media
NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR
trans
YOUR MEDIA COMPANY

European project MediaTrans –
Stimulating trans-national RTD co-operation between SMEs and research actors in Europe and India in the media sector by identifying future and emerging technology needs in SMEs

Case Study for Innovation Workshops in the United Kingdom

Within the framework of the MediaTrans project, substantial support and assistance was provided to a small company based in the West Midlands by Coventry University Enterprises (CUE)**.** The firm is a publishing company focusing on the independent game developers community. The focus of the company is to help groups of individuals develop their ideas, and support them in their attempts to go commercial by offering advice and services on topics ranging from the technical (implementation and distribution) to any legal issues involved. The company also specialises in the development of games and the provision of media technologies related to consultancy.

The company initially approached CUE in order to receive some information and advice on how to obtain some funding that would help in developing further some of their existing services and how to take their ideas forward. A meeting was arranged in the company's premises to enable CUE to understand better their position and needs. The main objective of the initial meeting was to identify their capabilities and needs and to explore ways of solving technological problems and acquiring technological know-how. The future tasks/projects had to fit into the overall business and innovation needs of the firm which made clear that future projects must have clear exploitation potential and economic benefits.

The workshop session kicked off with the compilation of a list where the most important products and technologies were categorised. As most of the SMEs, the company did not seem to have a long term plan although they had long-term contracts with some rather large clients. A SWOT analysis was put together based on the evidence and information provided by the firm in order to facilitate the compilation of a new strategy. The analysis revealed the following:

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Business Location Long term contracts Cost advantage over competitors(relatively low prices) Use of superior technology	Insufficient financial resources to fund changes and new products Limited experience in EC projects Relatively low R& D-Mainly focused on sales Weak brand -relatively new company

Good relationship with customers Experienced team Industry knowledge Strong links with universities	Small team / Resources barriers Time constrains
Opportunities	**Threats**
Expand the service line & Diversify the business interests by using new funding streams Expand the geographical base of clients by collaborating with international partners Changes in use of technology opening up opportunities to utilize these technologies such as Ecommerce or Internet sales Shift of customers buying behaviour(moving towards mobile media)	Many substitute products & services currently available in the market Economic crisis / negative economic trends Increased completion on EC grants Rapidly changing sector/ difficult to keep in tune with the latest developments

The company indicated that roadmapping was an interesting exercise which gave them a chance to reconsider their position. Despite their very small size they are very ambitious and willing to explore new routes. However, as a micro sized company they are too focused on day to day activities and they believe that they are not in a position to decide what they will be doing in a long term without some substantial support and guidance. They are keen though to establish an international collaboration in order to either sell their products or to undertake some research and development activities. After a detailed analysis of their needs, some possible future technological development scenarios were presented to them as well as a number of funding routes/alternatives.

A second workshop session followed where the various scenarios and funding schemes were assessed, taking into consideration the roadmap that was developed in the first meeting. The firm's MD rejected the idea of participating in a project funded under the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP7) as coordinator even though he came up with some interesting project ideas. He considered the coordination of the project as a demanding and complex management task which requires a well qualified and experienced coordinator and they do not have that level of experience. The company was asked to look into and try to answer the following fundamental questions so as to determine whether FP7 complies with their business strategy and project.

Business Rationale	**Project & European dimension**
• Will it fit within your business strategy? • Are you prepared to resource and manage the administrative responsibilities that the grant will place on you? • Are you prepared to commit considerable management time and resource to meeting consortium partners across Europe and contribute to the preparation of an application? • Are you prepared to invest in the project yourself. The grant will in most cases fund not more than 50% of your portion of the cost of the project. • Can you commit to a 2 - 5 year project? • Are you prepared to enter a competition where the rules can be complex and the procedures drawn out?	• Will your project benefit from the involvement of a number of complimentary European partners? • Are you undertaking research to develop a usable end product or to deliver knowledge and best practice? • Is the project European focused, aimed at making an impact and providing a major step forward? • Are you prepared to negotiate around the project outputs, including ownership of intellectual property? • Do you see benefits in collaborating with other European organisations (access to larger markets, shared risk, new contacts, facilities and expertise)? • Could you work in a consortium with a high level of responsibility, to deliver contractual targets.

A top-down approach was, therefore, suggested through which the company experience as partners access new technologies and strengthen their position for future leads. CUE carried out a research to identify suitable proposals and provided them with a number of Partner Searches obtained through various networks and databases. The company was also put in contact with some universities who are considered very strong in media research. Eventually, they collaborated with one university that led to a very promising project.