



University of Hertfordshire

Carving out a creative career

The creative industries are among Britain's most successful exports, generating some of the most exciting jobs and opportunities of the new century, so isn't it time we took them more seriously? **PAUL REDMOND** investigates the situation

Revolution: a fundamental change in the way of thinking about or visualising something; a change of paradigm. After the first Industrial Revolution the word "industry" became synonymous with huge workforces and heavy, iron and steel products – ships, engines, bridges, railways, skyscrapers. Things that were meant to last forever. Things

The era of the creative industry has dawned

you could drop on your foot.

Then along comes the second Industrial Revolution. Driven by technology and fired by radical

business practices, a new type of "industry" has emerged – an industry based not on iron and steel but on creativity and ideas, feelings and emotions, brands not products. At the forefront of this are "thin air" industries such as TV and video, advertising and PR, software and games consultancy, performing arts, fashion design, graphics, animation, digital photography and film making. The era of the creative industry has dawned.

Creating an image

What are they? Historically, one of the problems facing the creative industries has been what to call them. The term "creative industry" isn't all that good at demonstrating the sheer

diversity of the sector. It also has a tendency to suggest different things to different people. For an official definition, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) claim that "creative industries" are those which operate in the following fields:

- Content creation, i.e. anything to do with publishing, music, advertising, film, TV, radio, interactive leisure software
- Anything to do with design
- Heritage, museums and tourism
- The performing arts

These are still very broad categories. Nor are they definitive. Included on this list could also be specialist fields such as antiques, architecture, and different branches

Table 1: Contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy (Source: DCMS, 2005)

Creative Industry sector	Gross Value Added (£ million)	
	1997	2003
Advertising	3,400	5,000
Architecture	3,100	4,000
Video, film & photography	1,900	2,200
Music and performing arts	2,700	3,700
Publishing	6,500	8,600
Software & computer games	9,800	20,700
Radio & TV	3,500	6,200
Art & antiques	300	500
Designer fashion	280	330
Design	n/a	5,300
TOTAL	£31,480 million	£56,500 million

Table 2: Out with the old, in with the new – how companies using creative design techniques have successfully revolutionised established markets

Old Market brands	New 'creative' brands
Vacuum cleaners	Dyson
Personal computers	Apple
Coffee bars	Starbucks/ Coffee Republic
Cosmetics	Body Shop
Air travel	Easy Jet

of computer software work – particularly those involved in computer applications.

Incredible jobs

Recognising the link between computers and creative industries is vital for understanding why they have grown so rapidly in recent years. If Isambard Brunel was an icon of the first Industrial Revolution, creative industry leaders like Steve Jobs – founder of Apple Computers – are rapidly becoming icons of the second. Steve Jobs' CV is legendary. Aged 15, his parents bought him a home computer which he took to his bedroom and dismantled. Then he put it together again. It worked – better than it did before.

Five years on, from his parents' garage, Jobs launched his own computer, which he named the "Apple Macintosh". The design was – still is – a classic. Using his imaginative flair, Jobs built the "Mac" to look and feel creative, ie different from its "grey-box" competitors. The strategy worked. In just ten years Apple was worth \$1bn with a 4,000 strong workforce.

Then life at the Apple core turned rotten. In a move that would stun the business world, Apple fired its creator. For the first time in his life, Jobs was out of a job. He was 30 years old.

But it was his next move that would guarantee Jobs his place in the Careers Hall of Fame. Cashing in on his talents for design and niche spotting, Jobs set up a new creative firm, teaming up with George Lucas to create "Pixar Animation". Out of

Table 3: Numbers employed in the creative industries, by sector, 1995 – 2004 (Source: DCMS, 2005)

Creative Industry sector	Levels of creative employment (UK)	
	1995	2004
Advertising	189,100	200,000
Architecture	97,300	102,600
Crafts	115,300	112,900
Design & fashion	79,500	110,400
Film, video & photography	53,100	53,900
Music & the visual & performing arts	227,900	243,900
Publishing	327,200	274,300
Software & computer games	285,900	593,900
Television & radio	96,500	110,600
Art & antiques	19,800	22,500
TOTAL	1,491,600	1,825,000

this union sprang box-office hits such as "The Incredibles", "Toy Story", and "Monsters Inc". Another billion dollars later Apple gave him his job back. He then gave them the iPod.

The rise of the creative sector

Steve Jobs' career ups and downs offer a useful metaphor for the creative industries. Industries like fashion design, textiles and art dealerships have been around for years, but until recently their profile has been limited, restricted to a select few customers. But then everything changed.

TV and Information technology have, between them, been to the creative industries what coal was to Stephenson's rocket. IT has transformed the creative industries, meaning that anyone with a computer and a modem can be a

major player in the field. Take for example, the curious incident of Jon Snow's ties.

Jon Snow's ties

Jon Snow is a serious journalist, appearing every night to read the news on Channel 4. But what first caught the public's eye were his neck ties. Bright, florid and breath-taking, Jon Snow's ties were rapidly becoming the stars of the show. Channel 4 was inundated with queries about where Mr Snow purchased his ties. Eventually, the producers of Channel 4 news had no choice but to address the issue on their website. Prospective customers were directed to Victoria Richards, a textile designer, operating from a small studio in London. She is now doing a roaring trade in Jon Snow ties via the internet. The point of the story is this.



Through the powerful combination of TV and the internet, a creative product such as a designer tie can now be sourced, bought and dispatched from a small creative firm to customers anywhere in the world. And all because a news anchor man chose to wear the product in the studio.

Creative industries growth

Victoria Richards is not a one-off. Almost without exception, the growth of the creative industries over the past decade has been prolific. Between 1997 and 2003, the creative industry sector grew by an average of six per cent compared to an average of three per cent for the economy as a whole. Exports from creative firms contributed £11.6bn to the UK's balance of trade. At the same time, total employment in the sector grew from 1.5m in 1997 to 1.8m in 2004 – three times the average growth rate for the economy as a whole. The implications of this are dramatic. More people are now employed making films in the UK, than cars, while the total number of creative firms now exceeds 113,000.

Computer games, of all the creative industries, are the most profitable. Table 1 records the contribution to the national economy made by each of the creative industries.

But don't be misled. Despite these

categories, the boundaries between creative industries are often blurred. In recent years, advances in technology have meant that many creative firms have been able to multi-task, providing clients with a suite of services and one-stop expertise.

I think, therefore i-Am

If creative industries have anything in common it is the ability to focus on you – your dreams, your interests, your life. And they do it brilliantly. Take the MP3 Player. The design and marketing of the MP3 could easily lead you to believe that owning one is the ultimate statement of individual identity (even though everyone, up to the President of the United States, now has one). This is intentional, for as Benson et al (2005) argue, the rise of creative industries signifies a shift from conformity and consensus, to a focus on individuality ... to personal dreams and desires. It is this ability to tailor a product to consumers' specific personal goals and dreams before they even know them themselves, that more than anything explains the massive success, and almost unlimited potential of the creative industries.

Where are the jobs?

Evidence of the buoyancy of the sector can be seen in the number of

jobs created by creative firms between 1995 and 2004. During this period, total employment in the creative industries grew from 1,491,600 to 1,825,000 – a growth of around 22 per cent (Table 3).

A job seeker's guide

Earlier this year, Steve Jobs was asked to speak at Stanford University's graduation ceremony. The advice that he gave the students sums up how many people in the creative industries approach their work:

"Your time is limited; so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your inner voice, heart and intuition. Stay hungry. Stay foolish."

These are powerful words for anyone preparing to enter the creative industries – a sector with its own rules and regulations. Lots of setbacks, including being humiliated on a worldwide stage. He still bounced back. Bounce-back ability is an essential quality in creative industries. Contacts with new people is as important as having the right skills and qualifications.

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