Evaluator from Be Curious and Somerset Business Agency.

This project gratefully acknowledges 50% of its funding by Somerset County Council (Creative Industries Development Fund) and funding towards three workshops by Somerset Business Agency.

Contents
Introduction ................................................................. 4
Methodology .............................................................. 7
Collaboration ............................................................... 8
Workshop Programme .................................................... 11
Project Impact / Conclusions and Recommendations ............ 31

List of Tables
Table 1: Number of workshop attendees ........................................ 11
Table 2: Sample Coaching Objectives and Success Criteria ..................... 22
Table 3: Social Media used before and after the programme .................... 25
Table 4: Actual and Projected Turnover ........................................... 29
Table 5: Hours of Work .......................................................... 30

List of Figures
Figure 1 Stages of collaboration maturity (adapted from Chollet, 2007) ............... 10
Figure 2: Participant Objectives by Theme (7 Participants, 3 - 5 objectives each) ....... 22
Figure 3: Strength of Networks Before and After Creative Economy .................... 24
Figure 4: Strength of Marketing and Promotions Before and After Creative Economy .. 26
Figure 5: Strength of Business Model before and after programme ..................... 28
1. Introduction

The ‘Creative Economy’ has been identified by Government as an important area for economic growth and critical as a driver for rebalancing the economy. 1.5 million people are employed in the creative industries or in creative roles in other industries, which represents 5.1% of the UK’s employment.

Somerset has a vibrant and growing artistic and creative sector, characterised by small and medium scale businesses and micro businesses. It is a heavily networked sector. With the recent public sector cuts to the creative sector by both the Arts Council England and Local Authorities, emerging creative practitioners have found themselves with a weakened infrastructure and support structure for their businesses.

Many creative people lack support to increase their confidence in business development and marketing and many do not have the time or expertise necessary to take advantage of new ways to bring their work to the attention of a wider public. Social media - Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn for example - can be time-consuming but are vital to increase investment, sales and knowledge base.

It was against this backdrop that New Leaf Life Design developed the Creative Economy Business Coaching programme. Recognising both the need within the community and the potential it has to contribute to the Somerset economy Becky Wright approached Somerset County Council for funding via the Creative Industries Development Fund and this report sets out the impact of the Creative Economy Coaching Programme.

The programme is now in its third year. During years one and two, it provided business coaching and workshops for 20 creative practitioners and small cultural organisations in Somerset. This year, the programme has supported a further 7 people to develop their creative businesses.
The creatives taking part in the 2013/14 programme were:

- **Deborah Jane Saint-James**, Pickalilly Roo Bear and Birds & Pretty Serious Soap. Based in Yeovil.
- **Victoria Vincent**, Based in Taunton, Vincent Art offers Portrait Painting, Commissions and Art Exhibitions.
- **Jo Backhouse**, Writer and artist based in Taunton.
- **Nicole Kirbyshire**, Vintage Happiness based in Taunton.
- **Laura Pinkney**, Somerset Eye Langport, Creative Design, Marketing and PR
- **Fiona Marlow**, Just Simply Sumptuous offering bespoke, friendly and professional service for soft furnishings. Based in Taunton.
- **Olivia Solomons**, Sewfae. Based in Taunton. Creating dresses, tops and accessories made from up-cycled clothing.

The programme comprised four group coaching sessions lasting 2.5 hours and two one to one coaching sessions for the seven practitioners and five monthly workshops in two locations across the county.

- Planning to Succeed in Your Market Place (29th October 2013), Pam Knight White Knight Marketing, Taunton
- Social media Part 1 (14th November 2013) with Paul Elliot Smith, Bridgwater
- Life, the universe and branding (11th December 2013) with Barnaby Adams, Taunton
- Social media Part 2 (30th January 2014) with Paul Elliot Smith, Bridgwater
- Making a sale is like painting a picture (18th March 2014) with Pam Knight White Knight Marketing, Taunton

The workshops were also offered to people outside of the coaching programme as in previous years. 97 people benefitted in total. Four group coaching sessions additional sessions were offered to those who need additional support.

Deb Durrant Be Curious March 2014
In addition New Leaf Life Design offered two, two hour smaller group coaching sessions and three one to one coaching sessions. These additional sessions were funded by New Leaf Life Design and were not part of the original proposal.

Creative Economy received funding from Somerset County Council’s Creative Industries Development Fund for the programme. Somerset Business Agency directly paid for the room hire and tutors fees for three of the five workshops.

The other 50% was donated in kind by those involved.
2. Methodology

Scope and Limits of the Evaluation
The research has been designed to highlight the achievements of the participants of the Creative Economy programme.

Population Sample
The results within the evaluation reflect the views of participants of the coaching and the attenders of the workshop programme.

Timeframe
The evaluation for this report has taken place from October 2013 to March 2014. An interim report of the workshop programme was submitted in January 2014.

Methods
The research data was drawn from the respondents via a number of different research methods:

1. Digital and Paper Surveys
A digital survey was sent to participants after the first two workshops by New Leaf Life Design. These were then switched to paper surveys for the final three workshops.

2. Participant Aims and Objectives & Pre-Coaching Questionnaires
Completed with the coach before the programme

3. Participant Post Coaching Questionnaires
Completed by the participant at the end of the coaching

4. Interview with Becky Wright, New Leaf Life Design

Note: Somerset Business Agency has produced its own separate paper survey for workshops 1, 2 & 5 and the results of these are also incorporated in this report.
Analysis
The evaluator has undertaken qualitative analysis of the results of the surveys based on thematic coding (evaluator defined and participant defined). The feedback from the participants in the evaluation is represented as far as possible in their own words, but the extracts used have been subject to selection by the evaluator.

Caveat
Participation in this evaluation for the workshops has been entirely voluntary although it was encouraged by New Leaf Life Design. The evaluation of the coaching has been a key element of the programme. The report is very much a snapshot in time and comes from self-completed surveys and has not been subject to audit. Nonetheless, I believe it is sufficiently grounded and evidenced for the conclusions and recommendations to have value.

3. Collaboration in action

Recruitment
Recruitment to the programme was undertaken in collaboration between Becky Wright, New Leaf Life Design, John Carter from Somerset County Council and Creative Somerset.

18 people applied for the 7 available places.

2 people who initially were offered a place on the programme decided not to take up the offer so a further 2 were recruited from the applications.

Due to a reduced level of funding from Somerset County Council than in previous years, further support was sought from Somerset Business Agency (SBA). It was understood by New Leaf Life Design that SBS agreed to pay for four of the five planned workshops on condition that

a) The workshops took place in their specified locations of central Taunton and Bridgwater if the trainers and room hire were directly billed to them.
b) The workshops were opened to a wider group of start-up businesses other than creatives.

c) The workshop recruitment and registration was operated by them through their website.

d) They carried out their own independent evaluation of the workshops.

Whilst the funding of the workshops was extremely welcome to enable the programme to be viable, the conditions added an extra layer of complexity and administration to the programme than was originally envisaged.

Due to the reduced funding from Somerset County Council, the programme offered a different coaching offer to the previous two years in that the participants were offered four group coaching sessions instead of six individual one to one coaching. The group coaching sessions had mixed attendance, due to the group coaching not taking place at the New Leaf Life Design offices instead some six miles away on the same day as the workshops that needed to take place in either Bridgwater or Taunton. Thus some participants were reluctant to make the extra journey for the coaching. With the group coaching sessions, 5 people averaged attendance each time. In the light of this, New Leaf Life Design offered some extra sessions; two, two hour smaller group coaching sessions and three 1:1 coaching sessions each at one and a half hours.

At times communication between Somerset Business Agency (SBA) and New Leaf Life Design did not flow well. New leaf Life Design thought that SBA had agreed to pay for four of the planned workshops. When the Social Media workshop in Bridgwater was full, SBA chose to deliver the same programme in Taunton with a small overflow number of participants who were not from the creative sector. This left New Leaf funding the Social Media workshop in Bridgwater which was unexpected.

One of the cornerstones of a fruitful collaboration can be characterised by these characteristics:

• Strong Leadership

• Clear decision making structure
• Shared Goals
• Trust
• Good open communication
• Good information infrastructure
• Shared agreements and rules
• The right levels of expertise

In terms of collaborative working, Creative Economy Coaching was in the early stages and the partners were still getting to know each other, best illustrated by stage one and two of the model below. It may have been fruitful to have had a written agreement and to have undertaken some joint activities, rather than separate tasks, to encourage the collaboration to form and develop shared understanding, way of working and value set around the programme which would have encouraged trust and a stronger relationship.

Figure 1 Stages of collaboration maturity (adapted from Chollet, 2007)\(^1\)

From Creative and Cultural Skills Business Survival Toolkit developed by Dawn Langley
4. The Workshop Programme

This section sets out the attendance levels and feedback received from all the participants attending over five workshops.

Table 1: Number of workshop attendees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning to success in your market place</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Social media part one</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life, the universe and branding</td>
<td>December 2013</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to social media part two</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“It gave me new ideas to improve my business that I hadn’t thought of before.”

“It was great...relaxed,”

The programme appears to have peaked midway with more attenders for the Branding workshop than the other programmes.

Workshop One: Planning to Succeed in your Market Place (October 2013)

There were 13 respondents to the evaluation, just over half of these (7/53%) are taking part in the Creative Economy Coaching Programme.

Overall the participants were very positive about the session, with 69% (9) rating it as “excellent,” 23% (3) rating it as “good” and one as “OK.”
All of the respondents thought the session was relevant to their business, two of these though it “partially relevant”.

**Highlights**

The highlights of the session included pointing out the difference between marketing and selling, providing advice on making a craft product with a particular market or customer group in mind and supporting people to recognise their USP and how to promote their business. Participants also commented that the illustrations from other creative businesses were useful.

One person commented, “Pam was able to pitch at our level of understanding so her advice was very helpful.” This differed from other training she’d had in other areas in the past as the trainers hadn’t pitched to the participant’s level.

The first session provided useful support for the group; “Seeing the number and variety of people who all feel they need help with this - knowing I’m not alone!”

**Suggested changes**

The majority of people said that they would have preferred more practical work. Typical comments included “It would have been nice to do some group work, or paired work, on issues specific to our own business.” “It would have been great to have a few practical or visual exercises for people who do not learn so well from lecture style presentations like me.” One person suggested that cutting out the Chinese whispers activity would have created more time.

The handouts would have been more useful whilst at the workshop rather than emailed afterwards after as one person commented “this would allow me to write my notes as we went. As a result of this, I feel I have lost thoughts and ideas.”

One person would have liked more information on press releases and how the media works. “It’s important to be able to provide what they are looking for. A guide to the media mindset would be very useful in future.”

Two people commented on housekeeping details: that the room was airless and one person would have preferred a morning session.
How people will use what they have learned

Participants were very positive about the potential impact on their business. The majority said that they would now be more proactive and systematic about marketing and it had given them the confidence to widen their target market and try new ideas.

The course helped with planning and clarifying objectives: “I have started to plan a marketing strategy, feel able to start to plan, basic level of course, but plan at least.” “I will make my objectives more realistic so I don't set myself up for failure.” “I will print off a business plan from Somerset Business Agency website and keep this visible by my workspace. I think this will help me focus and clarify my objectives.”

It also helped people to have a new perspective: “I will look at the bigger picture and use media more.” “I will look at my marketing tasks in a new light.”

One person was highly enthusiastic about their next steps: “I have branding but I shall now get a blog and consider blogging, Linkedin & twitter to get my profile out there more. I will be able to work on how to get to my customers all year round and not just approaching Christmas and have ongoing development of products. I will be aware when to reinvent/refresh my business.”

Supporting Participants to reach their business objectives

Participants appeared quite motivated about the potential impact of their knowledge on their businesses.

The course sparked some ideas about matching products and messages to markets: “It's given me ideas of how to advertise to each type of customers I have, to match my work to their wants and needs and how to project my work better.” “I will look at the bigger picture, think to whom you would sell to and use social media as more of a tool.”

It also highlighted the importance of being part of a highly networked industry. “It hammered home the importance of networks - something I find difficult being quite an introverted person - and I will try to overcome my fears and network more.”
Several commented that it has given them a logical and step by step guide to follow which will help them to develop clearer strategies and plans. “It’s provided more realistic timescales and a clearer strategy for reaching my target market.” “I will be writing a marketing plan in the future.” “I am certain this training will help me shape my business plan and objectives.”

“Paul Smith was engaging and made the workshop interesting throughout.”

“Social Media plays a vital role in a communications lead business, so every aspect of the workshop...”

Workshop Two: Introduction to social media (part one) November 2014

There were 13 respondents to the evaluation, just under half (6/46%) were taking part in the Creative Economy Coaching Programme.

Overall the participants were very positive about the session, with three quarters (75% (9) rating it as “excellent,” 17% (2) rating it as “good” and one as “OK.”

All but one of the respondents thought the session was relevant to their business, one of these though it “partially relevant”. One person said the session was not relevant to their business.

Highlights

The course highlighted the importance of using social media to showcase people’s work.

Overall, participants found it useful to learn about how to use Facebook as shop for their business and it also helped them to unravel twitter; “the facts and the knowledge and the data.”

One person commented on the benefits of Pinterest; “It is a solution to the problem of needing a free online gallery.”
Suggested Changes

Again, the majority of people said that they would have preferred a more practical workshop. The workshop talked a lot about the importance of social media and how it can help your business but I was hoping for a much more practical workshop with hints & tips. “Workshops so far have been presentations and my Learning style would benefit from this being balanced with more interactive and practical sessions too.”

Two people suggested that it would be useful to have more practical interaction, “some pc based practice,” or “an interactive screen would be very useful so that real time demonstrations would be possible.”

One person thought that there was too much information. “I would reduce it slightly - so as not to create so much of an info overload in future,” whilst it was not what another expected, “I was expecting something a bit more high-tech in keeping with the subject matter.”

How people will use what they have learned

All of the participants planned to implement some changes and use social media more; two have already made a Facebook page and a further two have opened a twitter account as a result of the course. “I have already signed up to twitter in my pen name, started my business Facebook page and looked at the website I tried to set up last year with a view to finishing it!”

One person plans to build a more comprehensive website. “I will build a website that covers the full range of what I do.” Two people said that they plan to endorse other businesses by sending positive tweets and retweeting.

Two people also commented that it was helpful to learn about the rule of thirds. One person plans to use Pinterest as a gallery and link it to their website.

“It will hopefully mean that we reach and engage a much wider audience and increase sales.”

“I have learnt that to get noticed I will have to get out there and that social media is an important tool!”
Supporting people to reach their business objectives

The course demonstrated to all the participants that social media is a powerful tool that can promote their businesses to a wider audience than they might otherwise ordinarily afford.

“Social media is a free way of advertising myself, something I can’t afford to do otherwise so I hope it’ll help achieve my goal of raising my profile and making sales.”

“It should help to advertise my business further and for free!”

One person said that they planned to use social media more to network.

Workshop Three: Life, the Universe and Branding (December 2014)

There were 18 respondents to the evaluation, (4/22%) were taking part in the Creative Economy Coaching Programme, the rest and are not and one person was unsure.

Overall the participants were positive about the session, with half (9) rating it as “excellent,” 22% (4) rating it as “good” and 16% (3) as “OK.” Two people did not answer the question.

78% (14) of the respondents thought the session was relevant to their business, 16% (3) of these thought it “partially relevant.” One person said the session was not relevant to their business. “I found a lot of the information was not relevant to me or to small businesses. It was too focussed on the wider picture. I would have appreciated a set of tools to help me build my brand.”

Highlights

Overall the majority of participants valued the explanation of brand personality, typical comments being “I appreciated the advice to understand my business personality.”

Participants commented that it was useful to gain a different perspective on their business. “It is making me think about the business as people see it.” “It triggered some thoughts for a new business venture that I’ve been working on for some time.”
Some of the participants also found Barnaby’s take on ethical businesses thought provoking. “The highlight was the alternative look at business including ethical and truthful business.” “Talking about ethics and oneness really amazed me. I really believe in it and it is at the heart of my business but no one ever talks about it.” “Money is not the measure of wealth.” “Fabulously honest and engaging. I would like to bottle Barnaby and keep him on a shelf in my kitchen to add to a cup of tea when I’m feeling down. What he has illustrated tonight underpins everything I do and it’s brilliant to know that there are like minds out there in the universe.”

Suggested Changes

Whilst Barnaby’s stance on ethical businesses was a highlight for some, it was not well received by all of the participants. “There was a slight political bias - didn’t this was relevant for my business.” “Too personalised opinions of capitalism.” “I would like it to be more business focused, I felt the presentation was made up of two halves. The first half was really thought provoking and the second half was an individual’s opinions on environmental factors.”

Several people said that they would have preferred a more interactive workshop. “Presentation only, no interactive opportunity. I think I might have missed a lot of information as I find it hard to listen for a prolonged period like this.” “I would have liked more interaction at the start.”

One person commented that they would have liked more summarised handouts and another would have liked more positive and negative examples of branding. For one person, the workshop seemed to be focussed too much on the big picture, “It’s a bit too big. It needed to be more basic/ focus on really day to day running of a business.”

How people will use what they’ve learned

However, the workshop clearly made people consider the branding of their businesses as they came away with a list of ideas to implement. “I understand better how to brand across all media platforms.” “I will take my branding back to basics to incorporate my personality.” “I will think about the personality of my business.”
One person commented that by focussing on their brand personality, they realised needed to further promote their business. “Writing down my characteristics for the company I realised that many of them were hidden under a bushel, hidden talents that made me realise that I need to focus on getting out there and getting recognised.”

Another said that they would extend their branding through to new areas of their operation. “Design new invoices.”

The workshop also provided people some new inspiration. “I will approach the marketing and branding of my work in a new light with a different way of thinking.”

One person commented, “I might have created a new strapline.”

Supporting people to reach their business objectives

Three people commented that the workshop had enabled them to better understand and establish their business objectives, “I will re-establish my original goals for my happiness in my business.” The workshop has also given people a clear process blueprint for implementation. “It has given me a clear fundamental process to follow.”

Three people commented that they now understand how branding impacts on the whole of their business and had helped them prioritise their budget; “I understand how branding impacts on all the other areas of your product.” “I understand that branding has to go through the entire transaction and beyond. I’m working very closely on strategy of where to spend money.” Another reflected that they would now think about branding more objectively and would build a personality for their product.

Finally for one person the image of the cuckoo info-graphic will remind them of the process of attracting customers.
Workshop Four: Introduction to Social Media (part two) January 2014

There were 15 respondents to the evaluation, 4 (26%) were taking part in the Creative Economy Coaching Programme.

The participants were highly enthusiastic about the second social media workshop; 9 (60%) rated it as excellent and the remaining 6 (40%) rated it as ‘good.’ All but one of the respondents thought the workshop was relevant to their business. The remainder thought it to be ‘partially relevant.’

Highlights

The majority of people commented that the highlight of the session included learning about social media management platforms such as Hootsuite and also analysis tools such as Google Analytics. Overall participants commented that the workshop offered some good ideas. One person thought that Facebook insights was one of the highlights, “I generally only glance at it but I can make proper use of it now.”

Suggested Changes

Participants had some suggestions for changes to future sessions. One person thought that too much material was repeated from the first workshop whilst two people struggled to follow the content and would have preferred it to have been explained more simply. Two people would have liked a more practical and interactive workshop and time for questions. One person would have preferred more strategic content but did not comment on what that could be.

How people will use what they learned

Just over a third of the respondents said they would now look into a social media management platform. It also spurred one person to start using the rule of thirds. Two people commented that they would now start to evaluate their social media strategy using Google Analytics and Facebook analytics. One person said that they had been inspired to join Pinterest.
Supporting people to reach their business objectives

The majority of people thought that the information they had learned would be helpful for furthering the promotion of their projects, “This will help me get my Free Range Suitcase Workshops up and running using social media as the tool to succeed.” “Hopefully it will increase my marketing power a lot more.”

Two people thought that it could help find potential clients. “It will help me to make connections with potential customers.” “It will help me find clients and audiences.”

One person commented that the social management platform would save them time so they will be more inclined to use social media regularly.

Workshop Five: Sales Workshop (March 2014)

There were 12 respondents to the evaluation, (4/33%) are taking part in the Creative Economy Coaching Programme, 7 are not and one person did not answer the question.

Overall the participants were extremely positive about the session, with 83% (10) rating it as “excellent,” and two as rating it as “good”.

75% (9) of the respondents thought the session was relevant to their business, 17% (2) of these though it “partially relevant.” One person said the session was not relevant to their business but did not give an explanation.

Highlights

Two people commented that they appreciated learning about more up to date sales techniques such as rapport sales, another two people commented that they valued learning about the Unique Selling Point, two people commented that they valued learning about techniques for closing a sale and two said that the highlight was learning how to reach potential customers.
Suggested Changes

Two people would have liked the session to be longer and one person would have preferred a ‘more interactive’ session. One participant suggested that copies of the slides could be shared in the session so that participants can spend more time engaging and write additional notes as required, rather than copying the powerpoint notes.

How people will use what they’ve learned

One person reflected that they would undertake market segmentation; market to businesses they would like to work with by profiling the segment. Two people commented that they were going to utilise a wider range of selling techniques, one of these is going to adopt a policy of more assumptive sales.

One participant plans to be more experimental and try new ways to approach customers, and one person plans to adopt the ideas they have learned when updating their website and Facebook photos.

Whilst one planned to share their learning with the rest of their team, another said that they had made some craft connections and plans to run craft workshops.

Supporting people to reach their business objectives

The majority of the participants commented that the workshop had enabled them to better understand and establish their business objectives building both skills and confidence. “The programme has given me better marketing collateral in the first instance and I will have more confidence.”

Seven people said that they thought this would now lead to increased sales, one person commented that it may help them nurture potential customers and one person though ti had given them the skills to ‘close more sales.’

One person said that the workshop had helped them to develop a better sales strategy and build a better customer profile.
5. Programme Impact

Coaching Objectives

At the beginning of the programme, participants were asked to set three objectives of what they would like to achieve through the coaching. The majority of the participants required support with business skills such as planning, stock production and getting organised (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Participant Objectives by Theme (7 Participants, 3 - 5 objectives each)

![Bar Chart](image)

Table 2: Sample Coaching Objectives and Success Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching Objective</th>
<th>Success Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a clear identity</td>
<td>I will have a range of items that express my identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a business plan</td>
<td>I will have a business plan to follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop more confidence when dealing with customers - selling</td>
<td>Sell more products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create the website</td>
<td>The website will be live and able to take money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the end of the programme, participants thought the programme had helped them achieve their objectives.

Participants said that overall the programme had helped them increase in confidence, to develop a clearer brand identity, range of products and to learn about the process of taking their products to market.

They also felt that they had improved their networks and collaborative opportunities because it afforded them to ‘meet like like-minded business people.’ One participant was able to get a part-time job through a contact that she had made at a workshop. Taking the part time job, has enabled her business to become more sustainable as she has an income stream coming in as she builds her business.

Being part of Creative Economy has lessened the feeling of isolation for the large majority of participants which in turn has enabled them to feel better networks and increased their confidence.

“My confidence has increased tenfold. There is no comparison to where I was at the start.”

“I’ve made an enormous leap in confidence. I’ve made proper professional contacts with industry professionals”.

“I am more confident. I find it easier to approach people.”

“I have met lots of interesting people that have lots of different skills that I feel could collectively help. I have also made a few useful contacts through the workshops.”

“I have moved from not trading to trading.”

“I feel more confident about being self employed.”

They have also been able to acquire new knowledge which will be vital to build their profiles as their businesses move forward.
Networking

Participants were asked to rate the strength of their networks at the beginning and end of the programme. At the beginning of the programme, the strength of people’s networks scored on average 2/6 (33%), however by the end of the programme this had raised to 4.67/6 (78%). This shows an average raise of 2.67 points.

Figure 3: Strength of Networks Before and After Creative Economy

During the programme, the large majority of coaching participants said that they had increased the strength of their networks. Between the 6 that completed the programme, they cited that they are now part of 14 different trade associations, business networks and creative groups that they were not part of before. These included the Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce, Creative Somerset Take Art, and various virtual groups.
Social Media

Creative Economy showed participants the value of social media and the time saving platform management tools that would enable them to use it to promote their business.

At the beginning of the programme participants were not using much social media as a way of promotion their business. Three were not using Facebook, five were not using Twitter and none had a mailing list. By the end of the programme, one more had started a business Facebook account and four had established Twitter accounts. Two had developed mailing lists.

Table 3: Social Media used before and after the programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th></th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th></th>
<th>Mailing List</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other social media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Linkd in - 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Linkd in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>Linkd in 109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Linkd in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, despite the low numbers, at the end of the programme four of the six people who completed the programme said that they had a social media strategy and they planned to start implementing it. “I have been developing more marketing and promotion strategies on FB to keep engaging people.”

Four people also reported to have started using Linked in as a result of the programme.
**Branding, Marketing and Promotion**

Six of the seven participants came to the programme with the ambition of either developing their branding, raising their profile or improving their marketing. Their objectives included:

- Branding clearly identified
- Create a clear identity
- Develop my brand and promotional material
- Raise awareness of my business
- Sell more

At the beginning of the programme, participants were asked to rate the strength of their marketing and promotion. At the beginning of the programme, the strengths of people’s marketing and promotion scored on average 1.83/6 (30%), however by the end of the programme they felt confident enough to raise this to 4.83/6 (80%). This shows an average raise of 3 points.

**Figure 4: Strength of Marketing and Promotions Before and After Creative Economy**

![Chart showing strength of marketing and promotion before and after the programme]
At the end of the programme, participants reported the following marketing and promotion successes:

- Changed attitudes to marketing
- Clarified customer profiles for more targeted marketing
- Clarified value of products
- Wider advertising using more social media and hard print
- Using blogs and websites in a more proactive way
- Developed E newsletters/HTML campaigns
- Developed use of videos to showcase work
- Developed brand personalities and unique selling points
- Increased awareness through using social media

Four of the six said they had a marketing plan.

**Website**

Four of the six people completers said that they had made significant improvements to their website as a result of the programme. The added clarity and confidence that they had gained helped them to hone their brand, products and put together a showcase for their work.

“I have just set up the website. This has come as a result of me now being totally confident with my branding and approach. I have established an ‘about section and included testimonials and contact details.”

“It has built my confidence, improved my marketing skills and clarified my business.”
Overall Strength of Business Model

At the beginning of Creative Economy participants were asked to rate the strength of their business model. At the beginning of the programme, the strength of their business model scored on average 2.42/6 (38%) however by the end of the programme this had raised to 4.67/6 (78%). This shows an average raise of 2.25 points. This is particularly significant as participants wanted to increase business focus and clarity, confidence and business skills through the coaching programme. Business skills featured highly in participants list of personal objectives for the programme. Overall the programme has helped to not only provide skills, but also give people confidence in their business model and purpose. The following comments typify how the programme helped to strengthen the participant’s business models:

“I have increased confidence. The programme got me grounded and gave me a clear plan of where I’m headed and what I’m doing.”

“It has hugely increased my confidence. It has helped me to have a clear idea of what I want to achieve and how to do it. It has helped me to feel good about what I am selling, have faith in myself and believe in my abilities. Also to have confidence in the value of my products.”

That said, at the end of the programme, only two of the six who completed the programme had a written business plan.

Figure 5: Strength of Business Model before and after programme
Estimated turnover for the next financial year

Four of the seven businesses taking part in Creative Economy were start-up businesses. One had been trading for two years and one for one year prior to taking part.

In October 2013, participants were asked to estimate their turnover for the end of the financial year in March 2014. They were asked for actual figures in March 2014. The nature of the figures provided in round numbers indicates that the figures provided were not actuals but best guess. One person did not know the actuals to March 2014.

However, in one case the actual turnover to March 2014 was significantly lower than what had been projected, perhaps not too unsurprising given that this is a business in its first year of development.

Table 4: Actual and Projected Turnover

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>2011/12 £</th>
<th>2012/13 £</th>
<th>2013/14 - £ est</th>
<th>2013/14 £ actual</th>
<th>2014/15 £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,000 - 2,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>unspecific</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>6,000 - 8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>unspecific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>unspecific</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>4,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>3,000 - 4,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participant (1) did not articulate as to whether the income was organic growth or specific to a particular event. On this basis, the participant would need to further interrogate the data for future forecasts.
Similarly, the participant (5) needs to understand why their business didn’t perform in the way that they had anticipated.

Participant 2 commented, “I didn’t sell very much before as I didn’t have the confidence to market myself properly. Since the first session I have earned progressively more money every month. I am now getting a regular income.”

Comparing the income against the number of hours worked in building the business (in Table 4 below), presents a typical pattern for new entrepreneurs for their first two years of starting a business\(^2\). That said, the projected returns appear to be very modest. Four of the participants now spend more time on their businesses than they did at the beginning of the programme and the distribution of time spent on marketing and promotion against producing products is also different.

Five of the participants now spend more time on marketing and promotion than they did at the start of the programme and three spend less time producing work for sale, whilst there has been a slight increase for three of the participants due to two of them increasing the amount of hours that spend on the business overall.

Table 5: Hours of Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hours a week</th>
<th>Hours producing</th>
<th>Hours Marketing</th>
<th>Hours management/admin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\)http://www.forbes.com/sites/yec/2013/06/11/five-things-you-should-know-before-starting-a-business/
Challenges

Participants were asked what challenges they perceived for their businesses moving forwards.

The majority of people said that maintaining their motivation would be the greatest challenge. Other challenges included:

- Seasonal variation in demand
- Records and paperwork
- Financial barriers
- Increasing turnover
- Raising the profile
- Planning

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Creative Economy Coaching Programme was developed to provide group coaching and workshops to seven new creative practitioners in Somerset. It also sought to provide an interesting and engaging programme focussing on branding, social media and marketing combined with networking opportunities. It offered small group coaching to help people meet their business objectives, with additional one to one coaching for extra support.

The workshop programme was well received and had a wider reach than those who were taking part in the coaching programme with 97 attendances over six months. It provided great networking opportunities and also highlighted the latest thinking and trends in social media marketing and branding.

The seven programme participants for the coaching programme were solopreneurs with emergent businesses who are moving from being creative hobbyists to building viable businesses. They are clearly serious about their businesses given the amount of hours that they are committing to their development with so far small financial reward.
The coaching element the programme has increased people’s confidence in their business and helped to develop a stronger sense of brand and some further ideas for routes to market. It has also reduced the feeling of isolation which is common for sole practitioners and has enabled people to widen their networks.

What is clear is that the emergent businesses need some further support around some hard edged business planning and financial management of running a business. They would also benefit from extra pastoral support.

The collaboration with Somerset Business Agency (SBA) provided some necessary funds to enable the workshop programme to happen and enabled the workshop programme to extend its reach to non creative sector businesses. However the conditions of the SBA funding in the specified locations of the training and utilising the SBA booking system appeared to put an extra administrative strain on New Leaf Life Design, that was already stretched in making the decision to run the programme on a reduced budget.

The format using group coaching, whilst welcomed, appeared not have been as effective as the more intensive one to one coaching offered in previous years. Hence New Leaf Life Design offered extra small group and one to one coaching - a total of eight and half extra hours. The group coaching was not as effective as the one to one for this group of participants, potentially due to their inexperience compared with previous cohorts, and this appears to have been reflected in the distanced travelled of the participants in their over the six months of the programme compared with previous years and also their ability to engage with some of the harder edged aspects of running their business.

That said four of the six are in their first year of trading with emergent business ideas, and this programme has helped them to focus, develop a clear brand, product offer and develop confidence on which to build in the future.
Recommendations

• To conduct a longitudinal study of the previous 3 years in September 2014 to see how the participants have been impacted by the programme.

• Spend time building relationships for any future collaborations to ensure that there are agreements and shared values.

If the programme is to be run again,

• Increase the level of participants to 10 people for the coaching.

• Continue to offer monthly workshops as part of the programme.

• Offer one to one business coaching sessions.

• Offer further workshops on financial planning and business planning as part of the programme.

• Offer go and see visits as part of the programmes to extend people’s practice.

• Introduce action learning as part of the process to encourage more critical reflection. This would also build a peer learning community that could be self-sustaining and continued after the programme. This would be a mechanism for on-going development and support.

• Hold an evaluation day as a matter of course to gather data from the programme to measure its impact.
### Results of Somerset Business Agency’s Monitoring Survey

#### Planning to Succeed in your Market Place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booking process and directions to the venue</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills and knowledge of the trainer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of handouts and supporting materials</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue and facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall value of the session</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Were your personal objectives covered within this session?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Was the information provided helpful in deciding your next steps?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you hear/find out about the service?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Introduction to social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booking process and directions to the venue</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills and knowledge of the trainer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of handouts and supporting materials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue and facilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall value of the session</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Were your personal objectives covered within this session?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Was the information provided helpful in deciding your next steps?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How did you hear/find out about the service?

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Local newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>E-newsletter</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Enterprise Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flyer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other (New Leaf Life Design)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photograph taken on one of the workshops.
Sales workshop

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Booking process and directions to the venue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills and knowledge of the trainer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The use of handouts and supporting materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The venue and facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The overall value of the session</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Were your personal objectives covered within this session?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was the information provided helpful in deciding your next steps?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did you hear/find out about the service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Friend</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Local newspaper</th>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>E-newsletter</th>
<th>Enterprise Agency</th>
<th>Flyer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(New Leaf Life Design)