

HEAD OF DIGITAL SHOESTRING UNIT

Full-time, 37.5 hours per week

Shoestring Unit, IfM Engage

The Shoestring Unit aims to help small businesses across the world become more productive, resilient and sustainable – one step at a time – by understanding and embracing digital technologies. Based on research from the world leading Institute for Manufacturing, University of Cambridge, the Shoestring Unit's role is to oversee the transition of the results of the EPSRC-funded Digital Manufacturing on a Shoestring research project into a viable, self-sustaining industrial programme that supports SMEs.

In the past 2.5 years the unit has taken the original research project outputs and:

- Developed simple, reusable low-cost solution offerings based on the needs of SMEs.
- Deployed solutions (now over 100 deployments since 2018) in SME manufacturers, which provide both operational impact and digital capability improvements, in a simple, low cost manner.
- Developed working models for regional deployment programmes of Shoestring solutions and has run collaborative regional pilots in Scotland, Northern Ireland, East of England, Cornwall, Western Australia and Egypt.
- Piloted training, skills and educational support for low-cost digital solutions in conjunction with FE colleges and training developers.
- Provided leadership in the area of practical and low-cost digitalisation policy and programmes, working with local and national government bodies such as Innovate UK, BEIS, Scottish Enterprise, NMIS and the Western Australian government.

The Unit now needs a Head to set its direction in this new phase, focusing on achieving scaling, creating robust regional delivery models and national impact for SMEs. The Head of the Shoestring Unit role is critical as the national profile of this work is raised and as the Unit seeks to develop a complex set of local and regional programmes. The Shoestring programme has the potential to make a real impact on productivity in small companies, helping local economies, safeguarding jobs and upskilling employees in the UK and across the globe.

The Shoestring Unit is funded by the Gatsby Foundation and other industrial partners. It is incorporated within IfM Engage, a company which is wholly owned by the University of Cambridge. Profits from IfM Engage are gifted to the University of Cambridge to fund future research activities. The Shoestring Unit also works directly with the Distributed Information & Automation Lab (DIAL) within the Institute for Manufacturing. DIAL, led by Professor Duncan McFarlane, undertake ongoing research in this area via a range of funded grants.

Role Summary

The Head of the Unit has the following main responsibilities:

- **Develop and execute a strategy for ensuring the sustainable operations of the Unit beyond 2026**

The Unit is charged with supporting the uptake of low -cost digital solutions within manufacturing and other related SMEs. A strategic plan for ensuring a commercially

viable ongoing success of the Unit is required, potentially encompassing third sector funding, government skills or business funding, international or corporate funding.

Develop a sales and product strategy and plan and ensure appropriately resourced. Develop a strategy for evolving the credibility of the Shoestring programme, establishing measures of impact and communicating these to stakeholders.

- **Deliver the programme of work agreed with the Gatsby Foundation for the period 2024-2026**

This programme of work for the unit is focussed on increasing UK deployments of Shoestring solutions and training, with particular reference to the role the Further Education sector can play in this area. Specific activities include:

Activity 1: Expanding the Development of Local Shoestring Capabilities

Working with FE Colleges and local organisations, the Unit will develop models for local training, solution development and delivery.

Activity 2: Running Local Shoestring Deployment Programmes

Demonstrate the ability for local Shoestring deployments to be supported in areas centred around key technical capabilities (likely FE Colleges). This series of programmes is intended to inform broader national policy.

Activity 3: Creating Tools / Methods / Solutions to support Shoestring Developments

Creating a range of simple low-cost tools to support Shoestring deployments and programmes is therefore critical to the success of the capability development and programmes in Activities 1 and 2.

Activity 4: Achieving A National & International Profile

Providing a direct, simple and accessible pathway for getting small companies started in digitalisation and raising that to a national level will contribute to helping SMEs survive.

- **Develop and deliver additional programmes of work which support the overall aims of Shoestring**

The Shoestring Unit receives additional funds for the delivery of Shoestring programmes both within the UK and overseas. The Head of Unit will oversee and grow a portfolio of innovative programmes in the next three years, with the aim of the unit becoming self-funded and creating a global Shoestring community.

- **Team leadership**

The Head of Unit will lead and manage a small team comprising Leads in Business & Operations, Marketing & Engagement, Technical Developments and Deployment & Training. The Head will provide positive leadership and direction and conduct regular reviews of progress against objectives with each of these key team members.

Establish clear roles and responsibilities within the Unit and build any additional capabilities needed.

- **Company Leadership**

As a leader within IfM Engage, the Head of Unit will join the Company’s leadership team, taking part in weekly meetings and contributing to strategy and operational management of the Company as a whole.

- **Quality and Impact**

The Head of the Unit is responsible of ensuring that the services provided by the Digital Shoestring Unit are of the highest quality, achieve client & sponsor satisfaction, and create positive impact.

- **Financial reporting**

The Head of the Shoestring Unit is responsible for the budget of the Shoestring Unit, and managing income streams to achieve financial sustainability. Responsible for submitting brief annual reports to the Gatsby Foundation, which have been previously approved by the Head of DIAL and CEO of IfM Engage.

Reporting and Support

The Head of Unit will report to the CEO of IfM Engage for all administrative and human resource purposes and will report to Professor McFarlane in terms of delivery of the operations of the Digital Shoestring unit.

	Key duties	Activities	Indicative Time
1.	Strategic Management	Developing a strategy for the overall Unit, and a sales and product strategy.	40%
2.	Programme delivery	Oversee the delivery of Shoestring programmes. Develop models for local training, solution development and delivery. Develop a portfolio of national and international funded programmes.	30%
3.	Management & Operations	Team leadership. Company leadership team activities Financial management.	20%
4.	External engagement	Growing the influence of the Shoestring programme, achieving a national and international profile.	10%

Person specification

Criteria		Essential or Desirable
Qualifications	Honours degree in a relevant subject or equivalent experience.	E
Experience	Leading a team to ensure strategic objective are met.	E
	Significant experience of delivering programmes in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment.	E
	Experience of developing new products and services.	E

	Experience of working internationally	E
	Experience of manufacturing or working with smaller businesses.	E
	Experience of delivering training, skills development, business support or consultancy.	D
Skills	Strong skills in strategic planning and coordinating programmes of activities.	E
	Effective leadership skills.	E
	Ability to communicate effectively to a range of stakeholders, both written and verbally.	E

This is a fixed-term role, with funding available for 3 years initially and is full-time, however, we are open to conversations around flexible working and operate an 'office first' hybrid working policy (60% of working time minimum in the office pro rata). The salary band for this role is £65,000-69,000 per annum, FTE plus a generous benefits package, including healthcare. We encourage applications from all sections of society.

At IfM Engage, we are committed to being transparent about how we collect and use your data and ensure that we meet our data protection obligations. For a more detailed view of the information, we collect and how we process it please check out our Privacy Notice for Job Applicants. <https://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/privacy-policy-ecs-job-applicants/>

To apply for this role, please send a CV and covering letter to Alison Martin at ifm-engage@eng.cam.ac.uk

Applicants for this role must have the right to work in the UK.

The closing date is midnight on 26 May 2024