Doctoral Entrepreneurship Conference

The project brief

This Doctoral Entrepreneurship Conference brought together three categories of enterprising doctoral/post-doctoral researchers to share their experiences, knowledge and to equip students with the right tools to develop or manage their own enterprises. It informed doctoral researchers on how and where to access help to either manage their enterprise or use their innovative ideas to start up their enterprise.

The conference featured a series of presentations delivered by enterprising doctoral researchers and post-doctoral entrepreneurs that have successfully managed a PhD and an enterprise.

Key impacts

The volume of PhD candidates that showed genuine interest in and enthusiasm for entrepreneurship was very motivating and empowering. Also, learning about how easily ideas can be generated was an important element of the conference and the speakers were a source of inspiration.

Outcomes observed

The main outcome was the effect on participants who identified other career paths and opportunities. The aim of the conference was to increase awareness of enterprising behaviours and entrepreneurial possibilities, which was achieved.

The topics covered were thought provoking and challenges the purpose of PhD studies.

The legacy

The plan is to make the event biennial and the conference organisers are exploring other funding opportunities to host another in depth event.

The conference has a dedicated web page, capturing the spirit of the day: http://deconference.group.shef.ac.uk/home-page/why-entrepreneurship-conference/

El-Addo is a social enterprise that was set up as a result of the event. The Sheffield project supports refugees, asylum seekers and people out of work to develop sewing and designing skills. El Addo now trade with local department stores like Atkinsons of Sheffield.

https://www.facebook.com/ElAddoLimited
Enterprise & Innovation

This conference managed to attract 60 delegates, speakers and panel members, from 14 different institutions and the conference exercises in themselves inspired innovation.

To finish the conference day off, the students had the opportunity to participate in a group exercise. They were divided into eight groups and each was given an everyday object to start with. First they had to think of the advantages of the product and what the potential market for that product was. Then they were asked to think of any disadvantages. Bringing this knowledge together, they were then asked to come up with innovative ideas of how they could improve the particular project, and present this in front of the whole audience. The objects they had to work with included things like a slinky, a bottle opener, pencil sharpener or dry shampoo!

Quotes and personal experience

“Overall, I found the event very worthwhile and more opportunities to meet other PhD students and share ideas and concerns would be welcome.”

“The competition was very interesting and shows how ideas can be born in a very short time.”

“Important venture that needs to be upscaled across universities, in Europe and even Africa.”

“It was fascinating to see all the creative ideas the students came up with for their products and how they fearlessly presented their ideas. All in all it was a very inspiring and educational day.”

From the evaluation form:
“I found this conference interesting” - 94.8% in the affirmative
“I will attend / recommend someone else for next year’s conference” - 89.4% in the affirmative

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