

The Gaming Industry in the North East of England



The Development Agency
for the North East of England

Did you know

- The North East of England is home to one of the largest clusters of games companies in the UK.
- Almost 600 software and new digital media companies, some of which are leaders in their field such as Sage and Domainnames.com, are based in the region.
- The University of Sunderland houses the largest ICT training facility in the UK and supplies more computer graduates to Microsoft UK than any other UK university.
- Newcastle City Council has been identified as one of only three Pathfinder Councils nationally to lead the way in developing the UK's e-Government policy.
- Teesside University, considered to be the best UK University for computer games courses, is investing £8 million in the development of DigitalCity, which will be home to software design, computer suite and incubator facilities and will incorporate Digital Studios, Virtual Reality Hemispherium and Digital Business Park.

The Business Case to Locate in the North East of England

The North East of England is quickly becoming a national leader in the area of software and digital media. Sage, based in the region and expanding their operations, is the only software company remaining in the FTSE 100. Software service companies such as EDS and Strategic Systems Solutions are also well represented. However, it is the Region's reputation for digital media and games production that puts the North East on the map. The region is strategically building its capability to become the national leader in digital media and games. The key assets lie in its universities, commercial cluster and investment organisations such as Codeworks.

Codeworks: A unique investment partnership offer from the North East of England

Over the Next 5 years, the North East will invest over £200m in the development of its knowledge economy industries. One of the 5 areas this investment will be focussed on is in developing the Centre of Excellence in Digital Technology and Media through Codeworks. Codeworks, is tasked with developing the region's digital cluster by working with major corporate and academic partners to strengthen the local games cluster through direct financial investment in promising businesses, establishing new regional capabilities and assisting in the recruitment and developing of talent. Codeworks is keen to work with major games publishers and developers to find ways to utilise its substantial funding streams to further solidify the Region's capability and reputation in games development. As by way of example, should a company be keen to minimise the financial risks involved in setting up a development centre, Codeworks may be in a position to invest in the operation, thus reducing exposure.



Key Strengths

Companies locating in the Region benefit from the dynamic, forward-looking business base available:

- Pro-business attitudes
- Low operating costs
- A flexible, skilled and intelligent workforce
- Strong, academic support with an intelligence network of 5 universities
- Excellent telecommunications infrastructure
- Competitive financial incentives
- A range of high-tech offices in campus style locations

Labour Force in the North East of England

With competitive labour costs and a strong work ethic, the North East has a readily available pool of skilled labour for employers to tap into. This is coupled with a highly developed network of business support services, educational links and dedicated training courses for the IT, games and multimedia industries, means the North East offers a complete package to support a company setting up in the Region.



Salary Costs

Job Description	£ per year
Software Support Manager	32,329
Senior Systems Programmer	28,068
Designers	21,481
Administration	14,983
Senior Software Engineer	28,710
Graduate	18,790

Education - Focus on Animation, Games Design, Software Development

With five top class universities specialising in a diverse range of commercially relevant degree subjects, and an annual graduate output of over 14,000, the Region has a strong intelligence infrastructure. This is supported by a network of 24 further education colleges offering more vocational courses such as HNDs and HNCs, and courses developed in conjunction with the Region's major employers, which have been recognised for their excellence. A particular focus for the Region's universities is in animation, games design and software development, with Teesside and Sunderland Universities in particular providing highly rated, business-driven courses.

Source: REward Salary Survey, May 2003

Regional Specialisms

The North East's digital community of industrial, academic, and public sector talent is an essential driver of 21st century economic and social progress, and a major potential source of economic development for the region.

Specialisms in the region include:

- EScience
- Informatics & EBusiness
- Digital Technology and Media
- Software Evolution
- Virtual Reality

Specialists in programming, design and testing of computer games

The computer games industry is increasingly organised into a core of publishers, with global distribution networks, and development studios which undertake the programming, design, and testing of computer games. The North East region's strengths are primarily on the development side of the industry with a number of significant studios who are working with internationally renowned companies from US, Asia and Europe. Some companies are listed below:

Company	Activity
Reflections	Expertise in collision dynamics, car physics, multi-vehicle scenarios, photorealistic graphics. Games include Driver, Driver 2, Stuntman
Eutechnyx	007 Racing for Sony Playstation, F1 Grand Prix, Le Mans 24 hours
Atomic Planet	Video games software for Sony PS2, Microsoft X-Box, Nintendo Gamecube, PC & Advance
Mere Mortals	Specialise in conversion, translation, game-busting. Developers for Sony & Nintendo and own development kits for PS1&2, Game Boy Advance
Rage PLC	Develops and publishes games on PS2, Microsoft Xbox, Nintendo GameCube, Game Boy Advance, PC CD platforms
Pitbull Syndicate	3rd party computer game developer. Developer for Sony PS2, Microsoft, Xbox, Sony PS, PC and Sega Dreamcast.

Success of the sector

Games development companies based in the North East of England clearly benefit from the regional linkages with the 5 universities. These are a key source of talent, and the universities have targeted computer games and 3D graphic design and programming to support the training and development needs of the industrial base.

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