

New tech fuels passion and growth at Sydney digital agency AFK

Since launching his own digital experience agency in 2009, James Sugrue has kept ahead of digital trends by scouting out new technology in Europe and the US before it's released in Australia.

'We invest a substantial percentage of profits back into sourcing new technology and have built out products in artificial intelligence, augmented reality, gamification and the 'Internet of Things', says the founder of Sydney-based AFK Agency.

'Investing in new technology helps us to understand what's possible and provide cutting edge solutions to our clients, and if we hit gold on one—even better.'

Investing in innovation has also brought its own challenges. Most significantly, it's prevented the young company from hiring additional specialist developers and improving the company's innovation lab.

'Initially we were using developers from our Dublin office, but as the business grew we really needed more specialist people in-house', says James. 'To work on bigger projects and to provide strong customer services, we needed a NSW-based team.'



The investment: accessing talent and tech

Thanks to a \$300,000 **Accelerating Growth Loan** from Jobs for NSW, the digital agency will be able to maintain their investment in innovation while also creating over 19 jobs in the next five years.

'The whole digital media world is accelerating rapidly', says James. 'It's a challenging balancing act to simultaneously take a business to the next level while keeping up investment in new technology.'

'Jobs for NSW is helping us to make both possible in unison'.

With the new loan AFK will also be able to tender for larger contracts, including the global divisions of major international brands.



The future: creating a new digital reality

Most recently AFK's innovation lab turned out an educational mobile game called **Rainbow Reef**, where users nurture corals and collect rare sea creatures; **Skateboard Santa**, an augmented reality experience for Microsoft HoloLens & Xbox Controller; and a choose-your-own-adventure **St Patrick's Day virtual reality experience**, in which players banish snakes from Ireland.

What James is most proud of though, is the culture he's built in AFK's office and the company's high retention rate for staff.

'It's really rewarding to create fulfilling careers for people within a true innovative environment.'



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