

King Bee – Journey Through the Create Growth Programme

Background

King Bee, based at Elstree Studios, is a creative animation studio with a passion for animated storytelling. Founded by a lifelong lover of cartoons, the business evolved from sketching characters to producing animated content and developing original IPs. With a strong focus on innovation and storytelling, King Bee has grown into a studio with a unique voice and a passion for pushing creative boundaries, most notably through its flagship project, Soul Jump.

The Growth Challenge

As King Bee prepared to scale, founder Martyn Niman recognised the importance of complementing creative vision with strategic business development to unlock new opportunities and secure funding. The studio had successfully run two Kickstarter campaigns and piloted Soul Jump at venues like Elstree Studios, the Museum of London, and South Bank Skate Park. Yet, in a competitive landscape where production quality and market positioning are key, reaching the next stage of growth required targeted support, stronger industry connections, and access to finance.

The Create Growth Programme

King Bee’s journey with Hertfordshire Growth Hub began with a chance encounter via the Growth Hub newsletter during the COVID period. The team responded swiftly, offering impartial, fully funded advice at a time when the studio was navigating market uncertainty. In early 2024, King Bee connected with Adam Morley, Creative and Sector Lead at the Hertfordshire Film Office, who had recently moved in next door at Elstree Studios. Their conversation sparked a new phase of growth, leading to an introduction to Headliner, a music and activation studio, and the Create Growth Programme.

King Bee joined the programme in March 2024 and quickly began to benefit from its structured support and sector-specific resources.



“All of the support that we’ve received has really been helpful for us to give us a framework to develop where we’re going with our creativity and channel it in the direction that can lead to funding and further investment, so it’s been really helpful.

The Create Growth Programme through the Hertfordshire Growth Hub has so many different touch points for businesses, from tools, advice, grants, support, and networks; it is highly valuable for your business, and I’d recommend that any Hertfordshire business applies.”

A Four-Strand Package of Growth Support

As part of the Create Growth Programme, led locally by Hertfordshire Futures and nationally by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in partnership with Innovate UK. King Bee accessed a comprehensive package of support delivered through a series of interconnected strands.

Strand 1: Business Growth Assessment

Delivered by Hertfordshire Growth Hub, the Business Growth Assessment provided King Bee with a diagnostic overview of its performance across 12 key areas. This session helped clarify the studio’s current position and future potential, identifying priority areas for development and laying the groundwork for the next phase of growth.

“The Film & TV Supply Chain Innovation course teaches business design principles and how to develop your value proposition at a very high level. I learned how to think innovatively in terms of business development and came out with clarity and competence, knowing exactly what to do next with King Bee, and with Soul Jump”

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Strand 2: Film & TV Supply Chain Innovation Programme

King Bee participated in the intensive 8-week Film & TV Supply Chain Innovation Programme, delivered by Estu and the Royal College of Art in collaboration with Hertfordshire’s leading studios and industry experts. The course offered deep insight into business design principles and value proposition development, helping King Bee refine its commercial strategy and identify scalable opportunities. Martyn also built valuable relationships with fellow cohort businesses.

Strand 3: Investment Readiness

Following the course, King Bee progressed into the Investment Readiness strand, receiving targeted support on business finance and funding strategy. Advisers from both Hertfordshire Growth Hub and Innovate UK Business Growth provided guidance throughout the process. Founder Martyn Niman was supported in preparing funding applications for DCMS Create Growth Competitions 3 and 4, grants designed to help high-growth businesses commercialise their ideas and access the resources, expertise, and private investment needed to scale.

Martyn was successful in both rounds, securing over £80,000 in grant funding to support King Bee’s growth projects.

Strand 4: New Product/Service Accelerator

King Bee engaged with the University of Hertfordshire’s New Product/Service Accelerator to develop an AI-powered animation tool. This innovation was closely aligned with the studio’s animation workshops and marked a significant step forward in its creative and technical capabilities. Through the accelerator,



King Bee accessed valuable resources, facilities, and academic support that helped bring the new product to market.

Building Blocks for Success

With a robust foundation in place, King Bee is now well-positioned for future growth. The studio has sharpened its commercial strategy, strengthened its financial planning, and expanded its network across Hertfordshire’s creative sector. The successful development of an AI-powered animation tool has opened new avenues for innovation, while the funding secured through the Create Growth Programme has enabled King Bee to invest in production quality and scale its flagship project, Soul Jump. The studio is now equipped with the tools, confidence, and clarity to pursue new partnerships, attract investment, and continue pushing creative boundaries.

Summary of Impact

Through the Create Growth Programme, King Bee achieved:

- Strategic clarity on business development and innovation
- Improved financial literacy and investment readiness
- Successful funding applications totalling over £80,000
- Development of an AI-powered animation tool through academic collaboration
- Strengthened industry connections across Hertfordshire’s creative ecosystem
- Enhanced commercial strategy aligned with market demands
- Increased capacity to scale flagship IP, Soul Jump

Delivered in Hertfordshire by:

