

BRIDGE THE GAP

INCREASINGLY BUSINESSES ARE PARTNERING WITH THE UNIVERSITY TO FIND A MUCH NEEDED INJECTION OF FRESH CREATIVITY THAT ONLY ART AND DESIGN STUDENTS CAN GIVE. **GAYNOR AALTONEN** FINDS OUT THE WHOS AND HOWS



BY NICK HORNBY, MA FINE ART, CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, 2007. SCULPTURES TO BE INSTALLED AT CLIFFORD CHANCE IN FEB 2008

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON is a hotbed of creativity and the growing number of partnerships between the University and business is proof positive its students, staff and researchers are respected as the trendsetters of tomorrow. To meet the demands of an increasingly sophisticated and savvy marketplace, businesses are seeking out partnerships with the best and brightest at the University for expertise and innovation, for tangible results that develop and advance their strategic aims.

Partnerships at the University take place with a range of businesses, from small agencies to large corporations, and in a variety of ways, from sponsorships and scholarships to live projects and research collaboration. The partnerships benefit the students and staff by providing them with real life challenges to put their creative knowledge and expertise to the test, as well as the funding to do so. Businesses benefit from the creative injection, the brand association with being seen as pioneers in their field, as

well as having a vested interest in the talents of tomorrow. Companies can make a real impact on education, not only for the good of the business, but also for the wider economy and society. And in an age where corporate social responsibility is climbing higher on boardroom agendas, investing in the future workforce is not a bad place to start.

Supporting students in art and design education brings new energy and innovative ideas to a business. It also gives a company direct access to students – a golden opportunity to cultivate not only future employees, but also the style-leading consumers of the future. Top names including Samsonite, ASOS.com, Neal's Yard, Marks & Spencer, Heidelberg of Germany, Clifford Chance and Octopus Publishing can all attest to the benefits of partnering with the University.

As the first-ever sponsor of Central Saint Martins' degree shows, the prestige brand Samsonite Black Label reached a new and diverse target audience of market influencers, potential customers and future >

SUPPORTING STUDENTS DIRECTLY BRINGS TANGIBLE AND BESPOKE BENEFITS. ALONGSIDE PUBLICITY, COMPANIES CAN FIND GENUINE BUSINESS AND DESIGN SOLUTIONS TO ADVANCE THEIR AIMS

< designers. In addition, the global brand supported a luggage design competition at the College, giving students access to resources such as the expertise of the company's technical team. Benefiting from the students' innovation and the über-cool CSM name, Samsonite gains brand positioning, pioneering design and a new target audience of more than 25,000 people that attend CSM's degree shows annually.

Samsonite's Global Creative Director, Quentin Mackay, describes the partnership as working with "the minds of tomorrow". Himself a CSM-trained menswear designer, Mackay says his three years of study at the College were the best of his life and what better way to give back than by supporting students at the most important time in their degree. Jane Rapley, Head of College at CSM, couldn't agree more, "Sponsorship brings professional endorsement, 'validation' from the business community, additional public relations through the business and their clients, and a wider context to promote the graduates and their work."

Other companies, including Neal's Yard and Marks & Spencer, have chosen to fund scholarships in pioneering subject areas that address their core business issues and concerns. The new Neal's Yard Remedies



ASOS.COM WINNER FOR WOMENSWEAR

CULT BRANDS, CELEBRITY LOOKS

When fast fashion e-tailer ASOS.com ran a competition with London College of Fashion, the brief was no surprise – to design a commercially viable outfit based on a celebrity icon. Twelve students were shortlisted for the final of the Asos Fame, Fortune and Fashion awards. Eyizera Phoenix won the womenswear category for her puffed-sleeve satin jumpsuit inspired by the icon of 1970s dinosaur chic, Marc Bolan of T-Rex. James Hawkes won

in the menswear category for his urban hoodie look. The winning pieces will be stocked on the website, with a percentage of the profits going direct to the student designers. ASOS are thrilled with the results and will be staging the competition again next year.

Projects such as this give businesses unparalleled access to young, raw, creative talent (and future employees); new, experimental designs; and brand association with one of the foremost, cutting-edge fashion colleges in the world.



ASOS.COM WINNER FOR MENSWEAR



WINNERS OF THE SAMSONITE PROJECT



HEIDELBERG – PRINT ACADEMY IN GERMANY

Scholarship will support a full-time PhD student in the field of textiles, sustainability and ethical approaches to fashion across three of the University's Colleges. Keen to lead on this important developing area of research, Neal's Yard has put its money where its mouth is. So too has Marks & Spencer, a company that is soon to fund a PhD research scholarship in sustainability at London College of Fashion. Not only do scholarships demonstrate that companies are leaders in their fields, they provide much needed funding and support for talented students and researchers. Scholarships are possible across all levels and disciplines at the University and can be tailored to a company's specific interests.

Heidelberg of Germany, the major print company, has a longstanding relationship with the University through course collaborations and equipment donations with London College of Communication. Taking the relationship to a new level, Heidelberg has teamed up with LCC's School of Printing and Publishing to offer a new MA in Print Media Management that involves hands-on training with Heidelberg's senior managers at the company's headquarters. An international leader in the print industry generally, but specifically in print education, Heidelberg stays ahead in a fiercely competitive industry with early-stage investment into future print managers.

The global law firm Clifford Chance sponsors an annual sculpture award for the University's fine art students and exhibits the winning work in its London offices. Not only does the artwork spark debate within the firm, creating a sense of community, it positions the firm as contemporary and forward-thinking. "The award has provided us with a thought-provoking series of installations," comments Chris Turner, Clifford Chance's London Regional Chief Operating Officer. "It's enjoyable and stimulating for our staff and visitors."

Emonn Maxwell, University Curator, advises Clifford Chance on the award, "This firm is not about picking 'safe' sculpture. It's a business seeking different ways of doing things. And for our graduates, this has made a huge difference, either to help them pay off their student debt or to put the money towards making new art." In this art-as-investment world, Maxwell has an increasing number of business and commercial interests coming to him for advice on what to buy and from whom.

Octopus Publishing wanted to access top academic talent at the University to solve a unique data management problem. Having identified a particular skills gap in its resources, the company joined forces with the University under the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) scheme, where Government funds cover up to 60 per cent of the costs. Employing an 'associate' (a skilled graduate) who is supervised by a University specialist, Octopus acquired the skills it needed to revise its complex data management system without the commitment and expense of hiring permanent employees or consultants. Bridget Martin, the University's associate for Octopus, explains, "David Penfold of London College of Communication is a genius when it comes to databases. He was my supervisor, which is part of what the company is investing in. They get a top expert with an outside perspective, along with an 'associate' working inside the company, pushing the project along." In this particular case, Martin was hired by Octopus at the end of the KTP to continue with the project, while Penfold has the experience and a case study to take back for the next generation of students. ✪

If you or your business is interested in partnering with University of the Arts London, contact Caroline Archer on: +44 (0) 20 7514 2081 c.archer@arts.ac.uk