

Chapter 20

TechCreate

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ABSTRACT

TechCreate is a relatively small makerspace, much like an open classroom, located in a mixed-use industrial park. It was founded as a for-profit space, with the intention to create a community of makers for the outer Dublin area. Because adult memberships have been slow to grow, the space has pivoted towards small-scale manufacturing services and, at the same time, provides educational services to youth in the community. While learning communities for adults are largely non-existent, the space works diligently to provide opportunities for youth to work in teams and in near-peer combinations to foster a sense of community. Most youth participants in the space start the experience with TechCreate by taking a six-week basic coding class and from there may choose to specialize in making by joining a making club for youth or may choose to take an intermediate level coding course and then join a coding club. This chapter explores TechCreate.

It's a mash-up between education and outsourced manufacturing really, that's where we're at the moment: two main bits. We're trying to keep it fairly open minded. If somebody comes along with an idea and it fits in and we see, then we'll think about it or whatever; we'll see what we can do. — Matt Eve

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Originally founded as a traditional makerspace with the intent of a membership model, TechCreate discovered that their location in Clane, just on the outer edges of the commuter belt for Dublin, Ireland, would not support such a model. To understand TechCreate and the subsequent business model that emerged; it's important to understand where it is located and how that location dictated the model. Clane is a community of around 6,000 people surrounded by other commuter towns like Maynooth and Naas, both a 20-minute drive from Clane, with populations ranging from 20,000 to 25,000 according to Matt Eve, the owner of TechCreate. Eve noted that all these towns are popular for people living and working

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in Dublin and are referred to as part of the commuter belt, which is about a 45-minute drive for most people working in Dublin. Many those living in the area are families, others are residents not attracted to city living, while others have simply been priced out of the Dublin area. Purchasing a house in Dublin is expensive and for working families, living in the commuter belts is an affordable alternative. The M50 around Dublin is an orbital (beltway) around Dublin where many industrial parks have sprouted up again because land prices are much less the further away from the city center. TechCreate is located on the second floor, in the Clane Business Park among a number of similar looking buildings as shown in Figure 1. The space is about 400 ft² (37 m²) and is open, with tables, a laser cutter and a 3D printer.

Figure 1. TechCreate
Photo Credit: TeachCreate



TechCreate was started by Matt Eve in January of 2016. Along with Eve, Colm Ward is a co-owner and the lead instructor at TechCreate. For Eve, locating in Clane was a balance between space and affordable price yet still near enough to civilization to make it appealing for members to join. The original vision of the space was to have a drop-in membership model that also catered to youth making. In addition, Eve started the space because he saw a lack of opportunity for children to experience learning in the areas of information technology and computer science. Eve, originally from the United Kingdom, shared his reasons for starting the space:

The original vision was mixed ideas on the kids' end of things. I had three kids and they were all in primary school at the time. I would always get disappointed about the fact they didn't do very much in terms of technology and coding and just general digital world stuff that I can see was coming everywhere. I was disillusioned that they were not up with the times. I did A level computers. I grew up in the UK, so I was able to do that 20 years ago. You still can't do computer science here. Every so often they talk about it and it's like, it's a great idea. And you're going why have they not done this already when there's so many ... there's huge growth in the IT sector. If you go into Dublin, you know yourself there's Facebook, there's Google, all these big companies are there. I think the disconnect between what our education system is turning out.

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