

BLAST OFF AT SURREY RESEARCH PARK

USING STRATEGIC PR TO GENERATE LEADS

The Surrey Research Park is a leading UK Science Park located in Guildford, south of London. Managed and run by the University of Surrey and directed by Dr Malcolm Parry, the objective of the Park is to commercialise innovation, support start-up enterprises from the University's own academics and students, and to attract local national and international business.

A place where STEM takes off

The Park provides much more than space and office facilities to its tenants. It offers a range of services to help its entrepreneurial STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) businesses to establish and grow their operations. These integrated services include expert guidance and strategic public relations which Dr Parry believes are essential ingredients for success at the science park.

The Surrey Research Park is well-known for specialising in numerous technologies, one of the most notable being video gaming. Iconic titles such as Fable, Theme Park, Dungeon Keeper, Burnout and Need for Speed have been developed by businesses located on the Park or in the nearby town of Guildford which is known as the "Hollywood of the UK's video game industry".

With some of the best STEM creative talent being attracted to Guildford, creative industry entrepreneurs Neil Johnston and Ben Ward spotted a gap in the market. From their own experience, they knew that independent, freelance developers could work much more effectively and efficiently in an open-office environment. Instead of commuting into London to rent desks in expensive shared offices, or work from home or in coffee shops, they envisaged a place where fellow developers could gather together, swap ideas, share knowledge and collaborate in a co-working space. This was the thinking behind Rocketdesk, a business launched in early 2016 that offers affordable co-working space for game developers and other creative technology professionals, located within modern facilities in the centre of the Surrey Research Park.



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Creating awareness

As a new start-up, it was imperative for Rocketdesk to quickly win new customers to help establish the business. Ben and Neil needed to create awareness of its services within its target market of local independent, established, creative developers. Rocketdesk's initial marketing plan was to utilise the founder's existing web skills to bootstrap a strong digital presence to attract potential customers, and to create awareness among their existing contacts in the creative and gaming industries. Ben and Neil set up a website and began promoting community based events on social media and by email. This provided them with new customers enabling them to confirm the feasibility of the business.

However, this approach was not as effective as they would have liked. Neil and Ben needed to generate leads from outside of their network. They tried different tactics, such as approaching people working on laptops in local coffee shops to drum up interest, which wasn't a cost-effective use of their time.

Dr Parry, Managing Director of the Surrey Research Park was keen to support the development of Rocketdesk and tasked his PR agency, brookscmm, to provide strategic PR services to help Rocketdesk meet its objectives.

Having met the team at Rocketdesk and learnt about its services, target market and goals, brookscmm discussed options with Dr Parry and the Rocketdesk team and determined a plan of action.

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IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PR

brookscmm targeted a key local publication, The Surrey Advertiser, the leading weekly printed and online newspaper for Surrey, that whose readership included Rocketdesk's target audience. The team at brookscmm approached key journalists at the publication with news about Rocketdesk's new venture at the Surrey Research Park. A media tour of the facility was arranged and visiting journalists agreed that the Rocketdesk story was relevant and would be of interest to their readership.

The Rocketdesk article was published in the business news section of the Surrey Advertiser which has a print circulation of 80,000. It was also posted in the online version, Get Surrey, which receives 800,000 web visitors a month.

Quadrupling sales enquiries

As soon as the article was published Rocketdesk experienced a significant increase of traffic to its website. In addition, the number of enquiries quadrupled which contributed to a significant increase in new customers.

This surge of new business meant that Rocketdesk could expand the number of desks and the business soon had to upgrade to bigger premises on the Surrey Research Park. Rocketdesk now provides up to 50 desks for its customers.

Neil and Ben were delighted with the results of the media coverage.



“ *The online coverage in Get Surrey was superb and it created a real buzz for us. We jumped from 14 to 40 customers in no time.* ”

“ *We wouldn't have been able to expand without the business it generated.* ”

Ben Ward, Co-Founder, Rocketdesk

Next steps....

With the full support of Dr Parry and the Research Park, the brookscmm team are working with Rocketdesk to gain further exposure of the business in other Surrey focused publications and in national printed and digital media.



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