



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Provision of Content for the Digital Business Academy



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This document is an invitation for proposals to provide content for Tech City UK's Digital Business Skills programme.

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Executive Summary

On 19 November 2014 Tech City UK launched the Digital Business Academy in partnership with UCL, offering free online business courses covering the commercial skills required to start, grow or join a digital business.

Eight online courses were introduced, available to anyone in the UK, requiring no cost or pre-qualification. Users are able to sign up and do the courses at any time, and learn at their own pace, for free. The course topics were chosen by Tech City UK based on feedback from the industry, and following a tender process, three content providers were chosen to deliver them: Cambridge Judge Business School, UCL and Founder Centric.

Over 40 industry partners including Microsoft Ventures, O2 Think Big, Smarta and Seedcamp, are providing rewards and opportunities for users who complete the courses. For those looking to start a digital business, rewards include fast track to start-up loans, free co-working space or mentorship. For those looking to work in a digital business, rewards include fast track to final interviews for internships.

Within the first 3 months, 10,000 users have signed up to the Digital Business Academy, proving the demand for this proposition. We are therefore inviting proposals for five additional courses for the Digital Business Academy, the topics for which are based on feedback from users and the digital business community. The five new courses are to be launched in October 2015. Proposals are invited for any or all of the five courses. The courses are as follows:

- 1. How to scale a company from 1-10 people**
- 2. How to track performance in an early-stage start-up**
- 3. How to manage customers effectively**
- 4. How to leverage social media platforms**
- 5. How to scale a company from 10 to 100 people**

The press release and links to press coverage at launch are included in the Appendix as background to the programme.

<http://www.digitalbusinessacademyuk.com/>

I. Overview of the Digital Business Academy

I. A Purpose

The purpose of the Digital Business Academy is to address part of the digital skills gap in the UK. It is widely recognised that one of the main barriers to growth for digital businesses is a lack of available skilled talent. Efforts to bridge the digital skills gap have led to the rise of initiatives from both the private and public sector to teach coding. Tech City UK fully supports these initiatives, and we also recognise that there is a lack of equally accessible complementary training in the commercial skills that are required to start, grow and work in digital businesses.

- 745,000 additional workers with digital skills will be needed to meet the rising demand from employers and fuel the UK economy over the period 2013-2017¹;
- Efforts to bridge the digital skills gap have focussed on coding – but marketing/PR is the 2nd most sought after skill by tech/digital start-ups; business development is 3rd².
- Start-ups and SMEs suffer the most from lack of talent, yet small businesses are responsible for nearly half of all job creation in the UK³.
- Start-ups claim that that the LEAN model, Google Analytics and raising finance are all skills they look for in recruits⁴.

The Digital Business Academy has been created to address a market failure in the provision of widespread access to these commercial skills.

The main features of the programme are:

- Free online content from the best educational institutions based on specified topics
- Mix of academic and practical skills-based content
- Recognised & valued by industry partners for helping feed their available talent pool

The Digital Business Academy is funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

I. B Product

The Digital Business Academy is an online platform offering everyone business skills and opportunities to start, grow or join a digital business.

Product - Courses

Eight free online courses are delivered by three content providers, as follows:

- Size up your idea – UCL
- Set up a digital business – UCL
- Develop and manage a digital product – Founder Centric
- Make a marketing plan – Cambridge Judge Business School
- Build a brand - Cambridge Judge Business School
- Understand digital marketing channels – Founder Centric

¹ The Future of Digital Skills Needs in the UK Economy, O2 & Development Economics, 2014;

² Tech City Futures, GFK, 2013

³ Business Population Estimates 2013, Department of Business, Innovation & Skills

⁴ Tech City UK Interviews with start-ups in 2014

- Run a digital marketing campaign – Founder Centric
- Master finance for your business - Cambridge Judge Business School

The courses are delivered primarily through byte-sized videos, and include text, automated quizzes, and calls to action to do exercises and participate in course forums.

Users can start and stop courses at any time, learning at their own pace.

There is no formal accreditation for the courses. However for each course completed, users receive a digital badge and a PDF certificate.

See full course descriptions:

<http://www.digitalbusinessacademyuk.com/courses-list>

Product - Rewards

In addition to the courses, the Digital Business Academy has created over 40 partnerships in industry to provide rewards and opportunities to users who complete the courses. Partners can choose which courses they require users to complete, for them to be able to apply for the reward directly through the platform.

For those looking to start or grow a business, the following are some relevant rewards:

- Fast track to start-up loans with Smarta
- Free co-working space – e.g. Microsoft Ventures
- Mentorship – e.g. with Sarah Wood, co-founder and COO of Unruly
- Free training days such as in public speaking or social media

For those looking to for a job in a digital business, the following are some relevant rewards:

- Fast track to final interviews for internships - e.g. at Tech Stars, Unruly, theAudience, Codecademy
- Free code training days at Decoded

Users can browse these rewards and apply for them directly through the platform, if they have completed the specified courses – the platform tracks their completions.

Please see a complete list of rewards:

<http://www.digitalbusinessacademyuk.com/rewards>

I. C Platform

UCL has provided the platform for the Digital Business Academy as Tech City UK's partner for the programme.

Roles and responsibilities of each partner are as follows:

Tech City UK

- Funding and overall delivery of the programme, including:
 - commissioning, licensing & sign off of course content
 - specifying minimum platform requirements
 - programme delivery & performance

- Brand & marketing: acquisition & retention of users
- Partnerships - for content, rewards, sponsorship in future

UCL

- design & deliver platform based on agreed requirements from Tech City UK
- content coherence management - organising content sharing sessions with content providers, seeking agreement on content-related topics
- project management of content integration into the platform

Digital Business Academy uses Moodle as the learning environment for the courses. This is integrated with a Drupal front-end to deliver an enhanced user experience on the site.

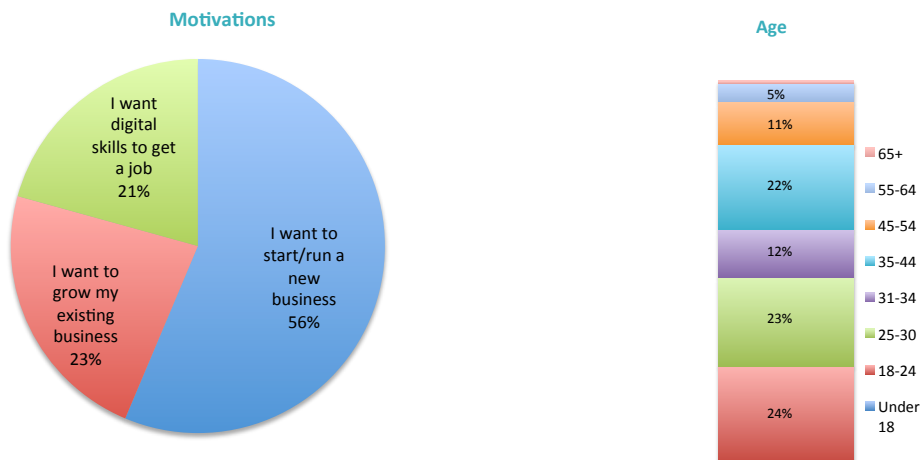
I. D Target Audience

The programme content has been designed to be accessible to audiences across the UK, with diverse social, economic, educational and demographic profiles. It needs to attract users with the aspiration to learn with the expectation that it will equip them with the skills to build their own business or to get employment in digital roles.

The programme targets three main motivational segments that cut across demographic and life stages:

1. For those looking to start a digital business or who have recently started - needing guidance on how to go about it
2. For those with an existing business, looking to grow their reach online
3. For those looking for jobs in digital businesses

The following graphs show the primary motivations and age of users who have started courses on the Digital Business Academy, based on data from November 19 2014 to 6 February 2015.



While almost half of current users are between 20-30 years of age, a third of users are over 35.

Currently the Digital Business Academy is resonating most with aspiring founders, although the aim is to resonate equally with those looking to upskill themselves to get jobs in digital businesses.

I. E Performance & Objectives

The Digital Business Academy was launched in beta on 19 November, to allow for optimization of the product based on user feedback in the initial stages. It is envisioned that the beta will end by the close of March 2015.

We will soon achieve 11,000 sign ups. Approximately half of these users have started courses. Course completion rates average at 11% for those who have started a course, going up to 23% for some of the courses. We request that you do not publicise these numbers widely yet, as we plan to communicate them in March 2015 as part of our national communications plan.

Targets for the first year of the programme are:

- 20,000 sign ups
- 1,000 course completions

These targets may be raised if we reach them earlier in the year.

III. Specification of requirements

Tech City UK is inviting proposals for 5 new courses on the Digital Business Academy. Specifically, there are three requirements for each content provider, elaborated below.

- A. Content
- B. Participation in project coordination
- C. Co-marketing and industry engagement

A Content

Proposals are invited for the following five courses, covering some of the key topics as specified below.

The 5 new topics have been decided based on feedback from 150 current users of Digital Business Academy courses, and partners of the programme.

The topics show a natural progression of focus for the Digital Business Academy. The existing eight courses take aspiring founders through a journey on how to successfully start a business, create marketing plans, build the brand, reach customers online, and understand the basics of finance. The following additional five courses are the next step: how to successfully manage an early-stage start-up.

As with the initial courses, some of the courses will be most relevant for founders of digital businesses, while others are equally relevant to those looking for digital business skills more broadly. Proposals should elaborate and specify the exact contents within each course further to the broad topics identified.

Please note the exact course titles are subject to change.

- 6. How to scale a company from 1-10 people**
 - Creating a company culture - building the right vision & culture
 - How to attract, foster & manage talent
 - Tools and processes to implement
 - How to remain agile through growth
- 7. How to track performance in an early-stage start-up**
 - KPIs and metrics to track
 - Measurement tools and systems to use
 - How to analyse performance
 - Online KPIs, and some offline examples (e.g. stock levels)
- 8. How to manage customers effectively**
 - From lead generation through to retention
 - Customer relationship management – through different channels
 - Optimise customer engagement & loyalty
- 9. How to leverage social media platforms**
 - Best practice in when and how to leverage social media platforms
 - Practical guide to how to augment brands and fulfil marketing objectives through the different platforms
- 10. How to scale a company from 10 to 100 people**
 - Managing peaks & troughs in growth

- Fast-tracking international expansion
- Employee investment schemes
- Working in a matrix organisation
- Managing investment rounds
- Journey to acquisition, exit, or listing

Target audience & scope for content

Besides course 5, all the courses are targeted towards early stage start-ups. The first course targets aspiring and new founders, while the next three are equally relevant for those looking to work in a growing digital business.

Course 5 is the only course addressing a segment that will be new to the Digital Business Academy: founders of established established high growth businesses looking to scale further for investment.

The realm of “digital businesses” to be considered include most industries and sectors, as long as a major part of the business is digitally enabled. The products don't have to be “digital products” as such. For instance, the “social media marketing” course will be equally applicable to a chain of hair salons as it would be to an online education company.

Format of content

The course content should be delivered in the following format:

- Primarily video-based, with multiple bite-sized videos across different sections – videos should include people, scenarios or graphics – there should be limited, if any, use of still slides on videos
- Mostly original videos are to be made for the Digital Business Academy
- Accompanying copy, where applicable, should communicate key messages only– user engagement insights indicate that the courses with less copy have more engagement
- Case studies – references should be made to real world case studies
- Interviews with experts and entrepreneurs should be included as often as possible.
- Quizzes that are automated online
- Courses should be designed to take between 5-10 hours to complete - including allowance for time spent on exercises that users can do in their own time; courses can be different lengths, and as such the budget will be allocated accordingly
- Courses should not overlap with existing course content on Digital Business Academy

For anyone wishing to submit a proposal, we recommend going into the courses on the Digital Business Academy to review the different styles from UCL, Cambridge Judge Business School and Founder Centric.

Course providers will be required to upload their content onto the platform themselves (see below Section IV.C Content upload)

Guidelines on “best practice” content structure and format will be shared with all course providers when they are selected, based on insights from user engagement so far.

B Participation in project coordination

All content providers for the programme will be required to liaise with UCL, the platform provider who will lead:

- a. Project management of the integration and delivery of the platform and content; a project manager will specify file formats and technical specifications at the kick-off of the project.
- b. Content coherence management:
 - i. Ensure that content provided by different content partners is not duplicated across the MOOCs
 - ii. Organise content sharing sessions, supported by TCUK where appropriate, with all content partners to ensure that courses cross-reference each other with accuracy and relevance
 - iii. Agree a common pass rate for each MOOC for the online learning assessment for students to qualify for course completion certificate
- c. Provision of content design guidelines:
 - i. Specifying minimum requirements for consistency of courses across the programme
 - ii. Specifying guidelines which ensure that courses have a longer shelf-life
 - iii. Checking adherence to guidelines for the content submitted

During the year until launch of the new courses, UCL, in collaboration with Tech City UK, will organise 2-3 workshops to discuss, decide and coordinate the delivery of content. These dates, and the programme schedule, will be communicated when the content providers have been selected.

C. Co-Marketing & industry engagement

To drive promote the programme nationally, participating content partners are asked to market the programme through their marketing channels. Specifically, they are asked to feature the programme on their web site with a link to the programme site.

Content providers are also requested to leverage their links in industry to secure, as far as possible, buy-in from companies to offer preferential access to internships, work placements and employment opportunities for users who complete the courses. For providers who have links into angel, investor or accelerator communities, they are asked to leverage these links for the benefit of students who complete the programme.

IV. Conditions for content providers

A Content of proposals

Proposals to deliver any or all of the courses should contain:

- Name and address of institution
- Contact name, email and phone number of individual leading the proposal submission
- Relevant credentials of the institution
- Responses to all the requirements specified in Section III above
- Course syllabus: topics to be covered within the course(s)
- Hours of study, broken down into content formats for the course(s): videos, reading, self-study time
- Suggested learning objects to be used in the course(s) - quizzes, practical exercises

B Content ownership and sign-off

Tech City UK is commissioning the content and as the programme owner will have final sign-off of the course content. We will participate at key stages of the project to shape the content, particularly in the project meetings organised by UCL, to ensure content is relevant for the purposes of the Digital Business Academy.

Original content ownership will remain with the content providers. Details of licensing content for this programme to TCUK will be agreed with content providers during the development of contracts.

C Content upload

Each course provider will be required to design their own content and upload them onto the Moodle platform.

UCL as the platform provider may answer queries specific to platform, however they will not provide training to course providers on how to use it. Course providers will need to have the competency to use Moodle.

Course providers will be responsible for instructional design of their courses, and for fully testing their content end-to-end before the courses are made live on the platform.

D Brand & marketing

Content providers' brands will feature alongside the Digital Business Academy branding for the courses that they provide:

- On the Digital Business Academy site
- On Tech City UK site
- In the Digital Certificate of Completion for each course
- On printed marketing collateral for the Digital Business Academy

Tech City UK will market the programme through multiple channels to reach its intended audience. It will engage in co-marketing activities with industry partners to widen its reach.

E Budget

The range of available budget for each course is £15,000-£20,000. As course length can vary between 5 to 10 hours, the proposed cost should reflect this, and the budget will be allocated accordingly. If the cost to produce the agreed content exceeds the agreed range, the content providers will have to accommodate the extra cost.

Please note VAT is not payable for this activity as it is educational content that is being provided.

F Timing for content delivery

The five new courses are to be launched in October 2015.

The full project plan will be developed and communicated by Tech City UK and UCL when content providers are selected, to include workshops for kick off and mid-point reviews. Content providers will be required to adhere to timings in the overall project plan to deliver the programme in this time.

Proposals in response to this RFP must be submitted by 13 March 2015. Tech City UK will select the content provider based on the proposals.

G Who can apply

Any company, organisation, or institution based in the UK, who are able to provide best-in-class learning material for some or all of the topics above are invited to apply.

Companies, organisations or institutions can apply individually or in consortia if they choose.

IV. Instructions for submission of proposals

Timing for proposal submission

The deadline to submit proposals is 13 March 2015.

Adiba Osmani is Head of the Digital Business Academy at Tech City UK. Kindly send any questions or proposals to:

adiba@techcityuk.com

Format

Proposals may be submitted as Word, Powerpoint or PDF files and may be supported by files in other formats cross-referenced in the original file.

Content

Proposals should contain:

- Name and address of institution
- Contact name, email and phone number of individual leading the proposal submission
- Relevant credentials of the institution
- Responses to all the requirements specified in Section III above

V. Appendix: About Tech City UK

We started life in 2010, with a mission to support the emerging Silicon Roundabout tech cluster in East London. Anchored in Shoreditch, we've grown into an organisation that delivers programmes focused on accelerating the growth of digital businesses, in London and cities across the UK, at all stages of their development. Examples include [Future Fifty](#), [Digital Business Academy](#), [Tech Nation](#), the [Internet of Things Launch Pad](#). A publicly funded organisation with a private sector mentality, we also provide a voice of advocacy for digital entrepreneurs. We feed back our findings to policymakers to influence change and we are dedicated to fostering the right conditions to start, grow and scale a digital business in the UK. We aim to make life better for digital entrepreneurs.

Links to the press release at launch:

<http://techcityukpressoffice.tumblr.com/post/103031871751/tech-city-uk-launches-digital-business-academy-to>

Links to press coverage at launch:

The Financial Times

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bc7f0ca2-6e70-11e4-afe5-00144feabdco.html?siteedition=uk>

The Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/11239313/Digital-skills-key-to-career-survival-Tech-Citys-Joanna-Shields-says.html>

The Next Web

<http://thenextweb.com/uk/2014/11/19/tech-city-uk-launches-government-funded-online-learning-platform-digital-business-skills/>