



Iskra wins work in Far East

Fast facts

Company: Iskra

Industry: Creative & media

Target markets: Hong Kong, Macao

UKTI service: Trade Mission

www.iskra.london



Joining a UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) Trade Mission to Hong Kong and Macao was the starting point for London-based creative agency, Iskra, to win over £300,000 worth of new business in Macao.

Chris Cook had worked at a senior level in a number of London's most respected PR agencies and leading edge social media businesses before setting up Iskra in January 2014. Based in London, the company provides strategy, design and communications consultancy services. For each project, Chris brings together a bespoke team from his extensive network of creative partners. He then acts as Creative Director to manage and co-ordinate them.

From the outset, Chris intended for Iskra to serve clients around the world, giving them access to the very best creative talent that London has to offer.

"Before I started Iskra, I had worked extensively with clients in Russia and realised that people overseas were willing to pay a premium for London

branding," says Chris. "They know this is where the best quality work is being done, but they may not know how to navigate the market. We connect them to the latest, coolest, most creative talent. It's a 100% bespoke service – I make up the right team for any project from my network of over 100 creative partners, covering a broad range of specialities. Some are individuals, others are boutique agencies. I don't work with large, anonymous organisations – I always make sure that the person I work with has personal responsibility for delivering the very best standard work."

Trade mission

Chris set about planning his strategy for identifying and engaging with potential clients in global markets, starting with the Far East. His first port of call was UKTI, to find out what help was available in developing the business overseas. The timing was spot on. The following month, UKTI was taking a delegation of 14 businesses from the British creative industries on a High Value Opportunities (HVO) trade mission to Hong Kong and Macao. Launched in April 2011, the HVO

Programme is UKTI's flagship trade initiative, which supports greater UK access to many large-scale overseas procurement projects.

The trade mission would be an important introduction to lucrative opportunities in Macao's booming gaming and leisure industry, the development of one of the world's largest cultural projects and the urban regeneration of Hong Kong's former airport. UKTI Trade Missions are designed to give British companies the opportunity to meet and build relationships with key decision makers, and explore current and future business opportunities. Iskra was invited to join and Chris was delighted to accept.

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Chris Cook, Founder, Iskra

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Chris Cook, Founder, Iskra



“The UKTI Trade Mission was absolutely brilliant,” says Chris. “The programme totally covered my wish list. UKTI had arranged for us to tour all 6 casinos in Macao and get a thorough understanding of the market. In Hong Kong, we met companies working on big infrastructure projects. The level of contacts that UKTI introduced us to was amazing. At the networking events, their staff were really proactive in making sure we spoke to the right people. I’ve never been on such a well organised market visit.”

New business

Understanding the importance of building personal relationships, Chris returned to Macao and Hong Kong in May 2014 on an independent visit. He used the opportunity to pick up discussions that had begun during the UKTI Trade Mission.

Whilst in Macao, Chris got talking to one of the biggest casino operators about devising a new customer loyalty scheme and developing a range of digital services. Iskra was engaged for an initial discovery phase to study the business of the operator and scope out possible approaches to the project. The recommendations that the agency put together were signed off and a second stage was initiated in September 2014. The work completed so far has awarded the company with over £300,000 of revenue, with solid potential for more work with this client in future.

Meanwhile, UKTI keeps in regular touch with Chris. He recently attended an Explore Export event where he met with UKTI specialists from 8 countries, including Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia,

the USA and Mexico. Chris is now due to attend a next Trade Mission to Singapore and Indonesia in February.

“The UKTI Trade Mission gave me very helpful advice about a range of issues and got me in front of an incredible level of contacts,” says Chris. “There’s nowhere else you can get his level of service. I believe UKTI saved me around 18 months of researching and trying to get meetings with the people I needed to speak to in Hong Kong and Macao. It would have been a huge effort and cost me much more money and time to do it on my own. Of course you have to do the follow up, but there’s no doubt that the UKTI Trade Mission kick-started my entry into the Far East. I look forward to having similar support to tap into other markets – in fact you could say that working with UKTI is my main new business strategy!”

The UK and Macao

Macao has a small, open economy that relies mainly on the services industry - dominated by gaming and tourism, this sector accounts for almost 90% of the GDP and over 70% of employment. It is one of world’s leading tourism destinations, attracting over 29 million visitors in 2013, mainly from Mainland China.

In 2013, UK exports to Macao were valued at £60 million, making the UK Macao’s 3rd biggest EU trade partner after France and Germany. Many more exports come via Hong Kong.

The local market has an appreciation for quality and is willing to pay for the best. There are several multi-billion projects already underway and planned over the next ten years. Business opportunities are available in leisure, tourism, construction, high end luxury retail, food and beverage, education and training and environmental technology.

For further information about business opportunities in Macao, please go to gov.uk/ukti

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UKTI was delighted to support Iskra in its business overseas.

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