



SME KNOWLEDGE NETWORK
new ideas • business growth

Building the SME Knowledge Network

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my SME KN bits

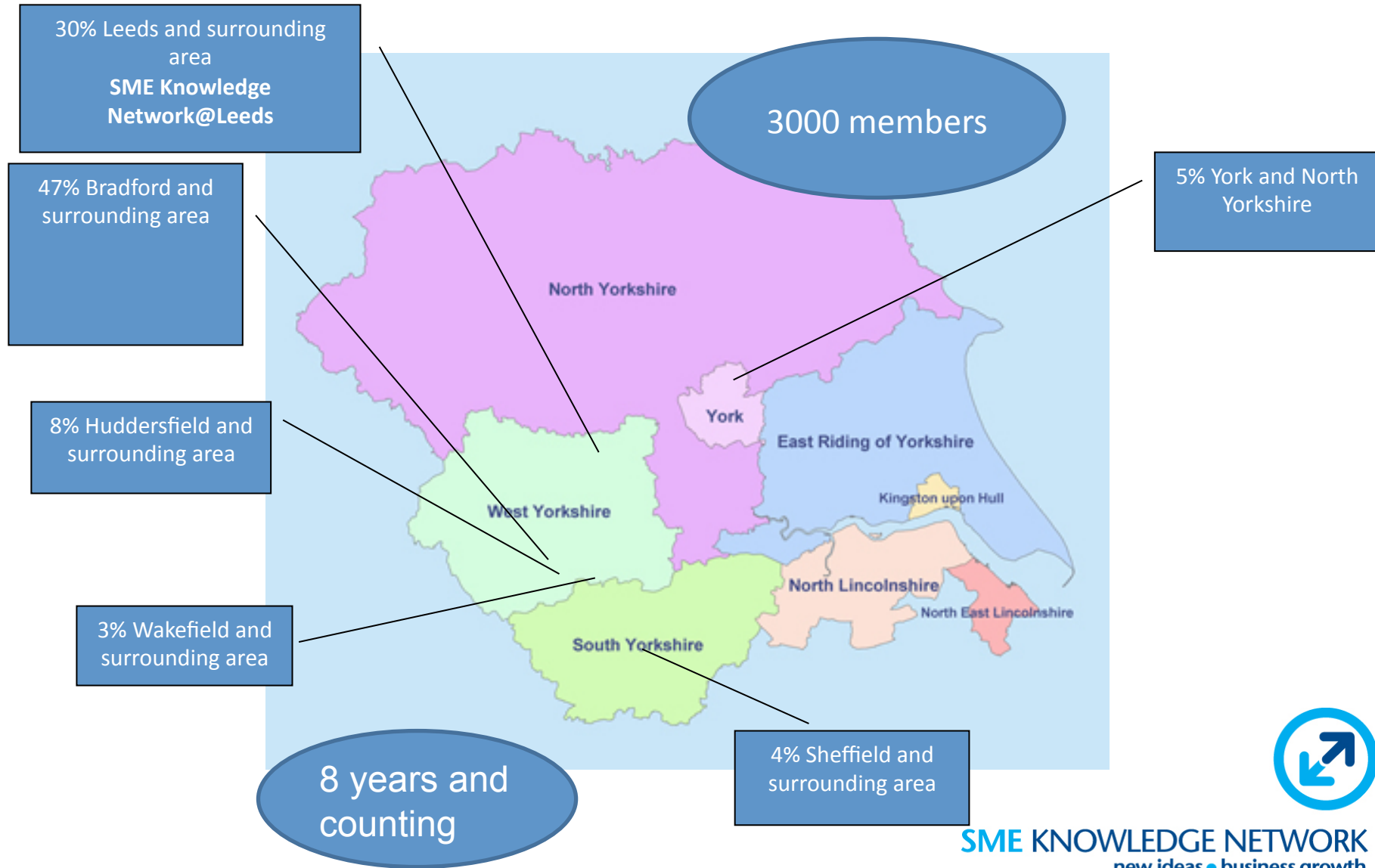
- What it is and what it does
- Who it is and where they are
- A bit about how
- A last but not least look at the future
- Just in case (and another thing)

services

- **Master-classes supported by Networking**- Practitioners and academics speaking on given topics structuring lively debate and questions- followed by networking around the issue
- **Director Support Network** - An Action Learning programme
- **Workshops** using a variety of styles and formats
- Strategy/Venture **Clinics** for advice and recommendations.
- **Innovation Network** - bringing large and small businesses together to unpack and apply innovation in different contexts.
- **Micro Business Network** – modular programme
- **Advice:** Coaching and Mentoring, Consultancy or facilitation from academics or practitioners in the Network
- Supported **Research** and/or Student **placement** or projects services, this might usually be MBA or student projects, having part time working from students or blending in with other University products such as ‘Summer Experience.’



network reach



members

- Small medium and micro business right through to large medium sized business with an international presence
- Start ups (not a start up programme however) established businesses, family, lifestyle and also social enterprise
- Mix of sectors
- People with an interest in SMEs such as other providers of services to this market place
- Even large businesses and public sector (though in most cases...)

- Core academic staff
- Associate staff
- Students



entry

- Referral from intermediaries
- Referral from partners
- Referral from network companies

- Basic marketing, electronic and through partner postings

- *In the last year the throughput has included around 2000 points of contact with 600 businesses and many thousands of hours of learning and development activity*

funding

- Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
 - Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF)
 - Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF)
- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI)
- Yorkshire Forward contracts (RDA)

- Last three years £1.5 million



first principles

- **Engage with the context, the identity and the interests of the client** – The first contact should engage with the interests of the managers not engage in abstract discussion or research promises.
 - Try to understand the firms context and the environment in which they operate
 - Pay attention to individuals and who and what they are – ‘when you meet someone new do you discuss the degree to which you are in partnership or do you just continue the conversation’
 - Respond in the right or at least reasonable timeframes
 - Look to build a solution to meet business’ reactive problems and which will also ensure they are **‘bitten by the bug’**

first principles

- **Trust: Deliver on familiarity, integrity; consistency and competence** these are the major factors in determining the success of interactions and collaborations and the belief in potential solutions.
 - Change is evident all around and after years and years of upheaval in the national business support infrastructure.
 - Trust is a starting block for opening up and confidence building
 - Trust makes knowledge ideas and thoughts less 'sticky' and more likely to be shared and developed
 - It is important for referral marketing
 - Trust has to be out there in the region – need to engender this
- **Recognise the long game**
 - Understand that referral capacity takes time to build
 - Develop business capability to accept and play with and implement ideas
 - It takes time to enhance belief, confidence and awareness

first principles

- **Understand your connectivity**
 - Give relationships time to build and gather trust, to get to know each other
 - Make sure the right people are speaking to each other brokers relationships
 - Spend time on brokering connections
 - Are you connected to people who bring you information
 - Use the stars and existing local networks, key figures and successes
 - ***Be a better network member*** and that means you are not always working in your favour (directly)
- **Create and diffuse a common language** and understanding of practice and methods so that people in different places in the network can communicate and share ideas, have reference points.
 - This is important to spread and develop networks and practice across regional differences and strengths
 - It is important to attract the attention of fund holders

just to note

- KT units need to be more focused on facilitating social practice
- Clearly, KT capacity can be safely bought in...
- Dependent on leaders – driven practice forward – entrepreneurial/intrapreneurs

future thinking

- Create greater links with other University services such as Centres for Industrial Collaboration and technology transfer as part of learning and development pathways
- A new focus on network mapping
- Follow on commercial models put in place for long term users
- Commercial partnerships put in place
- Greater breadth of services offered through other Universities
- Use external organisation's advisory capacity to help embed Learning and Development pathways.
- Big ideas – position University SME Knowledge Networks as the Knowledge Delivery point for Small Business

just in case (theory as tools)

- Absorptive capacity
- Cognitive social capital
- Dimensions of trust
- Boundary roles and objects
- Community of practice
- Systems of innovation
- Complex social action and chaos

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case studies

Scientific and Technology Services

SATS sat on the shelf for a while after being set up in 2005 while its founders worked out to access resources and what they were going to do with the business. In order to help kick-start the business the following services have been provided:

- 2 day open courses in:
 - Strategy
 - marketing
- Facilitation of strategy development with Professor of Strategy
- Provision experiential learning through Action Learning sets
- Identification of potential project partners
- Master -Classes and networking events in Competitive Analysis, Market Research, Project Management
- Provision of Market Research
- Provision of training and development in interpersonal skills

Envirocare

- Member for 6 years
- Programmes
 - DSN x2
 - Consultancy in exit strategy
 - Marketing Support Network, Negotiation
 - Regular at evening master-classes
- Building an Innovation strategy through consultancy
- Mentors students at the University

case studies

BTL Limited

BTL had been a successful educational software business but markets began to change due to changes in policy and technology. This meant that BTL had to change from being a company based on a narrow public sector customer base to a commercial entity focused on a wider range of customers and products. In order to help BTL the following services were provided.

- MBA module in strategic management for MD
- Key senior staff were placed on 2 day open courses were provided in:
 - marketing,
 - profitable negotiation
 - leadership and team building.
- A bespoke basic marketing course was designed and taught on company premises to sheep-dip all staff in the marketing concept.
- A professor of Marketing was used to facilitate a top team session in developing marketing strategy.

Calibre UK Limited

Calibre are a successful technology based business in a range of sensitive markets. They have been looking to develop new ventures in overseas markets and management the development of these opportunities. The managing Director was the focus of this intervention and was provided with:

- Key overseas contacts and market advice
- Master-Classes and Networking events in Project Management
- Evening classes in Project Management
- Strategic partner introductions
- Sales skills training, basic to advanced