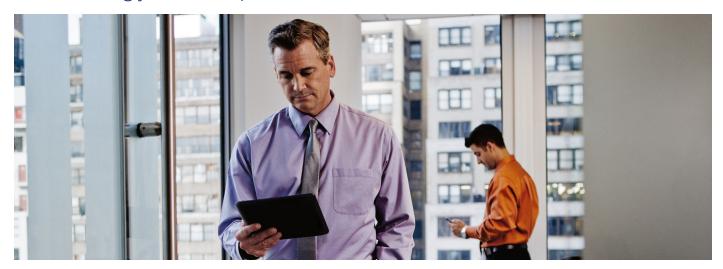# Business Accelerator Helps Technology Start-ups Take Off

IDEALondon uses collaboration tools to create innovation hub for tomorrow's companies

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: IDEALondon

Industry: Technology

Location: United Kingdom

Challenge
- Create environment for business acceleration
- Stimulate knowledge transfer and mentoring
- Provide foundation for innovation

Solution
- Strategic alliance between Cisco, DC Thomson, and University College London (UCL)
- State-of-the-art technologies with latest Cisco Collaboration tools
- Mentoring and training

Results
- Signed up more than 15 companies in first six months
- Encouraged business growth
- Made it easier for start-ups to secure customer and investor engagement

Challenge

Innovators and technology start-ups face steep challenges in getting their creations to market. Access to technical expertise and funding is critical. Equally important is the right development platform. Innovation hubs—start-up-friendly, highly connected work environments—have sprung up in response.

Solution

One such hub is the Innovation and Digital Enterprise Alliance London (IDEALondon) located near the so-called Silicon Roundabout in Shoreditch. Housed in a sleekly designed building, it has room for 80 desks and an event space accommodating 120 people.

IDEALondon was created by Cisco with DC Thomson and University College London (UCL), in a partnership aimed at bringing together leading expertise in technology, media, and research. Any start-up wanting to use the hub's resources has to go through a rigorous application process, with one of the hosts agreeing to act as champion and sponsor. Successful start-ups gain access to invaluable mentorship, business support, investment, and networking opportunities.

It was vital that IDEALondon offered the very best technology infrastructure. Born from a Cisco pledge to leave a lasting legacy following the London 2012 Olympic Games, many technologies deployed in the hub were derived from that mega-event.

Office spaces are equipped with an infrastructure featuring Cisco® Catalyst® Switches and a Cisco Network Analysis Module. A wireless network with five Cisco Aironet® Access Points and a Cisco Wireless Controller supports a range of Cisco collaboration tools, including Cisco Unified Communications Manager and Cisco Unified IP Phone handsets. A Cisco TelePresence® Video Communication Server Expressway is controlled via a Cisco Business Edition system mounted on a Cisco Unified Computing System™ Rack Server.

For global video communications, IDEALondon offers a range of managed TelePresence platforms, based on Video Communication Server Expressway with TelePresence Management Suite control. Video is used extensively for communications between companies in IDEALondon and others in the National Virtual Incubator, a U.K. network connecting incubation centres, research facilities, science parks and academic institutes. Cisco WebEx® Conferencing is being offered on a trial basis, and the space also boasts Cisco Digital Media Players supporting the Digital Media Signage displayed throughout the office, with content managed using a cloud-based platform provided by Appspace™.

> "Access to infrastructure, new market opportunities and mentoring has helped us develop our business. In the last six months we've gone from product development to our first market trials with a big retailer."

Amy Lai
Founder
Wittos

"We use technologies such as TelePresence and WebEx for talking internally and externally to people across the country and abroad," says Jacoby Thwaites, chief executive officer and founder of Sparkl, one of the start-ups at IDEALondon.

The network is secured with a Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance, while physical security is provided using Cisco Video Surveillance IP Cameras controlled by a Cisco Video Surveillance Manager.

Completing the IDEALondon technology foundation is MangoApps, a collaboration platform delivered through the DC Thomson subsidiary Brightsolid, which combines company intranet, real time messaging, team working, and employee social networking functionality.

Results

Since opening in October 2013, IDEALondon has attracted more than 15 start-ups, including companies such as the Social Ad Group, which helps promote brands using social media, and Sparkl, which is developing a Layer 7 transaction router.

These innovators benefit from working alongside other early-stage, pioneering companies in a low-cost environment while, at the same time, learning from established technology leaders during their early growth stages. They can access Cisco, DC Thomson and UCL contacts, ecosystem partners, developer kits, training programs and mentorship. Furthermore, the environment allows start-ups to showcase their innovations with the host organisations, which may be interested in helping commercialise the products further.

Sparkl has used the Cisco Open Network Environment to demonstrate its ability to develop software-defined networking, while using Cisco technology for networking and teleconferencing.
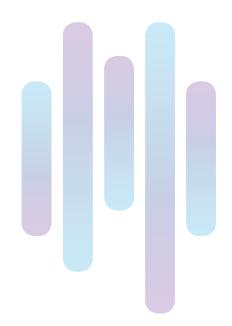
Thwaites says: "Being part of IDEALondon gives us many benefits. Operationally, in the sense that it's a cost effective place to be. But also in the relationships we share with other start-ups here and of course with our sponsor, which in our case is Cisco. Since coming to IDEALondon, we've successfully secured funding of over US$2 million."

Chief Operating Officer of the Social Ad Group, Sion Mooney, says: "Cisco has provided us with fantastic infrastructure and mentorship support, while DC Thomson has allowed us access to its sales team, and UCL is helping out with its technology intern programme. IDEALondon is truly an amazing, world-class space."

And Snap Fashion Chief Executive Officer Jenny Griffiths agrees that support from Cisco has helped her business grow. "The company was founded in 2011 and launched its first product, the Snap Fashion app and website, in September 2012," she says. "We have won a number of awards and acknowledgements for our technology, including the Cisco BIG Awards and Decoded Fashion."
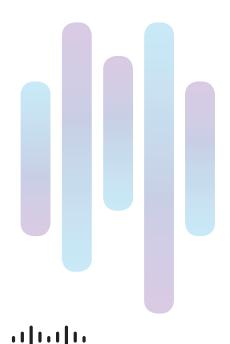
IDEALondon benefits are not limited to the start-ups. Cisco, DC Thomson and UCL get early visibility of new technology trends and the opportunity to co-develop innovations, while their people get personal development opportunities by acting as mentors. In addition, DC Thomson uses the Cisco TelePresence equipment at IDEALondon to connect via the National Virtual Incubator with IDEAScotland, a business accelerator programme in Dundee that DC Thomson sponsors in association with Brightsolid, a cloud and application hosting business, Abertay University, and the University of Dundee.

Amy Lai, founder and CEO of the retail mobile application start-up Wittos, sums up: "Access to infrastructure, new market opportunities and mentoring has helped us develop our business. In the last six months we've gone from product development to our first market trials with a big retailer. The next six months are going to be equally exciting and challenging."

"Being part of IDEALondon gives us many benefits. Operationally, in the sense that it's a cost effective place to be. But also in the relationships we share with other start-ups here and of course with our sponsor, which in our case is Cisco. Since coming to IDEALondon we've successfully secured funding of over US$2 million."

Jacoby Thwaites
Chief Executive and Founder
Sparkl

Next Steps

IDEALondon companies usually spend six to 12 months in the accelerator, during which time they might typically expand from two or three people up to 12 and achieve their first Series A round funding, as Sparkl has done. The company now has four employees.

Going forward, Cisco expects IDEALondon to become a major part of its customer and partner innovation engagement program, integrating the products that emerge from the incubator into its offerings to customers.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study go to:

www.cisco.com/go/collaboration

www.cisco.com/go/wireless

www.cisco.com/go/security

www.cisco.com/go/ucs

Product List

Switching and Routing
- Cisco Catalyst 3750E and 6500 Series Switches
- Cisco 6500/7600 Series Network Analysis Module

Wireless
- Cisco Aironet 3502 Series Access Points
- Cisco 2504 Series Wireless Controller

Collaboration
- Cisco Unified IP Phone 7942G Series
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco TelePresence Video Communication Server Expressway
- Cisco Business Edition 6000
- Cisco TelePresence MX200, MX 300 and EX90 Series
- Cisco TelePresence System Profile 65-inch Dual Series
- Cisco TelePresence Infrastructure
- Cisco TelePresence Management Suite
- Cisco WebEx
- Cisco Digital Media Player 4310G Series

Compute
- Cisco Unified Computing System C220 Rack Server

Security
- Cisco ASA 5580 Series Adaptive Security Appliance

Physical Security
- Cisco Video Surveillance 6000 Series IP Cameras
- Cisco Video Surveillance Manager

Digital Signage
- Appspace Cloud – Content Management System

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