



Creative Northants – Findings of Interviews with Grant Recipients

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05/12/07

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Introduction

There are good and bad aspects of running a creative business in Northamptonshire. There are areas of creative business where help from outside bodies would be most useful, if not desperately needed and others where little help is required. We sought to understand the experience of running a creative business in Northamptonshire by interviewing the five recipients of a recent £500 grant from Creative Northants on location in the space where they work.

We first give an executive summary of our findings and recommendations on how outside bodies might best support creative businesses in Northamptonshire. We then provide detailed reports of the interviews themselves.

Executive Summary Business Development

We saw issues relating to business development that required addressing in several of the companies that we interviewed. These issues were at various stages of the development process. At every stage, business development can be a difficult, at every stage the particular needs are different, but some common themes still emerged.

- Lack of knowledge of how the web and “web-savvy” approaches might be used for business development, whether it be for marketing, as market place for goods via eBay or as a way of building a community of supporters. Courses that provide awareness, not just of the technical aspects of web site maintenance and development but also the marketing and commercial possibilities of the web would be of considerable benefit.
- Lack of knowledge and lack of access to expertise regarding intellectual property. In two cases discussed below (TS and BB) creative businesses sought information relating to intellectual property and struggled to find it. A point of contact that could provide professional intellectual property advice at reasonable cost would address this need.

Marketing

All of the interviewees understood the importance of marketing to the success of their business. Several of them had gone to the trouble to draw up marketing plans, often as part of a process of applying for Government funding. However, several of the people we talked to expressed a competition between the demands, in terms of time and money of doing marketing and the attractions of doing the main creative work of their business and admitted that they were not doing as much marketing as they felt they should.

Affordable marketing support which not only helps with the creation of marketing plans for creative businesses, but also provides regular ongoing support in *actioning* of items within the marketing plan would be of benefit to these businesses.

Networking

We found that all the people we talked to were good at social networking within their “comfort zone”. This “comfort zone” included people working in similar fields, people within their own community, former teachers and colleagues from universities. However, we found that people were not as keen to network outside of those “comfort zones” and that those who had did not feel that it had resulted in success. This reluctance results in uneven and skewed networks. For example T from BB had very strong links with the fine art and art gallery volunteer community within Northamptonshire but did not know anyone - or even where to look to find someone - who ran a small business; L and his wife of CPP had strong links nationally and internationally with Chinese musicians but had few links outside of Chinese music with his local creative community or local authority.

Networking events which encouraged the building of links, not just with others who are involved in the creative sector, but also “between networks” with people in local authorities, education and in the small business sector beyond the creative industries would be of considerable benefit to these creative businesses.

Northamptonshire as a Place for Creative Business

Several of our interviewees "worked out" that Northamptonshire was a good place to locate, either for either themselves or their businesses, because of the combination of affordable accommodation, proximity to London and good transport links with the rest of the country. However there were also a number of comments about the lack of a "creative buzz" about Northampton and Northamptonshire. One reason that was suggested why this might be is that there is no single point, be it a publication, a meeting place or a website that can act as a single point of contact for all information about what is going on in the creative industries in Northamptonshire.

A central point, which would give information on all things creative that are creative would give a better shop window for the excellent creative work that is going on in Northampton and help create more of a "buzz". This does not mean that we recommend the creation of yet another listings magazine. Rather we recommend either aggregating the information that is already available in listings publications and website, or better still, working with a small creative business that is already aggregating some of this information.

Support and Advice from Government Agencies

There is gratitude for the funding that had been received from Creative Northants. Several interviewees said that they would have not been able to make a purchase vital to the advance of their business without the benefit of the grant.

The Portfolio Centre is regarded highly and its Centre Manager, Wendy Nikolaides is cited as a dependable central point of contact for advice about creative business. There seems to be an understanding amongst the people we interviewed that an effort is being made in Northamptonshire to support creative businesses.

Several ways in which government agencies might provide further beneficial support to creative businesses have been outlined in the sections above. In addition, several of our interviewees expressed a need for help with the administrative side of business. Several said that, as with marketing, administration was a task that was always at the bottom of their list and would tend to get left undone in preference to doing more creative work. Other admitted that they "weren't good with numbers" and would like help, not only with basic bookkeeping and accounting, but also with calculations of what they should charge for their services. A service which could offer help with administration, bookkeeping and financial matters at an affordable price would be of considerable benefit to these companies.

Interview with J – JMC

Background

JMConcepts started out as an interior design business in 2001 while J was at university studying interior design. *"I actually worked for the university which is how I got to hear about this Portfolio centre. I basically ran it to provide a service to the air traffic controllers - where I used to work who had lots of spare cash and wanted an interior designer. So I got lots of word of mouth work through them."*

JMC is now based in the Portfolio centre in Northampton. Its main work is to produce a "mood board" for a client and to select and help with the selection of paint and fabric samples. J can then also provide clients with a "recipe" - a list of materials that they should buy that they can give to a decorator. does not offer a project management service for the overseeing of the work. *" Most designers make their money from project management. But I haven't got the time and I don't want the headache. I want to design, I want to do something I like doing."*

Business Development

J intends to grow her business but despite her efforts, the business is not currently growing as she expected. *"I have racked my brains, I've done everything that I should be doing."*

J feels that the residential market in Northants might not be big enough to support the growth that she wants. She used the penetration of interior designers in the American market as a model for her business planning and feels that the UK, and especially Northants, is being slow to catch up. She would very much like to move the business towards the design of commercial premises. However, money is a limiting factor in developing business-to-business customers "Until I've got the money to invest I can't do anything, so at the moment I've just got to keep this floating."

Marketing

Initial business for came from an advert in yellow pages. But business has recently been slow despite a doubling in advertising spend. J also writes for a local interiors magazine free of charge. Help from the Portfolio centre in further developing her marketing plan resulted in the idea of "mood boards" for weddings which J hopes to develop as a new offering.

Networking

In pursuit of the business-to-business clients J has developed connections with several companies in related industries, such as a window dressing. This has yet to result in any work. J belongs to the the Federation of Small Businesses - *"I met some nice people there, once they'd got over the fact that there was this girl in their midst. It was very suit and tie."* She also attends the creative café and thinks that the Portfolio centre is a tremendous resource for creative people.

Northamptonshire as a Place for Creative Business

J is aware that effort is being put into the support of arts in Northamptonshire. *"I think it's going to happen in Northampton. There are people who are up for it, who understand what's going on. And there's this fantastic university which has a really good art school."* But she still feels that Northampton lacks a "soul" and any kind of alternative scene: *"When I dyed my hair pink there's only one shop in Northampton, you can possibly buy pink hair dye."*

J thinks that one thing that might help is a single publication that provided a shop window for what is going on creatively in Northants. "You need something like that *one* magazine like that, not several. You need one magazine. One central point which collates all that information." She does use the library in Northampton but doesn't feel that it is "one of the better ones" for giving information about what is going on in the larger community.

Support and Advice from Government Agencies

J will spend the money that she received from Creative Northants on a laptop which will allow her to create "mood boards" electronically rather than physically for clients without the necessity of carrying around large number of physical samples.

As mentioned above, J has already taken advice through the Portfolio Centre on improving her marketing strategy. She would also like more advice on what grants are available and help with completing applications.

Interview with L and K from CPP

Background

CPP is run by L, a musician and K, his wife who does administration. CPP organise music, dance and other Chinese cultural events, drawing on a network of Chinese creative professionals across the UK and the world. CPP have done work at high profile cultural events such as the Llangollen Eisteddfod and have worked with world-class collaborators, such as the BBC Philharmonic orchestra. They have also organised local performances in Northampton and Kettering.

About half of CPP's work is educational. They run workshops on calligraphy and Tai Chi, but

also musical workshops in which children get the chance to have hands on experience of Chinese Instruments. CPP's efforts are not focussed on the Chinese community, but rather on the community at large *"Our activities are not for the Chinese community. Everyone is welcome but really it's educational for the majority of people. Not for Chinese."* L feels that is important to introduce non-Chinese children to Chinese culture, *"[In the future] young people they will have a lot of opportunity working with China one way or the other" and also to show Chinese working in roles other than catering.*

CPP started in '94 when L, a composer and musician found that professional Chinese artists were not well-represented. *"Some groups started up but then three months down the line, because of funding or because of differences they break up. So I thought how about if we link up, not as a group, but as a network. So if we've got work then we can exchange ideas. Because in this country the Chinese artists are not that much."* The network is now between 40 and 50 strong.

Business Development

CPP are very keen to expand the number of local workshops and performances that they do. They find it rather frustrating that local authorities tend to imagine that their work is focussed mainly on the Chinese community *"When you try to get a local event they always ask - how many Chinese community in the Wellingborough area?"*

Many of their current engagements are one-offs. They feel that if they could get more long-term, regular client-base they could spend more energy on marketing and business development: *"Well, at the moment it's OK, but it would be better to have a regular client - from the Arts Council or from the local authority."* They would very much like to build better links with local Northamptonshire schools but have so found them hard to reach.

Marketing

CPP admit that *"we're not very good at doing marketing"* and realise that this is something that they need to improve *"the marketing is really important, if you've got the marketing right you'll get really good results. The marketing side is what we lack."*

They do however have a very successful web presence. The majority of their work comes to them, via their internet site. *"People who want to find us or want to have a Chinese event at their festival, then they will find us."* Although they do not do any work on maintaining their search engine rating, they rank very highly *"we're linked to so many people. One of these things they talk about for a high ranking is a link from a popular site but because we started so early and all these BBC and other sites they already have our link."*

They have found some of their attempts at expanding their business in Northamptonshire quite frustrating. *"There's one year where we produced calendars to send out to local organisations. And we got really good feedback and lots of people said oh, thank you very much, we'll use you. But one of the local authorities sent it back 'Please stop sending this to us!' That's the local authority for you. Not even open it!"*

Networking

CPP is a network with links nationally and internationally. *"The network always expands. Sometimes the artists go back to China and then they still keep in contact."* CPP also has good links with National Arts bodies such as the Arts Council – it was through an Arts Council showcase event that they got the slot at the Eisteddfod.

However, attempts at building local connections locally have not been quite as successful: *"Northampton, they have their music festival every year and they do know about us because I've visited them a few years ago. And while you're there they're like into it and everything but like afterwards they seem to have forgotten about you."* CPP also attended a local artists event showcasing local artists to schools, but this year attendance by teachers was poor.

Northants as a Creative Environment

L and K came to live in Rushden after moving from Yorkshire with the aim of being nearer London "I didn't want to move to London straight away because I don't know anyone and the costs involved. So I wanted somewhere on the outskirts of London." They regard Rushden as having good transport links with the rest of the country.

CPP's best current link with Northants local authorities is Anne-Marie Whittacker, she's the arts and education officer. They realise that improving their connections with the local authorities is import for the future for their business. *"What happens when I want to get any money from the Arts Council for any arts projects first thing they want to know is what is the view of the local authority."*

Grants, Advice, Government Support

CPP will buy Chinese percussion instruments with the money from Creative Northants. *"The reason we want to expand to Chinese percussion is that it's a lot easier in one session - to do 45 minutes and have a result. You know you see these sessions of African drumming and children love it. But the Chinese style - there's not many around."*

L is a Nesta fellowship awardee *"It's a three-year project to develop online-collaboration with musicians in China. So that enabled me to work with people around the world. It's quite good because it enabled me to do a lot of work internationally without leaving Rushden!"* L has also attended several other council-run training schemes, including the Activate project and the Mainstream project. L seems to measure the success of such projects by how much work he gets directly as a result of them. *"Sometimes we wondered, I don't know because in the end, we didn't get any work as such. No new projects set up."*

L and K both agree that they would like to know more about local events. *"Yeah I think I need a lot of information from the local authority, for example, if there's a festival somewhere."* They tend to think that if an event is not specifically labelled as multi-cultural they should not try to get involved *"I think in Northamptonshire, I mean we are on various lists for various events but they're not multi-cultural events."*

L and K would be interested in having access to professional marketing advice but would be concerned about how much it would cost.

Interview with M, BG

Background

M works from the garage at the bottom of her garden. She graduated from the ceramics and glass course at Buckingham and High Wycombe College. She has been planning the growth of her business over a long period of time *"I bought the house five years ago, three years ago I had the shelving put in and two years ago I got the kiln."*

M's work is mainly constructed from re-used bottles and off-cut and unused double-glazing panes. *"I approached a number of double-glazing places...and then the rest of it comes from the pub."*

At the moment, M's work is sold mostly through craft galleries that take the work on a sale or return basis. *"I take my work to galleries then leave it a few months and pick it up and make more and that's what's been happening the last seven years."*

M has a nearly full-time job – four days a week - providing art-therapy for young offenders but is hoping to reduce that to three days and spend the extra day a week working on her glass business. *"the plan is to use my art therapy to pay for the rest of the time in [my studio]."*

M's passion and enthusiasm for using recycled glass is a combination of economy and eco-

awareness. *"I had lots of part time jobs to fund university and what I noticed was from 1996 - 2000 alcopops came on the market and where at the end of the night I'd empty the bin and there'd be maybe one or two bags of bottles, all of a sudden within a couple of months there was 7 or 8 black bags and I was thinking 'Why've we got all these bottles?' and it's because they've designed these bottles to be so attractive for people to stand around and drink out of them."* And then I was going into college and they were saying it's 70 pence a kilo for sand glass and blown glass. And if you wanted to keep it, they'd charge you and if you didn't, they'd smash it and use it again. And I thought it's ridiculous, all this glass being thrown away."

Business Development

M realises that the current business model of selling pieces through galleries cannot generate a reasonable income. *"I make eight pieces and two or three might sell - what do you do with the other five? The garage is slowly filling up and that's why I thought I need a change in direction - I can't do this any more."* She intends to use the computer and camera that she will buy with the money from Creative Northants to improve her marketing efforts. Specifically she wants to target interior designers that might be refurbishing pubs and clubs and restaurants. *"this sort of work belongs in that environment and I want it to go back into that environment."*

One thing that hampers the growth of M's business is the high cost of materials for working in glass. M has not yet paid close attention to the cost of the pieces she makes and does not have a standard way of pricing pieces to make sure that she makes a profit.

Q: Out of interest, a piece like this - how much would you make from something like this - how much does a gallery make? What's the mark up?

A: That I haven't worked out yet.

Marketing

Because she knows that her current model of selling through galleries isn't working, M is interested in getting advice about alternative ways of marketing her pieces. She admits that given the choice between cost, market and paperwork or just making more pieces, she would probably just make more pieces.

"In the back of my head I was thinking no, you've got to start marketing this, you've got to stop making and let people know you're here." She hopes that the extra day (when she goes down to working 3 days a week) will be time when she can deal with these tasks, which she sees as "unattractive".

M hopes the camera that she's bought and the computer that she's going to buy will allow her to design a website that will attract more customers. It will also allow her to research the ways that other glass makers are selling their wares. M has only once listed a piece on eBay but isn't convinced that it's a promising way to sell her pieces, particularly because of the high cost of packaging for glass items and the risk of breakage. *"There is scope for it to go that way but it would need some more research and some more thought into it."*

Networking

M's main networks are with people that she was at university with. She still occasionally rents studio space at her old university with two former student colleagues so that she can do glass-blowing and other processes that she can't do in her own studio. *"The college actually have been really good to me. I can go in and use their equipment and because I'm health and safety trained and everything, their lecturers then can be off doing other things. So I can use all of that for free."*

M is a member of the "Contemporary Glass Society" and attended "Looking at Glass - The Conference" and intends to join the Northamptonshire Design Guild. She also intends to go to business breakfasts in Northants with the hope of meeting other designer makers in the area.

Northants as a Creative Environment

M moved to Northamptonshire for financial and geographical reasons: because she wanted to

be near family and friends in London, but be able to afford a house with studio space. *"So I looked at work in the home counties. Which was Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Oxfordshire county council offered me a job. I couldn't afford to buy with an OX postcode and I saw that here was halfway between the m40 and the M1."*

For M, the studio space (actually a garage in the back garden) was the most important aspect of the house. *"When I came here, I didn't want to look at the house, I wanted to look at the garage."*

Grants, Advice, Government support

M is please to have been given money from Creative Northants which is ring-fenced for buying a computer because whenever she has other money she would tend to buy artists materials with it.

M is very interested in receiving business training because she realises that she needs it in order to enter into more commercial markets. *"I realise now, going down the avenue that I want to go which is targetting say interior designers and refurbishment of pubs and clubs and restaurants. I'm going to have to have some business experience under my belt."*

M is dyslexic and admits that she would appreciate help with the administrative side of the business. *"Paperwork's always down the bottom of my list but as a realistic practice I'm going to have to do it and I do do it."*

M got to know about Creative Connections in a roundabout route, after visiting a "signpost surgery" business advice session in Leicester: *"He gave me ATC referrals and it's all sorts of art people all around the country that are giving out awards and said you might find something in there that you'll be able to apply for. So anyway I had a look through and came across Creative Connections."*

Interview with P – TS

Background

TS are a Design consultancy that specialises in design for children. They feel they are quite unique in providing product design consultancy that solely deal with children. They have designed toys for companies such as Lego, Disney, Hasbro and Nokia. Work is found all over the world, in Denmark and Germany, in the US and Hong Kong.

The company was formed 18 months ago by three former students of Loughborough University. One of the three has recently left the company. For P – who we interviewed, the reason for working in the business is his passion for toys. *"It's a nice way to not have to grow up. I have a passion for the toys."* His partner M is more focussed on the business *"M works well on the business front, really long term aims and goals"*.

P finds the experience of running a consultancy quite stressful, especially the uneven workload *"We've got a lot all at one time or it starts to quieten down and initially you have a bit of a rest but then you get stressed at no work coming in."*

Business Development

For TS, a major step in developing the business is having employees. The main reason for wanting to take on employees is so that they can spend more time getting more clients and managing their existing ones. They currently use a number of contractors and are looking to widen the pool of contractors that they use. However, in the long term they are looking to take on permanent employees. Related to the aim of taking on full-time employees, is the need to gain consistent work that can keep all members of the company fully employed.

TS are also interested in getting into toy invention and the sale of the ideas for royalties. This is quite an established business in the UK in which several other companies are major players. However, inventor work is high risk so the thrust of the company at the moment is to get the consultancy work in which will pay for the time required for invention.

Another challenge for the development of their business is the putting in place of adequate project management and financial procedures. Even though the company is still at a size where most management can be achieved informally through face-to-face conversations it is made more difficult by working all over the world. This is a problem that they hope to help solve by buying a server and project management software that the directors can access from anywhere in the world.

Marketing

In the previous 6 months, TS's marketing involved them visiting the Nuremberg toy fair – the industries biggest trade event and arranging a series of meetings. Work following on from that has involved nurturing new contacts which are now starting to produce firm offers of work. TS takes advantage of its track record with big-name companies in its efforts to get new work.

In the future they aim to put more original research on their website as a way of bringing in more business. The role of the website at the moment is not so much to bring in new business, but to allow prospective customers to get an idea of who TS are and what they do after an initial meeting.

Other kinds of marketing strategies have not been pursued. Writing articles for trade magazines such as Toy News and Design week has been talked about, and is regarded as on the "to do" list and potentially very useful.

Networking

Links to universities, both in Loughborough, Huddersfield and Northampton are valuable for TS, as a source of possible contractors and recruits, but also, in the case of Northampton as a workshop space. *"There's new courses coming up at Huddersfield, at their uni that's very much child-oriented design... cheap labour I suppose, essentially, but fresh talent"*. TS also visit the university degree shows in search of the best new graduate talent.

Joining the London Chamber of Commerce is regarded as a mistake. *"We thought that there'd be opportunities for the Olympics and basically there wasn't."*

Networking is the main way to find potential contractors but it is a complex business. People that they already know well and know their work is good are their first choice, but could turn out to be competitors as well as employees. Also, this is a small group of people who aren't necessarily available when they're needed *"we started trying to gain a bigger network because when you rely on two [designers] they're not always available."* But contact with employment agencies, even ones that claim to specialise in toy designers has yet to result in a useful lead.

Northants as a Creative Environment

One of the main reasons for TS being located in Northampton is the incentive offered by the Portfolio centre *"We just searched around for premises and found this one, found this scheme. Really that drove us locating in Northampton"*. Positive aspects of Northampton as a location for business are it's town centre – with easy access to Toy shops and it's good transport links with the rest of the country.

The main disadvantage of Northampton as a location is distance from London. Contractors coming from London have to be paid for their travel and travel time and most meetings with clients take place in London. There is an understanding however that there is a trade off between distance from London and cost: *"If we were in London it would be a lot simpler, but then again if we were in London we'd be paying more."*

Grants, Advice, Government support

The grant money from creative Northants will be used to buy a server that can run project management software that both partners can access over the internet - *"for project management. Really to keep a track of what everybody's doing all of the time."*

TS are very positive about the Portfolio centre *"Right now we get pretty good facilities and Wendy's great."* A particular advantage of the Portfolio is its connection with the University. TS have good relations with the University, helping supervise some student projects and from time to time using the University's workshops, spray booths and machinery. One way in which they think Portfolio centre might be improved is the addition of workshop and spray booth space.

For general business advice, TS might approach Wendy Nikolaidis the Portfolio Centre manager. They also consult a business mentor – a senior consultant who has experience of running several design consultancy businesses.

One area in which they struggled to get advice was intellectual property, this was the one area which membership of the London Chamber of Commerce proved useful. They would be interested in help with future marketing *"Generally we're not doing too bad [with marketing] but it's always good to get more ideas in that respect."* However, even though they admit to problems with project management, they are not sure that outside administrative help would be that useful *"It would be useful if someone could come in and do simple things, I suppose the only risk is that we'd spend so much time telling them what to do that we'd actually be better off doing it ourselves."*

Interview with T from BB

Background

T is in the third year of a fine art degree at the University of Northampton. The BB is a community art project. People are given a small piece of blue plasticine in a small plastic bag and encouraged "to sculpt the plasticine ball in any form you wish" and then either email pictures of their work back to T or post them on a website. *"I like the idea that it's kind of engaging people and also bringing art to the communities that might not necessarily be able to have it."*

T is able to include the BB project – and its development as a business – as part of her fine art degree. *"[I have to do a] five thousand word dissertation and a folder based on a business - which is like wonderful for me. And for that we have to create and action plan of where we want the business to be in like a year or two years."*

The BB is an inclusive community project: *"When it gets to exhibitions I'll show these people's work alongside my work"*. T gives out as many BBs as she can (the interviewers got BBs) and she receives a high response rate, in terms of the numbers of images returned compared to the number of packs that she gives out. *"I had an exhibition at the Balloon Festival. And the Blue man was there - with the BBs giving packets out. 900 hundred BBs went out and that day I received a 100 photos back."*

Business Development

The main way that T wants to develop the BB project is by developing her own website as a replacement for the current BB myspace page. She is finding this a challenge, mainly for technical reasons *"I'm only on the early stages with it (website) but oh it's so confusing."*

T would like to investigate the possibility of developing the BB project into a business *"I'd quite like to sort of evaluate it more.. do all the finances of how much the plasticine is against how*

many bags you know how much does it cost per head and stuff like that." She would like advice on the intellectual property aspects of the project and the health, safety and legal issues around giving out free plasticine. She would also like to investigate the possibility of taking the project forward as a charity rather than a business. However, she is currently finding it difficult to get advice on a number of issues surrounding business development. "There's no one there that I can find that says this is what you've got to do to establish yourself as a business."

T is interested in the possibility of staying in Northamptonshire and developing the BB as a business, but feels she's reached a point where there's not much more she can do without outside help.

"I'd love to [have the BB become a job] but I couldn't see past next year really to be honest. If it could that would be fantastic... I want to take it further but it's taking it to the point where it goes out of my knowledge and it goes out of the people's knowledge that I know and it gets to the point where you're kind of stranded not really knowing what you're doing."

Marketing

One way of looking at the BB is that it is *entirely* a marketing project and in its current form an already successful one. *"Now it's featured in artists newsletter which means that people come and say 'oh could I have ten bags for such and such a place'...It's kind of really been snowballing really throughout the media"* T has therefore already created a strong presence for herself in the market and got some media coverage *"I did a radio interview for the BB - I did a live show for 5 minutes about it."*

The nature of the BB is that it has provided a contact and focus for a group of people who might not normally be involved in the arts. *"Because I'm collecting all this information on the website I can now email them and say 'Oh, do you want to come and see your work in the exhibition?'... all these people that have sent me stuff I've created a mailing list where I can send out different things that are happening."*

Networking

T has done a great deal of networking within the art community in Northamptonshire, volunteering as an invigilator for local galleries and helping set up exhibitions. She has also made connections with staff at the Fish Market and knows people in Kettering Borough council through various workshops and exhibitions that she has been involved in. *"It's kind of just getting to know people and getting to know people through different voluntary events."*

However, she has much poorer links, or none at all with people either in the web or software industry:

"Q: So you don't know people who write websites for a living?"

"A: No, not personally."

Nor in the business community : *"There's no one sort of within my immediate talking to that is actually running a business... I wouldn't really know where to start, I suppose, I'd just look on Google for business help within Northamptonshire, something like that."*

Northants as a Creative Environment

When asked about Northamptonshire a place to work in creative industry, T is blunt: *"I'd say it's a desert... there's just so much limitations within the actual town itself some of the people don't seem to be that interested in art when you haven't got a mass public interested it's not gathering momentum it's not producing more."* Despite this, she is aware of the efforts that are going on to improve the climate for creative industries in Northamptonshire and is complimentary about them *"I think Creative Connections are really beneficial because I think they've made so much happen. They gave me a sponsored unit within the Fish Market for a year with some colleagues here. And that was great because that was sort of encouraging students up here to be able to engage in stuff."*

T seems to be in two minds about leaving Northamptonshire. She would like to go to another art college to do a fine art MA *"I'd quite like to do it somewhere else to get the benefit of another faculty"* On the other hand, she seems to think that if there was a job she could do in Northamptonshire that was related to the arts, she would take it. *"If I could, if the job was there I'd love to but from looking at artists newsletter and stuff, there's never anything."*

Grants, Advice, Government support

T has spent the money from Creative Connections on creating a website, promotional T-shirts and business cards.

She was surprised at the cost of developing a website *"For the website I sort of set a base email and sent it to all the companies within the area. And some of the replies were shocking how much it would be. There was one gentlemen who was really helpful and said he would do it for £500."* As mentioned above, T has no close contacts who are familiar with web development techniques. As a result she has to rely on paid-for professional help. *"I mean there is problems with it. The people that host the website now are quite good. They always reply within 24 hours. And the service is there because I'm paying £200 for the year but as such no one I could physically talk to face to face."*

T would be keen to see more local provision of courses on business aspects of running a Creative Business, similar to those run by the Arts Council in Nottingham, but run closer to home. *"It would be nice to have workshop sessions where people could come in and say this is what my idea is and get suggestions from people who know what they're doing rather than trying to interpret the information on the internet, I think that would help a lot."*

T is also keen to get more training and experience of applying for grants and feels that this would improve her chances of getting employment and staying in Northamptonshire. *"I applied for one of the jobs in Northamptonshire - that was as a coordinator for an arts event - ...the problem was that I didn't have that much funding knowledge. So this year I'm working on increasing my funding knowledge..."*