

Local MP backs good design giving Kent companies the edge

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Derek Wyatt MP promotes design to improve local companies' productivity at a Designing Demand Workshop, Kent Research Park.

SEEDA has expanded Designing Demand to help over 150 business owners to improve their company's prospects through design. Derek Wyatt MP will visit the Kent Research Park on 17th April to meet some of the companies which will be considered for intensive design support.

MP for Sittingbourne & Sheppey and a member of the Parliamentary Design Group, Derek Wyatt explained: "Good design is quickly fundamental to all businesses. Often people are put off by costs, but investment in good design reaps benefits. Strong design can help prospective customers understand your company and why they should buy from you, differentiate your company in the market place, increase product and service innovation, and expand your local/international markets."

According to a [Government Report](#) - half of export sales made by winners of the 'Queens Award for Exports' could be attributed to their investment in design.

Designing Demand (DD), (one of 30 national public business support programmes), has been developed by the Design Council. It provides small and medium sized firms with strategic design mentoring advice to improve their profitability, market penetration and innovation levels.

SEEDA is funding over 150 places over 18 months on two mentoring schemes: DD Generate – for SMEs operational for 3+ years and DD Immerse a more intense programme for larger SMEs. SEEDA is also considering investing in DD Innovate which targets technology start-ups.

Robin Gillum-Webb, SEEDA Manager for Design, added: "SEEDA is delighted by the excellent response from Sittingbourne businesses to the twenty first Designing Demand workshop held in the SE. Businesses in the current economic downturn are increasingly recognising the importance of getting the best design into their products and services. Designing Demand provides businesses with Design Council approved designers to directly help them develop cost effective design strategies that will help them gain competitive advantage."

DD has already helped a number of companies in the South East since it was piloted by SEEDA in 2006, including:

- 400 SMEs and high growth technology companies have attended strategic design workshops
- 72 companies have participated in the Innovate (4) and Generate (68) programmes improving their subsequent sales, profits and distribution
- 155 business advisory and design agencies attended workshops to help them consider how to help SMEs better understand the commercial benefits of design

Companies completing the South East Generate programme spent an average of £11k on design projects, 450% more than the UK average.

...ENDS...

Notes to editors

- **Background on Designing Demand in the South East:**

Designing Demand was developed by the Design Council and includes three programmes:

- **DD Innovate** – structured design mentoring programme targeting technology start-ups less than 3 years old with the potential for significant growth. Programme lasts for 18 months and operates as a cohort of six companies. SEEDA completed a first Innovate programme in May 2008 and is considering the roll out of another programme.
- **DD Generate** - offers up to five days worth of mentoring from a Design Council Design Associate provided over a six month period to SME's of >3 years old.
- **DD Immerse** - a full strategic design programme targeting established manufacturing companies providing high level design input and up to 18 days of mentoring.

Designing Demand is one of the Business Expertise programmes in place under BSSP.

SEEDA was one of the first RDAs to roll-out the Designing Demand programme in November 2006. Since then the following outputs have been achieved:

- 400 SMEs and high growth technology companies have attended strategic design workshops
 - 72 companies have participated in the Innovate (4) and Generate (68) programmes improving their subsequent sales, profits and distribution
 - 80 designers have attended specialist workshops focused on helping them position themselves to win SME business
 - 75 business advisors have attended specialist workshops to better understand the benefits of design for their SME clients
 - We have had a number of good successes through the programme including JS Humidifiers, Craufurd Technology, and others (see attached case studies prepared by our delivery partner)
 - We are currently in the process of recruiting 10 companies for the Immerse programme. As part of this process our aim is to create a competitive process so that there are two companies for every one position being considered. This will ensure that we have only high quality candidates recruited to the programme.
- **SEEDA, the South East England Development Agency**, is the Government-funded agency responsible for the sustainable economic development of the South East of England – the driving force of the UK's economy. Through supporting businesses, encouraging innovation, developing skills and engaging with public and private partners, we aim to create a successful, sustainable future for the region.
 - **SEEDA's support helped deliver the following** over the period 2005-2008, :
 - 17,500 jobs created or safeguarded
 - 32,500 people helped to get work
 - 10,000 businesses created or attracted to region
 - 137,500 businesses assisted
 - £638m investment, 45% levered from private sector
 - 200ha Brownfield land remediated
 - 148,500 people assisted in skills development
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