



New US business for Smart Cookie following UKTI support

Fast facts

Company: Smart Cookie

Industry: Creative Industries

Target Market: US

UKTI Services: Passport to Export,
Export Market Research
Service

www.wearesmartcookie.com



Smart Cookie has benefited from several UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) programmes as it expands its client base in the US. Thanks to new business from this market, the company has recently taken on new premises in both the South East of England and in Dallas, increased its staff from ten to 40 and its turnover from £1.1 million to £3 million.

Creative agency, Smart Cookie, was launched in March 2013, a re-branding of its predecessor, Mediastation Creative Services founded in 2000. This change reflected a new direction that the company had taken in the two previous years. Rather than producing work for other agencies to sell on to their clients, it now engages directly with brands and commercial clients.

Smart Cookie is a specialist creative technology agency. It helps clients engage with their customers, in interactive and visual ways, by exploiting the potential of cutting edge technology.

When it made short on-board film for American Airlines, it used time lapse photography shot on six locations to capture incredible scenery and landscapes. 48 million people will see this film this year. Another high profile project by the company was a television commercial for Universal Studios to launch its theme park, the Wizarding World of Harry Potter. Initially aired during the NFL Super bowl, it features computer generated imagery that lets viewers feel like they are actually riding a broomstick through Hogwarts with Harry Potter himself. This won a People's Choice Award in the tourism category of the Webby's, the leading international awards that honour excellence on the Internet.

"We have worked on some really amazing projects," says Chris Searson, Executive Chairman of Smart Cookie.

"For American Airlines, we created a Hollywood-standard feature film showing planes in the air, without shooting a single aircraft in flight.

Working with Universal on the launch of Harry Potter World was also something of a pivotal moment. Producing a Super bowl commercial is one of those bucket list projects that creative agencies aspire to."

Solid support

A key part of Smart Cookie's strategy has been to earn the credibility and gravitas it needs to operate on a global scale. In 2012, the company joined Passport to Export, the UKTI programme that helps businesses to prepare for international markets. It attended various courses covering issues faced by exporters, including finance, operating a business in the US, brand perception in different markets and how to sell abroad.

Smart Cookie also had access to an International Trade Adviser (ITA) who provided feedback about the company's plans and advice about how to achieve its goals.

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Chris Searson, Executive Chairman of Smart Cookie

Funding through UKTI’s Export Market Research Scheme (EMRS) and Market Visit Grants supported several visits by the company to the US to research Dallas (where American Airlines is based), meet potential new clients and build on existing client relationships.

“When we contacted UKTI we were a small company of ten people working out of small premises in Cranleigh, but we were already working with high level clients on major projects in the US,” says Chris. “People there loved what we were doing, we were winning awards and the timing was right for us to take it further. We were ready to use all of UKTI’s capabilities to help us. Passport to Export gave us a lot of useful information. It was also reassuring to talk to other British companies from different sectors going through the same as us. We found the ITAs to be well-informed and quick to answer our questions. UKTI’s financial support allowed us to make more frequent trips to the US than we would have managed otherwise, showing our commitment to the market and helping to establish ourselves as a serious player.”

Fast-track to success

It became clear that if Smart Cookie wanted to attract more top US clients it would need a local presence. UKTI introduced the company to the Dallas Chamber of Commerce which provided on-the-ground support with getting set up.

In March 2013, Smart Cookie opened an office in Dallas which now has a staff of three. The company’s American client base has grown quickly and it is shortly moving to new premises which will also eventually house a development studio of the same scale as the one it uses in the UK. Meanwhile, as well as an overall increase in staff from ten in July 2012 to 40 today, Smart Cookie’s turnover has almost tripled from £1.1 million to £3 million in the past two years.

“Working with UKTI and the Dallas Chamber of Commerce undoubtedly fast-tracked our entry into the local business community,” says Chris. “We knew that it wasn’t enough to be an award-winning creative agency – we wanted to be seen to run a great business. UKTI gave us this credibility. With offices in both the UK and the US we can offer 24 hour coverage for clients all over the world. 65 per cent of our work now comes from overseas clients. We will continue to look to UKTI for support as we take the next steps to build our business in the US and beyond.”

The UK and the US

The UK and the US are each other’s single largest investors and most important partners in science and innovation. In fact, more than a quarter of new investment projects in the UK come from US investors, and bilateral trade between the UK and the US is worth around £120 billion per year.

In 2012, the US continued to strengthen its relationship with the UK, funding 396 projects and creating 50,000 new jobs. About a million people in the US go to work for British companies, while a further million in the UK work for American firms.

The US economy is integrated and largely self-contained, with every major industry represented. The sheer size of the US means it should be treated as a series of regional markets with varying characteristics.

For further information about business opportunities in the US, please go to www.ukti.gov.uk/unitedstates

Helping you to do business abroad

Doing business in another country can be a challenge, so it’s good to know that UK Trade & Investment is there to help you succeed.

Through a range of unique services, including participation at selected trade fairs, overseas missions and providing bespoke market intelligence, UK Trade & Investment can help you crack foreign markets and quickly get to grips with regulations and business practices overseas.

Through our Passport to Export programme we offer new and inexperienced exporters:

- Free capability assessments
- Support in visiting potential markets
- Mentoring from a local export professional
- Free action plans
- Customised and subsidised training
- Ongoing support once you’re up and running

UKTI was delighted to support Smart Cookie in its business overseas.



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