An overview of a Workshop on 'Design in Ireland'

November 16th 2016, St. Andrews Church, Suffolk Street, Dublin 2

9.00 am - 2.00 pm

Background to Workshop

The Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) hosted a Workshop on 16th November 2016. Representatives from industry, industry associations, design-sector associations, enterprise agencies, academia and the policy system were invited to the workshop, and a full list of attendees are provided at the end of this note.

The purpose of the workshop was to solicit feedback from stakeholders on draft findings from a number of research studies that are currently being undertaken in relation to design, and also to discuss the opportunities to create additional jobs, firm sales and exports through enhanced design activity and how the design ecosystem in Ireland might be strengthened.

Workshop Agenda

The workshop agenda was as follows:

1. A presentation of the draft research findings from a study of 'the profile of the Design-intensive Sector in Ireland' (commissioned by ID2015)-Con Kennedy.
2. A presentation of the draft research findings from a study on 'the role and importance of design in the Design non-intensive industries in Ireland' (commissioned by Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)-Dylan Henderson: CM International.
3. Two parallel facilitated stakeholder breakout groups:
   - Group 1 to discuss draft findings from the Design-Intensive Sector research.
   - Group II to discuss draft findings from the Design Non-Intensive Sector research.
4. Reporting back of main discussion points to the plenary group.
5. Two parallel facilitated stakeholder breakout groups. Both groups to discuss:
   the opportunities in design and how the design ecosystem might be strengthened.
6. Reporting back of main discussion points to the plenary group.

A summary of the feedback from the 4 different breakout sessions are provided herewith.

Breakout Session A: Design Intensive Sector

Rapporteur Report: Con Kennedy

Facilitator: Barry Sheehan

Questions for discussion at Breakout

1. Are the findings in line with/greater/worse than expected with regards to :
   - The size of the design sector
   - The number of design practice
   - The types of design businesses
   - The location of design practices
   - The age of design businesses
   - The value of design sector to the Irish economy

2. Are there any dimensions of design that stakeholders believe have not been considered in the research for the non-Design Intensive Sector?

Feedback on Research Findings

- Generally the feedback from the group was that the research findings were in line with expectations, although it was acknowledged that design in Ireland was a particularly small sector.

- Group questioned if Design in-House should be captured as part of this research along with the Design-in-practice research presented.

- Group asked about overall employee numbers.

- Designers need to become 'Design Leaders' and be able to deal with succession planning of their practices.

- Designers need to identify clear career paths (design education).

- Design-in-practice are competing with companies with in-house facilities for employees.

- There are procurement issues for small design practices and this may be hampering business development and growth, therefore, do design practices need to be bigger?

- Design practices must be able to service larger clients. International clients require practices to deliver scale.

- Design is considered to be a 'low level purchase item by clients' and designer need to communicate the creative and strategic aspect of their work to clients.

- Both parts of this research need to look at the value of design from an in-house and government perspective.

- Issues over free-pitching was raised and government and private sector needs to end this practice of procurement.

- What is the number of design education graduates and where are they going? What roles are available for design graduates? Design education has a role to play in developing future Design Leaders. Is there a better role for design management within design?

- What is the total value of design? What is the value of exports where design is a key component?

- The client-community needs to better understand design's contribution to the clients business and wider economy.

- The design sector is becoming increasingly fragmented.

- Designers need to be better at collaboration with other practices. Better networking is required.

- There are recruitment issues: practices are having difficulty in finding the right staff. Competition with in-house companies for employment.

- The cost of freelance hire is having an impact on margins.

- What is the level at which Public Sector are purchasing design services?

- Where are graduates finding employment abroad?

Breakout Session A: Non Design Intensive Sector

Rapporteur Report: Dylan Henderson

Facilitator: Meirion Thomas

Questions for discussion at Breakout

1. Do the research findings on:
   - Managing design
   - Design spending
   - Use of design
   - Role of design
   - The barriers to engaging in design
   - Supports for design

   seem in line with the stakeholders views?

2. We have some conflicting results on skills and the consideration of design as part of the R&D process.
   - What are the group's views on availability of skills for design?
   - To what extent is designs considered a part of or separate to the R&D process?

3. Are there any dimensions of design that stakeholders believe have not been considered in the research for the non-Design Intensive Sector?

Feedback on Research Findings

Broad support for key conclusions such as:

- Design is an active component within the R&D process, and in many cases synonymous with R&D – particularly in sectors such as Engineering.
- It is concerned with more than simply styling and aesthetics.
- The design ladder is a useful tool to assess design maturity. Care, however, is required to contextualise the high level of companies found at stages 3 and 4 of the ladder.
- The key barriers to undertaking design / R&D are, indeed, often time and finance.

- R&D tax credits are a key support available to R&D, but it may be difficult for design activities to utilise these fully (e.g. 'technical uncertainty' is a challenging concept to prove).
- Design is key to strategic differentiation and is helping companies, notably FDI, retain activities in Ireland ('stickiness').
- Design skills and experience are evident weaknesses in Ireland (particularly for FDI sectors). The time cycle from graduation to develop professional design skills can be 3 or more years.
- There is a need for higher education to strengthen the 'green' nature of graduates through opportunities for experience in a professional environment – creating Design professionals.
- Developing a wider ecosystem for skills in which a career path for skills designers would be key to ensuring opportunities and utilization of skills – needs critical mass – similar to that achieved for key sectors such as financial services and medical devices in recent years. Competition for skills only benefits everyone and pushes the levels of skills upward.
- In developing skills for design there is a need for much better connection between education and business, with a role for the public sector to facilitate this.

Additional areas for consideration

- The connection between design, profitability and customer satisfaction could be explored further.
- Make use of the recent OECD research in our study (referenced in the BMW Region design report).

Breakout Session B : Group 1

Rapporteur Report: Dylan Henderson

Facilitator: Barry Sheehan

What opportunities are there to create additional jobs, firm sales and exports through enhanced design activity?

- Design is a complex practice and there is a need to better promote and raise awareness of design across the different economic sectors. This was described as 'bestowing value on design' and 'making it part of the agenda'.

- To fully exploit the opportunities associated with design (jobs, exports etc), however, better evidence is needed on the value of design and the margins that can be generated by using design.

- There is potential to create jobs in design, *and* jobs from design. This reflects design's role as a sector itself, but also as an activity that can be harnessed by the wider sector.

- Many designers are leaving Ireland to work in locations such as London. There is an opportunity to attract them to return to Ireland.

- The emergence of new design disciplines such as service design and design management offer the opportunity for design to be further cemented in company innovation / R&D activities.

- It can be hard to separate out design from the R&D process in many companies, and time/money are key barriers to putting more emphasis.

- There is an opportunity to support the FDI sector by establishing Ireland as a place for multinationals to locate design. The experience of the financial services sector, which leveraged its accountancy offer to provide business services illustrates how design services might be developed.

What distinct parts within the ecosystem need to be strengthened?

- There is a need to strengthen awareness of existing innovation measures that are available for designers and design projects.

- The potential to revise existing support measures to take a greater account of the needs of design is also needed.

- The key skills opportunity is better 'work readiness' and helping designers to better understand business needs.

- Government could help establish clear competency frameworks, and career pathways between the different parts of the design sector.

- The public sector is a key procurer of significant volumes of goods and services and there is an opportunity for procurement to better promote design. Other countries are said to be active in this area.

- Consideration should be given to applying design thinking to key themes and global / societal challenges (e.g. idea-led design).

- Priorities: developing the professional practice of the design sector, developing design as a set of competences, establish Ireland as a place to undertake design activity, bring designers home, get people ready for work.

Breakout Session B : Group 2

Rapporteur Report: Con Kennedy

Facilitator: Meirion Thomas

What opportunities are there to create additional jobs, firm sales and exports through enhanced design activity?

- Design is cyclical: there will be and is, a natural demand.

- Growth in emerging fields such as interaction design, user experience design and service design.

- Challenges are faced because a significant number of mid-level practitioners have left the sector during the recession and have not returned.

- Challenges are faced because design fees have not returned to pre-recession levels. If the sector grows fees, the sector jobs will increase.

- The design sector needs to better understand the value of design.

- Design is a non-regulated industry, this may be an issue for quality control and client reassuring. Register of design practitioners rather than regulation of design practitioners. Professional standards and quality assurance.

- There needs to be a policy/case study into how design's value can be communicated in a coherent way that includes Government, Professional Bodies, Design Businesses and Client Businesses. A collaborative model between design industry and government needs to be developed.

- State aid is required to develop the sector.

- Design practices need to be equipped with the skills to seek out funding (Horizon 20/20, Innovation Vouchers, Design Vouchers etc) and then to approach clients, rather than waiting for clients with funding seeking out design practices. Design practices need to become strategic leaders.

- Clients need to better understand the benefits that design has on their businesses. Clients must trust their designers as they would any other consultancy service.

- There is a low level of IP registration and design practices need to generate their own IP.

- Design practices need to understand VC funding in order to pursue certain clients (IP generation by practices).

- Design practices need to promote their role as consultants not just as practitioners.

What is the Value Proposition of Design? What distinct parts within the ecosystem need to be strengthened?

- Where is the best place for Design Practices to seek investment?

- What is the ROI of design (Design Effectiveness vs Profitability)?

- There are issues with how the state (as the biggest client) procures design services (Free Pitching).

- Design needs to better communicate the part it plays in achieving the Millennium Goals - People/Planet/Prosperity – this will better communicate the Value Proposition for design value to young people.

- There need to be better public visibility of 'great' design.

- Currently the model of design business is fee based and alternatives may need to be looked into (Royalty, Profit Share, Long-term client payment).

- The establishment and promotion of Co-working environments may allow multidisciplinary collaboration between practices and with other sectors.

- Design needs to be embedded within new product development.

- What is the legacy of ID2015?

Workshop Participants, Presenters, Facilitators and Rapporteurs

Name	Affiliation	Role
Adrian O'Donoghue	Northern and Western Regional Assembly	Participant
Alex Milton	Design and Crafts Council of Ireland	Participant
Andrew Bradley	IDI (Institute Designers Ireland)	Participant
Andrew Power	IADT	Participant
Brian Franzoni	Rockbrook Engineering	Participant
Brian McGee	Design and Crafts Council of Ireland	Participant
Conor Minogue	Ibec	Participant
David Craig	Scriba	Participant
David Smith	IADT	Participant
David Tormey	IT Sligo	Participant
Declan Hughes	Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation: Assistant Secretary- **Designated Public Official**	Participant
Eddie Shanahan	Fashion Council of Ireland	Participant
Elaine Collins	Dell	Participant
Fiachra Sweeney	Nypro	Participant
Fiona Fitzgerald	Keelings	Participant
Frank Devitt	NUIM	Participant
Ger Craddock	Centre of Excellence in Universal Design	Participant
Hugh Campbell	UCD	Participant
James Greenslade	Limerick School of Art and Design	Participant
James Hubbard	Centre of Excellence in Universal Design	Participant
Jim Duggan	VFX Association of Ireland	Participant
John O'Connor	DIT	Participant
Julie Spillane	Accenture	Participant
Karen Hennessy	Design and Craft Council of Ireland / ID2015	Participant
Karen Hynes	DJEI	Participant
Lorraine Egan	IDI (Institute Designers Ireland)	Participant
Marc O'Rian	IDI (Institute Designers Ireland)	Participant
Michael Lohan	IDA	Participant
Nicholas Cloake	Design Business Ireland	Participant

Paul Sheridan	Engineers Ireland	Participant
Sean McNulty	Moo Call	Participant
Stephen Hughes	Enterprise Ireland	Participant
Susan Brindley	Design and Craft Council of Ireland	Participant
Con Kennedy	ID 2015 Researcher	Presenter Breakout Session Rapporteur
Dylan Henderson	CM International	Presenter Breakout Session Rapporteur
Barry Sheehan	DIT	Breakout Session Facilitator
Meirion Thomas	CM International	Breakout Session Facilitator
Elizabeth Harvey	DJEI	Event Support