

Wealth of 'hidden innovators' just waiting to be unleashed

A latent pool of 'hidden innovators' could potentially add a staggering £15 billion to the UK economy by 2012 – if the right conditions were created – according to new figures.

The research, sponsored by Microsoft, has been carried out by Cass Business School's Centre for New Technologies, Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

The report, which combined in depth statistical research with qualitative case study analysis, was conducted over a six month period. It examined how the UK might unlock the barriers and pathways to entrepreneurial innovation in three important groups, already recognised for their potential.

It claimed that older entrepreneurs could contribute an increased 17 per cent of the potential uplift to the UK economy by 2012 and will be key to capitalising on this innovation opportunity as the size of this group expands over the next four years.

With a wealth of experience and insight built up over their careers, this group has the highest rate of business success and longevity, with over 70 per cent of startups lasting more than

three years, compared with 28 per cent for younger entrepreneurs.

Moreover, the report says that with those over 55 set to account for a third of the UK population by 2025, older entrepreneurs are well placed to tap into the fast-growing potential marketplace through their shared experiences and understanding.

Another of the report's key findings is that entrepreneurial self-confidence is a critical issue for all the hidden innovator groups and a major barrier in pursuing an entrepreneurial path.

However, it also reveals that this self-confidence can be nurtured if there is a culture of entrepreneurship to support it.

Some of the critical steps to creating that culture are

- Policy makers should be urged to provide equivalent support to the over 50s as they do to younger people – younger entrepreneurs need investment and support but that should be balanced against support for other parts of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Business support services must take diversity

seriously – understanding barriers and helping to break them down. Government should strive to change the image of entrepreneurship and make business ownership a mainstream ambition.

- Encourage improvement as well as innovation – a successful and sustainable business doesn't have to be completely unique.
- Provide tailored encouragement and support – the right mentoring can have a dramatic effect on business success.

Gordon Frazer, managing director Microsoft UK, said: "Technology, and software in particular, is an extremely powerful tool which enables innovation and entrepreneurialism.

"It provides a platform on which new ideas can be built, it breaks down barriers to entry for new businesses and allows access to markets far beyond traditional boundaries.

"It appears that as a nation, we're currently only focused on supporting a relatively small part of the UK when it comes to entrepreneurial and innovative potential.

"By tapping into the knowledge and passion of all our communities we can both drive

economic growth and help to create a culture of successful start-ups and growing businesses.

"We are passionate about helping the UK to become a nation of successful business owners."

Julie Logan, professor of Entrepreneurship at Cass Business School's Centre for New Technologies, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and one of the report authors, also said: "This report shows that in the UK we have a tremendous opportunity to capitalise on the rich pool of entrepreneurial and innovative talent that is held by groups in society that has previously been underutilised.

"There are some things that we can be doing to tap into this potential.

"Faced with increasing global competition, part of the solution must be to make better use of the pools of talent already in existence and this means a renewed focus on what the older generation, disabled and BME communities can add to the economy."

Meanwhile, Trevor Baylis, inventor of the ClockWork Radio, commented: "We need to create a culture in the UK which encourages and

nurtures innovation across all groups in society.

"This is especially true for the older generation who have built up experience during their careers which enables them to identify and act on business ideas quickly and effectively.

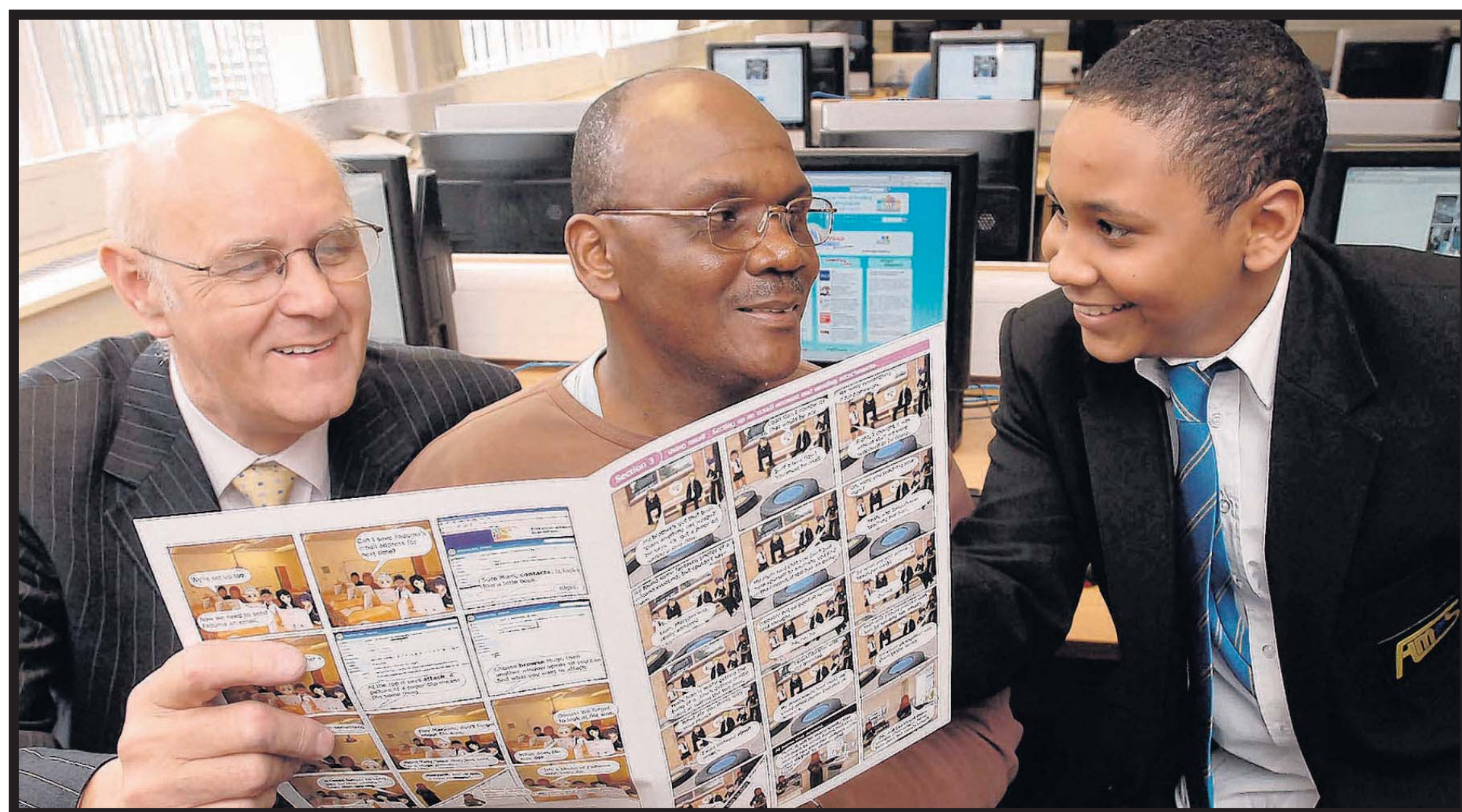
For the disabled community, the report reveals that technology has presented new opportunities to pursue entrepreneurial paths – whether by enabling better access to information or underpinning the business model, technology has fundamentally changed the way in which disabled people can innovate.

The Black Minority and Ethnic group also has the potential to make a significant impact to the UK economy through greater levels of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The report highlights that if the group's innovative potential can be unleashed, an extra £10.6 billion in economic uplift could be generated.

The report also shows that technology has been one of the most important factors in making the entrepreneurial path more achievable and more accessible by breaking down barriers to entry and opening new markets.

Keeping IT in the family aims to improve learning



Coun Paul Tilsley (left) checks out the illustrated guides to IT with 14-year-old Aston Manor school student Ervid Rawlins and his father Irod

By Steve Pain
Technology Editor

The old joke about children being the only ones able to programme the video recorder comes of age this month with the launch of *Keeping IT in the Family* – a project encouraging families to use IT and see the benefits of email, the internet and digital photography.

The initiative is led by Digital Birmingham for Birmingham City Council, and is being launched in six local secondary schools currently using Government 'Computers for Pupils' funding to improve learning by providing home computers and connectivity for students.

Developed in partnership with Microsoft, *Keeping IT in the Family* links to the Government's Universal Home Access (UHA) agenda, for which Birmingham is a UK pilot. UHA was established to increase ICT skills in families and communities which may have a poor understanding and take-up of computers and the internet.

Digital Birmingham's Mike Farmer is launching the project in Aston Manor; Washwood Heath; St John Wall, Handsworth; Broadway, Perry Barr; Castle Vale and Handsworth Wood Girls schools with their parents and other family members.

The students are then given a 'toolkit' for use at home – a set of illustrated comic guides commissioned by Microsoft and developed by Citizens Online – which takes the students and their 'family pupils' through the basics of how to set up an email account, how to search the internet, top tips for online shopping and how to take digital photos, upload them to the computer and produce prints.

"The guides are relevant to families and explore examples of how the technology can be useful in everyday life," said Mike Farmer.

"For example, email can be used to communicate easily with family members overseas; digital photography is invaluable if you want to send friends and relatives instant pictures of the family, and being able to search the internet means

you can more easily help your kids with their homework as well as find the best price for a holiday."

As well as supplying the guides for students, Digital Birmingham is making them available through the city's libraries and for download free of charge from the Digital Birmingham website, www.digitalbirmingham.co.uk, and from www.microsoft.com/uk/publicsector.

In addition, the project has recently received backing from BECTA, the Government's lead body for ICT in education, to enable support the development of the initiative on a national basis.

"This is another example of Birmingham taking the lead in promoting digital technology to all areas of society," said Birmingham City Council deputy leader Paul Tilsley, who heads the Digital Birmingham partnership.

"Research has shown that there is a wealth of benefits to be gained when older family members are taught how to use computers and the internet by their children.

"By using Government funding wisely



The guides are relevant to families and explore examples of how the technology can be useful in everyday life

Mike Farmer

and making this comic-based toolkit widely available for all family members, we aim to help close the digital divide and encourage more people to have the confidence and skills to benefit from IT connectivity.

"We would like to see everyone have access to the technology they need to be part of the 21st century 'knowledge society', and we're proud in Birmingham to be taking the lead nationally in this initiative."

Julian Price, head of citizenship at Microsoft, also said: "Today more than ever technology brings enormous benefits to families.

"We participate in a wide range of community initiatives to promote proficient and safer use of technology in the home and in schools. This initiative in digital literacy by Birmingham City Council is a prime example of where Microsoft is helping local authorities to make their communities great places to live, work and do business."

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Innovative Muslim social networking site is a winner

A Muslim equivalent of Yahoo, Facebook and Youtube has been recognised as one of Europe's best tech start-ups by an American technology magazine.

Muxlim.com has been selected as one of Europe's most successful new businesses by California-based *Red Herring* – a media company dedicated to business innovation and technology.

Muxlim.com was launched in 2006 by two Scandinavian-based entrepreneurs, with the objective of creating the most popular Muslim social media website in the world. Within a year Muxlim.com attracted more than a million users from 190 countries across the globe.

Founder and chief executive Mohamed El-Fatry said: "The recognition of Muxlim.com as one of Europe's most innovative and successful companies is a great honour for both the company and the Muslim community.

"Our objective was to create an online environment where Muslims and non-Muslims can enjoy social media in a safe and friendly atmosphere."

He added: "We know that a huge number of internet users, in particular parents, want access to an online experience that does not expose people to vulgarity, offensive content and adult material.

"At the same time it's vital that social media is engaging, user-friendly and fun. Muxlim.com achieves all this, and we have attracted a vibrant and friendly community with a welcoming demeanour and a sense of humour.

"As all social media websites, we are continuously improving the services available to our users, and recently launched Muxlim TV – which allows our users to create their own online TV channel by uploading and sharing their videos.

"Our community has been very active in helping the moderation team ensure that uploaded content is appropriate for users of all ages.

"And within the next few weeks we will introduce My Muxlim, the first Muslim personalised-homepage and social networking service based on the Google OpenSocial platform, which allows users to add thousands of apps from different sites to their Muxlim.com profiles.

"In a few months, Muxlim Pal, will also be the first Muslim alternative to the likes of Second Life and other virtual worlds."

Imran Akram, chairman of Innovate Arts and founder of the Muslim Writers Awards, said: "I welcome the availability of a safe and ethically-minded channel like Muxlim.com, as it provides users and parents with peace of mind that Muslim families can enjoy a complete online experience within a morally-centred environment.

"What makes this online community stand out is the creative and comedic user-generated content on display.

"If you want to appeal to young users then it's vital that your output is funny and engaging.

"The Muxlim.com community has proven that it's more than possible to discuss serious social issues through humour, and this website is a great resource for Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

If you want your ad to get noticed, then hope for an ASA ban

Making an ad for prime time television can cost you an arm and a leg and by the time you've bought enough airtime for it to make an impact you'll probably be completely limless.

Unless of course the Advertising Standards Authority save you most the broadcast costs by banning your ad after its first airing!

Before the internet, an adverse ASA ruling was very bad news indeed, leaving you with a very expensive ad no one was going to see.

But now we have YouTube and an ASA ban is the golden ticket to a bigger audience than most brands could ever dream of.

Recently, the ASA banned an ad for a hair curling product, the ghd IV, from a

company called Jamella. Now I've never heard of them before. A brief glance at the accompanying photograph should explain my lack of knowledge on the hair care market place.

However, now the ghd ad has been banned, I find myself writing about it!

The story and the ad have gone viral in a way only the web could pull off and inadvertently so has the awareness of the product.

It only took 26 people to complain to the ASA to get the ad banned. Admittedly one of them was the Archdeacon of Liverpool, who I discover, thanks to Google images, is also follicularly challenged.

The ad, which you are no doubt going to watch online yourself after reading



this, features several provocatively dressed models praying for better hair and the less wholesome results it might bring.

It was banned due to the use of a phrase from the Lord's Prayer and religious icons such as beads and candles

which could apparently prove offensive to Christians, bald or otherwise.

But thanks to the internet, you can still watch the series of three ads and judge for yourself.

There are also now several more shocking spoof versions, uploaded by pranksters, giving even more exposure to the brand whose ad has sparked a cult following.

I'm not clear whether the ASA's authority extends to online, but if it does, there would be little practical hope of removing the original ad from the web.

This is the true power of the modern web – you cannot seek to control the way its citizens treat your brand messages.

It's a tough thing for marketers to do, but letting go of control is the only way to

gain brand equity in a web 2.0 world.

As traditional broadcast media fragments – there are now hundreds of commercial television channels – it is becoming increasingly hard for brands to know which advertising slots will suit their products.

So making a video content specifically for the web is looking like an increasingly attractive option, especially as the media costs are zero.

But if you really want to get the best return on your video production investment, pray that the ASA bans your ad!

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