



Grow your

OWN

You may remember Mo Isap from a lively skills debate on the employer panel at our annual conference in July. We delve a little deeper into his experiences of recruiting highly skilled work-ready graduates in the North West.

I'm a North West businessman who is passionate about delivering prosperity in my region. Two years ago, I set up IN4.0 ACCESS with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and we employ several local people. We've also just launched a disruptive innovation accelerator programme that helps local businesses to adopt industry 4.0 technology.

Having consulted with many of our clients, they all voiced the same concern – they were struggling to find local, highly skilled and work-ready graduates to employ.

It seems that due to a lack of opportunities, many of our local, homegrown students move to other regions in search of well-paid employment once they've graduated. I feel that we should be doing more and creating further opportunities for technology graduates to retain talent in our region. Essentially, we need to grow our own!



Mo Isap,
CEO, IN4.0 Group

Nurturing future leaders

Growing your own talent is easier said than done. As I'm sure ISE members can appreciate, it requires getting the right skilled people from your regional universities, up-skilling them by exposing them to industry and then embedding them in your business going forward.

This requires time and investment, but of course it's worth it. These students are local people, they live in our communities and if we invest in their development and skills, they will help to deliver prosperity for our regions. They are also our future leaders of industry.

Bridging the gap between industry and education

To nurture technology postgraduates in our region we set up IN4.0 TALENT as part of our joint venture with UCLan.

IN4.0 TALENT bridges the gap between industry and education, creating new opportunities for both employers and students and growing a digital workforce that is fit for the future. We take highly skilled technology postgraduates that have the 'know how' and employ them on fixed term contracts as consultants for our clients.

We also established a development programme that nurtures talent within the first year of their employment. Many SMEs don't have an established graduate development programme, which many graduates seek in a prospective employer. Business owners fear the talent leaving within the first six months and therefore losing the investment made in their recruitment. We help recruit and retain

talent. We also have commitment to promote BAME, female and first generation local graduates.

This enables students to develop life, business and commercial skills, and gain new skills that will help them to succeed in the industry

of the future. We place our students with local employers and they get to know each other without any commitment on either side. If at the end of the contract the student and employer agree they'd like to continue

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working together, they can employ them full time. This gives the employer the opportunity to invest into the student's development as a full-time employee, growing their own digital champion.

I hope that sharing my experiences has helped highlight the benefits of investing in local students and developing your own industry champions. As employers, we have the opportunity to develop our regions and make them attractive employment hubs for our local graduates. I for one am championing this approach and would recommend others get involved too.

TAP INTO LOCAL TALENT

- **Contact local universities and enquire about offering work placements:** Work placements are a great way to share your valuable experience with students who are looking for relevant opportunities. Quite often students don't recognise the types of businesses that operate in their region as they haven't been exposed to them. A work placement gives a student and employer the opportunity to get to know each other.
- **Research mentoring schemes in your region and don't be afraid to get involved:** There are many fantastic mentoring schemes that operate across the country and they give employers the opportunity to share their career journey and insights with young people in their local community. For example, I am involved in the 'Give an Hour Campaign' that's operated by the Careers and Enterprise Company. This scheme requires me to give just one hour of my time to make a difference to the future career choice that a young person makes. It's inspiring to know that I could change the life of a young person just by showing them what's possible and by telling them about opportunities in their home region.