# Extending the sphere of digital influence and collaboration

**Influence, lead, transform – the rallying call of Sphere Network, a digital network launched in Newcastle in 2017 which seeks to accelerate collaboration and the adoption of technologies within organisations.**

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By connecting cross-sector experts and bringing them together to explore how existing and emerging technologies can address social and industrial challenges, they hope to unlock untapped potential in the region and help the North East become a centre for excellence across a variety of burgeoning innovative markets.

But do initiatives like this not already exist? Apparently not according to Sphere's founders, a group of seven leaders from across industry and academia, who established the network to spark action rather than words. Much like the science fiction writer, Ray Bradbury, who believed thinking was wasteful – instead "You simply must do things" – Sphere wants its problem-solving groups to replace endless postulating with action orientated discussions about the application of evolving technologies and how to adopt them.

Emerging technologies have applications across all sectors but Sphere argues there is little cross-sector collaboration. It wants those who attend its monthly forums – be they workshops, presentations or roundtable discussions – to 'expand their sphere of influence' by mixing with like-minded professionals including influential people from universities, public sector organisations, charities and businesses to

debate and digest a host of 'hot' topics and share knowledge, experiences and best practices.

The pace of technological advancement increasingly relies on organic change, and therefore innovations achieved in isolation will only leave organisations behind. With all sectors facing similar challenges, there is an urgent need, Sphere highlights, for collaboration and the sharing of innovative solutions. Starting with Blockchain, Sphere Network events are tackling Advanced Analytics & AI, the Ageing Society, the Internet of Things, and Industry 4.0, successfully joining dots between experts and organisations, and influencing and accelerating adoption of relevant technology where it's needed most.

Sphere co-Founder, Steve Blanks, says the network is powerful because it is inclusive, a-political, not for profit and run by volunteers. Any income generated is reinvested back into the network and the operation is truly regional because it covers the whole of the North East, from Teesside to Berwick, Haltwhistle to Whitley Bay. Steve explains: "The principle of remaining neutral enables the unlocking of amazing research pockets within university networks, and the forming of eclectic connections that would not happen through KTP processes, Growth Hubs and other forums."
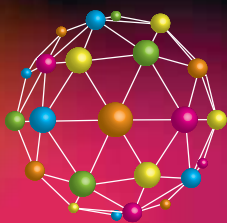
# SPHERE
## NETWORK
Digital Influence, Leadership & Transformation

Following Sphere Network's inaugural event in September, focusing on the implication of Blockchain technology, attendees immediately began sharing research and development activities and building new relationships. For example, Sphere co-founder Kate Baucherel, a digital strategist and emerging technology consultant, has been working closely with attendees including Accenture to develop Blockchain collaboration opportunities across multiple industry sectors.

Steve commented: "It's all about fostering collaboration through generosity to aid wider business growth in our region; making connections, raising awareness, improving understanding and accelerating digital transformation."

Those interested in getting involved in Sphere Network should visit spherenetwork.co.uk and register their interest. Sphere's 'Digital Heatmap,' featuring past and future themes is being added to all the time. The founders encourage those who sign up to scrutinise the details and offer suggestions of any topic they'd like to see discussed, debated and pulled apart during a forthcoming event, in order to identify societal and organisational problems than can be solved by intelligent application of technology.

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