



Apr 02, 2015 00:00 BST

Innovation partnership unlocks faster route to market

A knowledge-sharing partnership with Northumbria University, Newcastle, is helping to drive innovation and accelerate market opportunities for engineering and manufacturing business Parker domnick hunter.

Strategic Marketing Associate Ellie Jones, from Newcastle Business School, and Industrial Designer Callum Whitehead, from Northumbria Design School, are collaborating on a two-year full-time placement with the Gateshead company.

Their work is part of a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), where

university academics work directly with industry by jointly managing a strategic project in the business. Set up last year it is proving highly successful, with a number of innovations from Ellie and Callum being approved and developed.

The partnership has also been praised by Government KTP funding advisor John Clayton, as an “impressive example of collaboration”.

Parker Hannifin is a subsidiary of US-based global engineering group Parker Hannifin. It specialises in the design and manufacture of high quality compressed air, gas treatment and gas generation products, for a wide range of applications across the world. Customers include global businesses such as Coca Cola.

Ellie said: “Our brief is to help the company become more market-driven, or customer-centric, so that their engineering strengths are better aligned to what customers want. It’s about having disciplined and measurable market research and testing critical assumptions when deciding, for example, whether to invest in developing a new product concept or idea.

“Because I work closely with Callum in a cross-discipline approach we can show that the most cost effective and profitable way of taking new products to market is when design and marketing complement each other by working together. By increasing flexibility in the process we have also shown the time taken from concept to develop stage can be significantly reduced from around six to 12 months to just six to 12 weeks. The positive impact of this can be huge.”

Fraser McLeay, Professor of Strategic Marketing Management at Newcastle Business School, added: “Our KTP is an innovative project involving both the School of Design and Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University which combines service design and marketing to develop customer centric innovation. As a result, we are developing new marketing systems and processes that are helping us to identify opportunities for organic growth.

“The next stage of the KTP will help us transform the way in which we use existing data to optimise business performance and develop a dashboard focusing on new market opportunities which will increase international sales and profitability”

Neil McPherson, CAGT Platform Marketing Manager, said: “As a result of our KTP with Northumbria we are developing new marketing systems and processes to identify opportunities for organic growth. It will help us transform the way in which we use existing data to optimise business performance and develop a dashboard focusing on new market opportunities which will increase international sales and profitability.”

Matthew Lievesley, Reader in Human Centred Problem Solving at Northumbria Design School, said: “Parker domnick hunter is already a technically excellent business with leading positions in many of its markets. Increased global competition in traditional market segments has highlighted the need for increased innovation and shortened development times. With the Design and Business disciplines working together, we are able to embed new approaches to innovation, engaging key customers to understand where the company’s technology will make the greatest difference.

This responsive approach has already helped the company secure close partnerships in major export markets, which are expected to be worth over £1m p.a. to the UK economy.”

KTPs are part Government-funded programmes designed to encourage collaboration between businesses and UK universities. To find out more about opportunities with Northumbria please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk.

Anyone interested in finding out more about Northumbria’s postgraduate opportunities in business and design can sign up for one of its masters’ open days by visiting northumbria.ac.uk/masters.

Image: l-r Ellie Jones Strategic Marketing KTP Associate , Callum Whitehead Industrial Designer KTP Associate, Craig Annal, Principal Engineer and Company Supervisor; Chris Mayes Market Development Manager (Food & Beverage) and Company Supervisor; Matthew Lievesley; Northumbria University Academic Lead, Neil McPherson Marketing Manager and Company Lead, Nigel Coates; Academic Supervisor Strategic Marketing; Fraser McLeay; Strategic Marketing Academic Lead

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