

# THE **BIG** HOUSE

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## ACCELERATOR

Fast-tracking our brightest creative  
and digital businesses



**European Union**  
European Regional  
Development Fund



**NOTTINGHAM  
BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY



# Welcome

We are delighted to showcase the Big House Accelerator 2019 cohort. In this first Accelerator for creative and digital businesses in the region, we were privileged to support eleven ambitious and highly innovative new businesses. Here we present their stories, giving insight into their business and Accelerator journeys.

Nottingham Business School is internationally recognised for combining academic excellence with impact on business and society, so we're proud to be leading this programme in partnership with an exciting network of key industry figures and innovators. We wish all our Accelerator clients the very best of luck on their onward journey. We look forward to seeing what they will achieve and exploring further ways to work with them.

Professor Baback Yazdani  
Dean of Nottingham Business School

### Accelerator Specialists

Browne Jacobson LLP	Mercia Fund Managers
BDO Nottingham	Monika Biddulph
Cordius Recruitment	My HR Hub
F Word Training	Paul Jenkinson Consulting
Foresight Group	Dr Suzanne Ross
Knowledge Transfer Network	Stratigen
Make Happy	Trinamo
Sirio Business Transformation	

### Special thanks to:

Jon Slade, Julian Turner and Laura Handley of Ensek	Joe Campbell of Wealth Kernel
Susan Hallam of Hallam Internet	Adam Bird of Cronofy

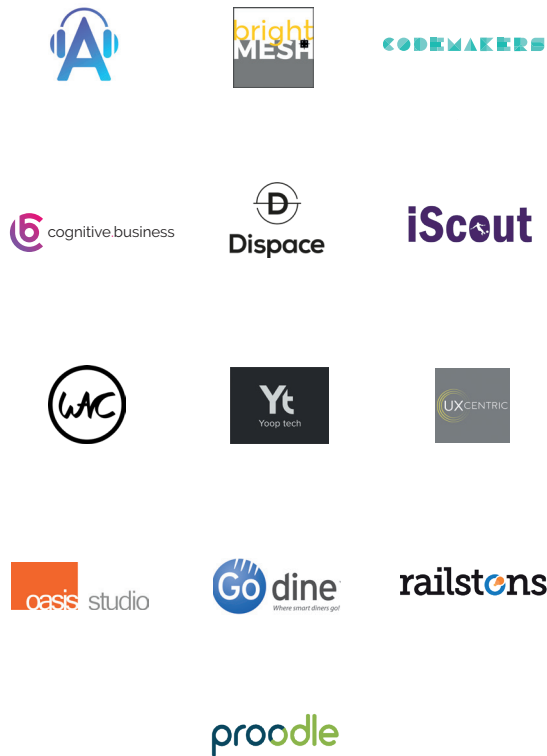
# Introducing the Big House Accelerator

The Big House Accelerator is a 6-month programme of bespoke business support, which ran for the first time in 2019. It is for early-stage businesses that are innovating with new or existing technology to solve market problems with show both the ambition and potential to scale. A selection process allows us to achieve an optimal blend of businesses to go through the programme together.

This is not business-as-usual. The Accelerator is delivered by industry experts, and anchored by our Accelerator Facilitators - all with extensive experience of high-growth tech start-ups. Each element of the Accelerator is tailored to the needs of participating businesses.

- The Accelerator facilitator conducts a deep dive diagnostic, provides anchor mentoring to help businesses get the most out of the support on offer and provides a strategic look forward at the end of the programme
- Six results-focused, small-group workshops - with the option of follow on business mentoring - led by a network of industry and academic specialists
  1. Value proposition & pitching
  2. Marketing
  3. Sales
  4. Financial management & legal requirements
  5. Management team development
  6. Financing growth & investor pitches
- Access to academic expertise, research and resources – including bespoke postgraduate research projects
- A professionally written PR piece for each business
- The option of pitching to Midlands Engine and angel investors
- Peer learning and support in an informal group of founders and entrepreneurs
- High value networking and introductions to investors, funders and experienced tech entrepreneurs

### Big House Accelerator Cohort 2019





## Inspiring musicians around the world

Founder – Jenny Prokop

Founder Jenny Prokop has created a unique, patent-pending algorithm that generates original, royalty-free music content in seconds for musicians to use in their creative process.

Audiently is an app that inspires musicians around the world, both amateur and professional. Musicians can download and edit the loops the app creates to use in their music, alongside Audiently's ever growing library of midi files and samples, and because Audiently is designed to run on mobile, desktop and tablet, they can do it wherever they are, even on the move.

Existing ways for musicians to find inspiration include using stock music, buying from music content marketplaces, and more recently, using AI music generation tools. What makes Audiently different is its speed, generating unique music content in under three seconds, faster than any competitor, plus the fact its library is created by humans for expert sound curation and a fast response to market trends.

The app is currently being user tested by a global community of musicians through an Early Access program. They are demonstrating the demand for their product with over 40k Facebook followers in their online music community.

Audiently was born out of founder Jenny Prokop's passion for music. As a child, she learnt how to programme the family Commodore 64 computer to play chip music, inspired by her love for electronic sounds. However, much later, in the midst of a successful career in software development and leadership, Jenny realised she had stopped finding the energy to be creative and felt blocked whenever she tried to write music.

Audiently came out of those creative blocks. Jenny began building the Audiently algorithm in her spare time, and began to notice a spark in herself. *"Any time I started doubting myself creatively, I would use the algorithm to generate some music loops and it would inspire me to keep going."*

### The Big House Accelerator – a chance to strengthen ties and make new contacts

*"I'd recently finished a year-long programme of business support and wanted some form of continuation that would provide all round support."*

*"Those sessions gave me the chance to strengthen ties with people I'd previously networked with and I also made some new contacts that will be useful going forwards. I'm also working with MSc students from Nottingham Trent University. I don't think I would have gathered analytics and engaged in user testing as soon as I did without the programme and it's been an interesting journey, especially given it was the first Accelerator of its kind."*

Follow Jenny's story at [www.audient.ly](http://www.audient.ly)



## Inspiring musicians around the world

Founder – Robert Wilkes

Founder Robert Wilkes has developed a simple way to create exciting, interactive surfaces, from walls and floors, to displays, installations and sensory environments, using patent-pending modular, touch-sensitive LED tiles.

Each tile is completely self-contained so you can tile the area you want to, linking the tiles as you go, horizontally, vertically and around corners. There is no need for a computer or special software to set them up. Power can be supplied at any edge, and once powered, you can control the colour, brightness and light pattern you want to create, using the remote control that comes with the tiles.

A layer of toughened glass can be increased to support heavier weights, making the tiles suitable for applications such as car showroom floors and areas with heavy footfall. The tiles encourage people to interact with their environments offering exciting possibilities for a range of different sectors including retail, hospitality, architecture, public spaces and healthcare.

*“When I finished developing my product I thought ‘that’s it, I’ve made it, that’s the end of the journey.’ As a physicist and an engineer, that’s what I do, I build stuff. But this time I couldn’t walk away, I wanted to see the technology being used and that’s when I started my second journey.”*

Physicist, engineer and innovator, Robert Wilkes, pitched to join the Accelerator with the aim of turning his product into a business. During the programme, Robert began trading with the launch of his company brightMESH. He is currently working with NTU masters students to research potential new markets and refine his value proposition to meet the specific needs of each sector. He is also seeking funding or investment to grow, something he hadn’t previously considered.



## The Big House Accelerator – support to turn a product into a business

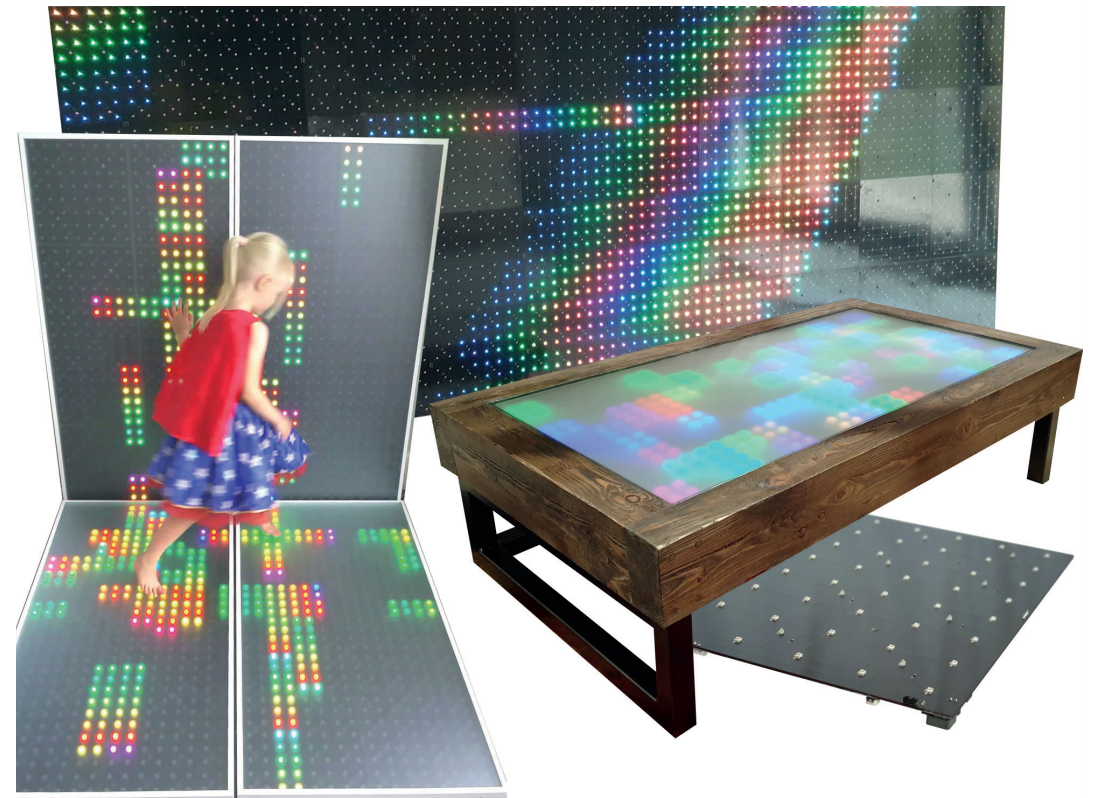
*“I wanted help to explain what the product is all about and the programme has helped me frame and refine the brightMESH concept and communicate that clearly to both customers and investors. I can’t overstate the value of that refinement process – it’s been such an enormous benefit and has made it so much easier to market the tiles.”*

*“Beyond that, the Accelerator gave me the clarity I needed to focus and plan a much clearer direction for how I can develop and grow as a business – from defining my target markets to dealing with cashflow and balance sheets.”*

*By helping me learn in a manageable way and put what I learnt into practice, the programme has enabled me to step on the gas and do things much more quickly. It’s also given me the confidence to feel I’m doing the right things and as a result I’ve implemented small changes on my own that are leading to bigger changes.*

*“There’s still a long way to go, but now I know how to function as a business, not just a maker.”*

Find out more and follow Robert’s story at [www.brightme.sh](http://www.brightme.sh)



# Codemakers



## Shipmate – helping online retailers deliver parcels – and promises

Co-founders – Antony Stevenson and Chris Ison

The secure, delivery management platform enables retailers to incorporate multiple carriers and delivery services into their order processing environment easily and affordably

Online shopping is expected to account for over half of all retail sales in 10 years' time – and by 2040, as much as 95%. That's a lot of parcels for retailers to send, and a lot of pressure to make sure goods are delivered quickly. Retailers can't afford to get it wrong.

In July 2017, Codemakers launched a simple solution to support online retailers - Shipmate. Working with a growing range of national carriers, Shipmate uses intelligent routing rules to ensure each parcel is sent by the most appropriate and cost-effective service, exchanging data with the selected carrier and generating a parcel label automatically in seconds. Retailers (and their customers) can keep track of their deliveries via one centralised system and be alerted to any delays.

The platform, which took two years to create, was entirely designed and developed by Codemakers, and supported by grant and crowdfunded investment. After working with the carrier Hermes over a number of years, Codemakers had learnt a lot about online retail and logistics, so this was a great opportunity to grow.

*"The problem with being a web design or development agency is you only have your time and ideas to sell, which are exactly linear to the number of hours or people you can put on a project."*

### The Big House Accelerator – headspace to think 'how can we make this really work?'

*"We went into the Accelerator to grow Shipmate but we've learnt a hell of a lot about improving Codemakers too. The programme gave us the opportunity to confirm what we thought we already knew, as well as new ideas. It's helped us develop the discipline of taking regular time out of the office to reflect, solve problems and ask ourselves how can we make this really work?"*

*"Being part of a wider group and the depth and breadth of the Accelerator was incredibly beneficial. For example, we've realised that finance isn't just about looking back when you're sat with your accountant, it's about looking forward and planning ahead."*

*"One of the most positive aspects of the programme has been sharing our journey with other companies in the same situation who are also keen to grow. A lot of the encouragement we've had has come from peer learning, discussions and problem solving together. Now the Accelerator has come to an end we're beginning to realise we've come much further than we initially realised."*

Follow Shipmate's story at [www.shipmate.co.uk](http://www.shipmate.co.uk)

## Helping the energy sector benefit from digitisation – without drowning in the data

Co-founders – Ty Burrridge-Oakland, Chris Fraser, Thomas Humphries



A solution for optimising assets in power generation to boost reliability, efficiency, performance, safety and compliance with legislation and regulation, whilst significantly reducing costs and emissions.

Businesses across all sectors are being told ‘digitise or die’ and energy is no exception. But how do you digitise effectively when you have a sea of data flooding in and only a handful of people to make sense of it – let alone action it? That’s what digitisation looks like at many energy projects in the UK and beyond, from conventional power plants to offshore wind farms, and it’s a growing issue.

A typical power plant has around 90,000 assets or moving parts, all creating machine data due to the increasing number of sensors and IoT devices. It’s easy to see the scale of the challenge facing the sector. Currently the data isn’t clean and isn’t joined up, leading to asset inefficiencies that can cost millions over the life span of a plant or wind farm.

The Cognitive team have developed a suite of products to help solve this problem. The solution uses machine learning approaches to turn data into real-time, actionable insights for unified asset management and maintenance strategies.

The Cognitive team of physicists, two of who studied at Nottingham Trent University, have been pioneering innovation within some of the world’s leading energy companies. Confident in their product, what Cognitive needed support with were the nuts and bolts of running and scaling a business, so they pitched to join The Big House Accelerator.

*“As a result of the programme, we’re more prepared for the future. We’ve got a strong business plan in place, we’ve applied for Innovate UK funding, and are exploring phased equity investment. We’re more ‘business’ now – we interact better with people, position what we do with greater clarity and know better how to engage customers at different levels. Thanks to the Accelerator, we’ve been able to hit the ground sprinting.”*

### The Big House Accelerator – multi-layered business support

*“What was different about the Accelerator is that the businesses involved were already formed, launching a new product or taking a product to the next level, which was a massive benefit to us. It meant we could learn from and be inspired by businesses at different stages of their development, including established companies running for 10 years.*

*“Conversations with other businesses have given us the opportunity to talk about different ways to develop our business. We even phoned one of our cohort for advice and feedback before an important business meeting – that kind of real-life peer support is invaluable.”*

*“Our mentor, was really good at balancing challenges with encouragement. This pushed us to think about things we’d not previously considered, helping us make the right decisions at the right time. For example, after prompting, we began selling consultancy services to fund our product development.”*

*“We plan to keep in touch with the rest of our peer group as well as the professional networks we’ve developed and Nottingham Trent University, not only because of the potential for collaboration, but because of the friendships we’ve developed.”*

Follow Cognitive Business’s story at [www.cognitive.business](http://www.cognitive.business)

**“** One of the most positive aspects of the programme has been sharing our journey with other companies in the same situation who are also keen to grow.”

## A new way to work – close to home or on the go

Co-founders – Ross Cox, Ben Hancy



Dispace has come up with a brilliantly simple way of providing the remote workspaces of the future – whilst supporting the new breed of small, independent businesses on the high street.

Dispace is at the centre of not one, but two revolutions.

First, there's the work revolution, with 50% of UK employees predicted to work remotely by 2020. Second, there's the revolution on the high street. The headlines often declare it's dying but data reveals a different picture. Shops may be declining in some areas, but they're being replaced by social hubs like cafes, restaurants, bars, barbers and beauty salons – with people looking to buy experiences, rather than things.

Dispace have created a UK-wide network of 'worker friendly' spaces where people can go and work remotely whenever they want to – by teaming up with local venues keen to fill space during the day, from cafes and restaurants to bars and hotels. All of Dispace's workspaces are free for individuals to use and come with exclusive discounts on things like food, drink and

meeting rooms – helping venues to make a profit at times they'd normally be quieter.

Dispace also offers workspace to businesses on a subscription basis – giving them an easy way to provide a range of places for their employees to work remotely or meet clients in different locations around the UK.

Launched in 2018, Dispace is already in 13 cities including Birmingham, Leeds, Derby, Nottingham, Lincoln, Rugby, Leicester, Cardiff and Bristol, with London coming soon. They have over 1,000 members, sign-ups growing 15% month on month, and more and more venues on board up and down the UK, proving that Dispace could play a big part not only in the future of work, but in the future of the high street too.

### The Big House Accelerator – headspace to think 'how can we make this really work?'

*Fittingly, Dispace believe what the Accelerator gave them was space. "Before the Accelerator, we were really bad at getting our heads above the parapet and thinking strategically about what we were doing, we were bogged down in the minutiae of everyday. The Accelerator has allowed us to see the bigger picture and we've done a lot of reflecting, deconstructing and strategy building as a result. We're now a million times clearer through every stage about what we're trying to do."*

*"It's weird to think it's only 10 months ago that we pitched to join the Accelerator and what ideas we had back then, compared to where we are today. We*

*wanted to learn some stuff, take some time to think strategically about the business, make connections and raise our profile – and a lot of that has happened, pockets of really good stuff.*

*"We worked with one of the businesses on the programme to develop our app and customer journey and we're talking to another about the possibility of using spaces in football stadiums. Through the Accelerator, we've also commissioned Masters students to carry out a piece of research for us, around small business pain points."*

Follow Dispace's story at [www.dispace.co](http://www.dispace.co)

**//** *We're now a million times clearer through every stage about what we're trying to do."*

## At last, a cost and labour saving efficiency in football

Founder – Darren Robinson



The first and unique introduction to the market of A Licence standard scouts observing players on the ground combined with the intelligence of data analytics that consider a club's playing style, ethos and budget structure.

Data analytics probably isn't the first thing that springs to mind when you think about football but it's becoming a huge part of the game. Credited with helping Liverpool win the Champions League, analytics and player profiling tools lie at the heart of the club's recruitment strategy for 2019-20.

But not all clubs can afford to invest in data and scouting on the same scale as Liverpool. iScouts service levels the playing field by combining qualitative intelligence and empirical evidence to help match the right player to the right club.

wFounder Darren Robinson explains,

*"Analytics isn't about gathering data, it's about interpreting data and making it useful and that's where our approach*

*differs. We're not just an analytics service, we live and breathe football in the same way our clients do, and we're bringing scouting and analytics together as a team, rather than as separate players.*

Darren Robinson has held roles as performance manager, head of player recruitment and is one of the highest qualified coaches in the UK. Witnessing many clubs head towards insolvency with mis-aligned player recruitment, over-spend on player wages relative to ability and cost inefficiencies in player scouting, he could see the potential of this approach.

The Big House Accelerator helped Darren move from a lifestyle business mindset to a firm focus on business growth to take iScout from a scouting service that uses analytics to an AI software as a service platform that

also utilises data funnelling, natural language processing and machine learning. All in under a year.

iScout has won two Innovate UK grants to develop the platform in a highly competitive environment, secured SEIS eligibility and is in the process of taking its initial first round of funding.

With encouragement from his mentor on the Accelerator, Darren is drawing on his experience to become a thought leader in football, with several appearances on Sky Sports and more planned for the future. iScout is opening up new sales channels too, with Sky Sports and BBC local radio accessing its services and insights.

### The Big House Accelerator – a complete learning journey

*"I thought the programme would accelerate me through the process of starting up, but it did something much more interesting. It's helped me change direction and find my focus, whilst giving me the tools I need to grow and develop.*

*I've got a lot from it...it's been a complete learning journey and has brought my understanding of sales and marketing to life in particular. Discussions with my mentor and the specialists, alongside what I've learnt on the programme, have been instrumental in reframing my business.*

*I'm already collaborating with another business from my group and learning from their AI expertise and there's potential to collaborate with several others.*

*The Big House team delivered on the promises they made and took a genuine interest in how businesses were developing and learning. Compared to other programmes I've been involved with, it's been the best by an absolute mile."*

Find out more and follow Darren's story at [www.iscoutclub.com](http://www.iscoutclub.com)

# Oasis Studio



## A digital transformation

Founder – Paul Deakin



Oasis Studio has evolved from an architectural practice, to a full-blown digital media company, creating immersive, interactive experiences in the virtual world – including CGI, virtual, augmented and mixed reality.

Technology is changing how we see the world with more than three quarters of the world's biggest brands now incorporating virtual and augmented reality experiences into their marketing.

Oasis Studio have ridden this technological wave. Their product, EyeSiteView, is a unique package of interactive CGI services designed to help property developers sell and consult off-plan. Potential homebuyers can take a virtual tour of new developments, explore any property they like the look of inside and out, and compare different design options – all before a single brick is laid – and without the need for a headset or any special software.

Oasis Studio's evolution into a digital media company saw both their staff team and turnover grow by 100% in 2018. It also presented founder, Paul Deakin, with an interesting challenge – how to upscale sustainably.

When Paul pitched to join The Big House Accelerator at Nottingham Trent University, he came to find a solution to that challenge, by working alongside other like-minded founders and professionals.

A year on, Oasis is moving into new sectors, including marine, heritage and education, as well as the built environment; they've moved to larger premises in Chesterfield; and they're developing new ways of creating experiences in the virtual world. Paul believes a lot of the decisions they've made have been down to what they've learnt on the Accelerator – including the business attributes Oasis needs to grow.



### The Big House Accelerator – an opportunity for growth

*"The last few months have been damn hard work, but very rewarding. One of the best things I've realised is that I can't do everything myself. My colleague Tony attended some of the sessions on my behalf and I learned he was much better than I was in certain areas – especially in networking and building connections. That realisation has enabled me to pass elements of the business onto Tony and he's now playing a much bigger role in taking Oasis forward."*

*"Running a business isn't a journey you can take on your own and that's one of the biggest lessons a founder can learn. In that way, the Accelerator turned out to be a great opportunity for Tony and Oasis, as well as me. The content of the programme and the support I've had via my mentor, the experts running the sessions and The Big House team has been amazing. I've talked about it to other small businesses and said, if you get the chance, do it."*

Follow Oasis Studio's story at [www.oasisstudio.uk](http://www.oasisstudio.uk)

**//** *Running a business isn't a journey you can take on your own and that's one of the biggest lessons a founder can learn."*

# Proodle Solutions



## Helping universities stand out and connect with Gen Z

Founder – Shrenik Paras Parmar



Proodle solutions have developed a state of the art mobile app to connect international students and UK universities in a more personal way – customisable to individual universities.

Proodle Solutions was launched in 2017, with support from the University of Nottingham's Ingenuity Lab. Their app gives prospective students the chance to see their chosen university at a glance, including the campus, accommodation and events, and check their eligibility for courses. It also features a personalised checklist to help them plan their next steps, automated instant messaging to answer their queries and a forum so they can interact with existing students.

The app includes an app manager for universities too, enabling institutions to view user profiles, create personalised content, track activity, measure engagement and communicate easily with prospects. The more universities communicate with prospective students via the app, the more insights they get to improve their marketing and recruitment.

Proodle was born out of the problems encountered by its founder and CEO Shrenik Paras Parmar, when he tried to apply to universities abroad as a prospective international student via the agent system, which acts

as intermediary between Universities and prospective students. Realising this was a challenge for Universities too, he thought - why not change the game? Give power to the students, and in turn, power the universities' recruitment teams. Give universities the right technology that students are familiar with and fix the problem."

Shrenik pitched to join The Big House Accelerator at Nottingham Trent University to get all round business support, from sales and marketing, to legal and finance, as well as support to user test, develop and take the Proodle app to market.

In the same month Shrenik completed the Accelerator, the company won three major awards at the Ingenuity19 Competition at the University of Nottingham. Proodle are also in the final stages of negotiation with three Russell Group Universities interested in piloting their app, and in talks with two other top-tier universities. Now Shrenik's sights are firmly set on growth.



*"To secure funding, continue to build my team and scale the business, I need to market my product effectively and integrate new processes and systems to support our growth. The Accelerator has given me the skills to do this."*

### The Big House Accelerator – the opportunity to build multiple networks

*"I knew I had a unique product, but I didn't have the networks to get universities to sign up for it. Through the programme, I've built multiple business networks, through my Accelerator mentor and the business leaders running sessions."*

*"Building my team was a difficult process but with support from the Accelerator around developing, managing and leading a team, I now have a team of eight people who work together effectively, leaving me more time to concentrate on other areas of the business."*

*"Being part of a cohort of digital businesses who are all very different was very useful and I really valued the brainstorming sessions we developed as an opportunity to solve problems and build a community."*

*"I previously did an MBA, but that was before I had the idea for Proodle, so learning was generic. The Accelerator allowed me to tailor what I was learning directly to my business and the issues I encountered – it's an excellently built programme."*

Follow Proodle's story at [www.proodlesolutions.com](http://www.proodlesolutions.com)

Helping businesses benefit from new technologies

Co-founders – Chris Gibson, Jason Watkins



Railstons develops customised mobile and cloud-based solutions to help businesses benefit from new technologies and stand out from their competition.

Over four years Railstons have developed two major solutions with two of the UK’s leading companies, which are now being taken to the wider market.

*Collaboro*, is an asset maintenance software for multi-asset, multi-technician projects in challenging environments, designed to co-ordinate complex inspection and maintenance processes and enable collaboration. This was originally developed for GEV Wind Power, a leading provider of blade maintenance services in the wind energy sector. It gave vast improvements on their previous maintenance reporting systems and was so successful it is being rolled out across the whole GEV Group.

Their second product *Employee Engagement Toolkit* came out of a solution that Railstons developed with Brother UK, the first large business in the UK to achieve Investors in People (IIP) Platinum status in 2016. Although they had many tools for managing employee engagement activities, they were heavily reliant on manual processes and didn’t always include the growing numbers of externally based staff.

Railstons created a new online employee engagement toolkit to streamline all Brother UK’s activities, featuring a simple dashboard for employees and managers so they can check progress and complete outstanding tasks with notifications to guide them through each process. The toolkit was instrumental in helping Brother UK retain their IIP Platinum status in 2019.

Railstons are a team of experienced digital entrepreneurs that like challenging themselves, solving complex business problems with surprisingly simple solutions.

In 2018, standing at a turning point and keen to build on the success of their solutions for GEV and Brother UK, Railstons pitched to join The Big House Accelerator.

Operations Director Chris Gibson explains: “To navigate down a more product-focused route, we were looking for support to increase our chances of success. When we joined the programme in December 2018, we’d given ourselves a six-month runway to prove the business. By February, we had two major new clients on board, and we were well on our way with our growth plans.

*“The Accelerator gave us the opportunity to go through the journey of understanding our business again at an interesting stage of development and get ready to launch our first product. We’ve moved further forward, more quickly than we would have done on our own – with more of the jigsaw pieces in place. We’re already seeing the benefits, in terms of increased turnover and two new members of staff, and the programme has definitely played a significant part.”*

The Big House Accelerator – a deeper relationship with NTU

*“For us as an established business, the programme was a brilliant refresher on a broad range of areas as well as a chance to learn new skills. Each session gave us a practical to-do list to prepare for our first product launch and we took something away from each one.*

*“The sales workshop with Trinamo was particularly transformative as it helped us define a sales strategy that’s already paying off. Instead of recruiting a sales manager, we hired a new team member to help us bring clients on board, so we can focus on selling ourselves. The legal session was key too – enabling us to put the IP and licensing processes in place that*

*led to our first paying client, as well as documents to grow the business.*

*“Networking with like-minded businesses has been an invaluable part of the programme and challenged us to think about things we hadn’t considered before, as well as validating our experience. We’ve also developed a deeper relationship with NTU and we’re currently working with postgraduate students and exploring a move to the University’s new Enterprise and Innovation Centre.*

Follow Railstons’ story at [www.railstons.com](http://www.railstons.com)

// each session gave us a practical to-do list.”



## Supporting and unsupported workforce

Founder – Georgina Fairhall



After ten years working in the hospitality industry, struggling to keep track of her hours and pay on various contracts, Georgina Fairhall decided to do something about it. Not by looking for a different job but by launching her own business to solve the problem that exists for zero-hour, hourly-paid, temporary contract and gig economy workers.

*“At the moment, the only option for millions of workers is to keep track of their hours in a notebook or on their phone for some peace of mind and security. It’s easy to lose track and get confused, especially if you have multiple jobs, numerous contracts and no idea what payday might hold.”*

It’s getting harder for businesses to keep an accurate record of staff activity too, especially in sectors where employees are increasingly working off-site or in multiple locations. There isn’t anything out there for both businesses and the staff. Until now...” Georgina Fairhall

The freemium app launches in September 2019 and it gives workers a quick and easy way to track their work hours, breaks and pay, manage their money and organise work-related ‘bits and bobs’ like contracts, payslips, certificates and even gives a section on basic employee rights.

The WAC offer will expand to include a business version as soon as possible. Georgina’s aim is to get employers on board, offering an innovative digital clocking system and features for both parties to enjoy.

A Nottingham Trent University Alumna, Georgina was initially supported through the Hive, our student business incubator, registering the company, Work and Communications Ltd, in January 2018. Just a year later, in January 2019, Georgina started work on her business full time – this time supported by the Big House Accelerator.

Since finishing the Accelerator, Georgina has secured £52,000 investment to develop her business, showing WAC to be a great example of how digital businesses need a great value proposition, not just clever tech.

### The Big House Accelerator – the foundations for building a business

*“I was looking for an all-round programme to learn from and that’s exactly what the Accelerator has given me – the foundations for starting a business. It’s helped me build on my basic business skills in a structured, easy to follow way and covered a wide range of areas at a speed I really liked.*

*There was never a day that I walked out without learning something new. I found all the sessions valuable, especially the Marketing session, as it helped me to drill down to what I needed and get the right message out to my audience. Talking about stress and wellbeing within a Finance session was excellent too and really resonated with me, especially as the session was led by an experienced, successful businesswoman.*

*The programme has helped me do things in the right order and talk to the right people which has saved me a great deal of time. I feel calmer and have a more systematic way of working, with a clear checklist to work through. People have noticed a difference in me and I couldn’t have anticipated how far I’ve come, so quickly.*

*The Accelerator was just what I needed, when I needed it and WAC wouldn’t be at the standard it is now without the programme.”*

Follow Georgina’s story at [www.workandcommunications.co.uk](http://www.workandcommunications.co.uk)

**“** *I couldn’t have anticipated how far I’ve come, so quickly.”*

## Personalised newsfeeds beyond the filter bubble

Co-founders – Dr Mattia Fosci, Denys Demchenko



Yoop are a mission-driven company using machine learning and blockchain technology to help the media sector improve data security, brand trust and audience engagement.

Founder Dr Mattia Fosci is tackling one of the biggest issues of our time, the negative impacts of filter bubbles and fake news on democracy.

Yoop is one of four European tech startups working with the Content Personalisation Network (CPN) – a Europe-wide research project exploring questions around data control, openness of algorithms and transparency, as personalisation algorithms increasingly define what news audiences are exposed to.

The CPN offer news organisations of all sizes transparent and easily integrated software to personalise their content, via a virtual open platform called the CPN recommender – so content providers can give their users a mix of personalised and selected content designed to burst the filter bubble.

Yoop is helping to expand CPN's recommender platform with a unique new product called IDWard.

Mattia explains: "IDWard enables content providers to create a unified sign-in for users and aggregate their data across devices, while protecting their privacy with E2E encryption and blockchain technology. It enables content providers to build much richer data profiles to improve personalisation, improve their products and services and reach new audiences, while giving users a better login experience and more transparency and control over their personal data. In a nutshell, it minimises the trade-off between privacy and personalisation."

Yoop won the CPN award for most promising startup at the World News Media Congress in June – and they are working with the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers to develop IDWard.

*"On the day the Accelerator launched, I gave a great speech about who we were and how we were pivoting. The truth was, we were going in circles. Our last product had failed, my morale was really low, and I was wondering why are we in an Accelerator? But the way we approached it was, either we can accelerate against a wall or we can accelerate out."*

Dr Mattia Fosci and his team didn't just accelerate out, they accelerated further and faster than they could have imagined.



### The Big House Accelerator – structure and support every step of the way

*"Yes the programme is useful in terms of learning how to run a business, but much more importantly for us, it gave us support and structure at a difficult time for the company, when we were working out how to pivot."*

*"When we first started, we didn't really know what we were doing and weren't sure how to make the most of the programme, but we remained engaged and kept going. Our mentor pushed us to try to experiment with new ideas and ways of doing things and that gave us just enough motivation to carry on without wasting time and money going down dead ends."*

*Now, with IDWard, we're hopefully onto something very big, very interesting, and a happy ending to our Accelerator story. We're feeling very motivated and some of our former colleagues have even re-joined the team."*

*None of this would have happened without the Accelerator community, including The Big House team and the other businesses we met on the programme. It gave us the accountability of having to do things and kept us progressing in the face of extreme uncertainty."*

Follow Yoop's story at [www.yoop-tech.com](http://www.yoop-tech.com)

*"Our mentor pushed us to think about things we'd not previously considered and supported us to make the right decisions at the right time."*

Supported by the European Regional Development Fund, The Big House project provides free support for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire-based creative and digital businesses.

#TheBigHouse #ERDF

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