

Autodesk Digital Catalyst Program

SME FAQ

What is a Digital Catalyst?

A Digital Catalyst is a young individual who can be placed into your business to bring a fresh perspective to a design or manufacturing challenge you may be facing today. They are handpicked from leading UK universities for their high levels of digital awareness, creativity, design thinking as well as their skills in computer aided design and manufacturing. Right now, Digital Catalysts are helping industry explore the art of the possible through a hands-on approach, enabling businesses to digitise the way the design, make and sell their products, drive innovation, improve collaboration and develop better products.

Can my business request a Digital Catalyst?

If you can identify some potential digital transformation projects that are not merely cad operator jobs or data entry projects, then you are most likely can attract a Digital Catalyst. The projects need to impact the way you design or make your products and you need to be a UK based design or manufacturing business.

How Does it Work?

Autodesk will use the information you provide to make direct introductions between SMEs with registered Digital Catalysts, who are then free to connect and discuss the project or opportunity and decide if there is a good fit on both sides. If there is, we'll help define a project brief against which the Digital Catalyst can work, and help agree a start date. While the project is running Autodesk will stay in contact with both the SME and the Catalyst to facilitate that everything is running smoothly and help resolve issues that may arise.

Is it Free?

Whilst we cannot insist that Digital Catalysts get paid for their placements we strongly encourage the SME to make some form of financial contribution to them. In many cases local grant funding may be available to cover this cost, for example via the Local Enterprise Partnership or Growth Hub. At the very least we'd expect any reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred by the Catalyst to be covered. Considering the potential value that a Digital Catalyst can bring to an organisation this is incredible value.

How long are the placements?

Digital Catalysts are available for a maximum period of 80 hours, or approximately 2 weeks, which can be called off in one big block or flexibly, depending on the project and the existing commitments of the SME and their Digital Catalyst. After that time is up, you are free to agree an extension of the project directly with the Digital Catalyst, for as long as you both feel is appropriate and reasonable.

Do the Digital Catalysts have to be on site at my business?

This is entirely up to the SME and the Digital Catalyst, some companies prefer their Digital Catalyst on site, others are happy for them to work remotely. What we'd ask is that if your Digital Catalyst does visit your premises, you provide a safe working environment for them, with the appropriate liability cover in place.

What about confidentiality & IP?

Since the Digital Catalyst will be working on a project for your business it will be up to you to ensure you have the appropriate IP protection arrangements in place.

Why is Autodesk Doing this?

Autodesk is heavily invested in preparing the next generation of professionals to enter the design and manufacturing industry. The Digital Catalyst Programme is our way of helping to close the skills gap in the UK by helping great students gain some real industry experience with great companies whilst they study and before the graduate.

What's the Catch?

The one thing we do expect from both SME and Digital Catalyst is to agree to talk about their experience of working together as a form of case study which Autodesk can share with the wider community. This may range from a simple written statement or a short video testimonial. Any promotional materials created will be done with full involvement and consent of both the SME and Digital Catalyst and will respect any potentially commercially sensitive or confidential aspects of the company or project.

What if my Digital Catalyst doesn't work out?

We strive to identify and match you with Digital Catalysts with the right skills and capabilities, however, if you are not happy with your current placement please reach out to us at digital.catalyst.uki@autodesk.com and we will shortly be in touch.

Other questions?

Email us at digital.catalyst.uki@autodesk.com