InSTeP Project

Background

The InSTeP project (Integrated Services Training and Products) was created to help small to medium sized businesses and organisations involved in the development and delivery of products and services for the healthcare sector. It offers a completely integrated programme to provide a clear and practical route for the transfer of state of the art applied research and expertise into market ready products.

Project

By bringing together a unique collaboration of regional healthcare, engineering, product development and design professionals, InSTeP is able to offer companies the opportunity to ‘fast-track’ the development of healthcare products, services and technology.

The delivery of InSTeP client projects is led by Northumbria University’s Centre for Design Research and brings in other regional partners including C2M (UK) Ltd, INEX, Kinneir Dufort, NHS Innovations and Newcastle University’s Resources Centre for Innovation & Design. Cels project managed the InSTeP intiative for a number of years and helped many regional companies to develop their technologies.

Behind InSTeP lies the recognition that user focused design is vitally important if the market potential of healthcare products is to be maximized. Therefore clients have access to a wide range of expertise, including research, concept design, product development (including software, electronic and mechanical component development), user testing and rapid prototyping. Guidance to support medical device classification, such as CE and EMC approvals, is also available alongside interaction and interface design, risk assessment and the creation of IP and licence agreements. Throughout the process there is close liaison with service & product users and with public and private healthcare providers.

Outcome

InSTeP is having a real impact onNorth East companies developing new products in the healthcare sector. Its effects are being felt across a wide range of technologies, including biotechnology columns, diagnostic devices and novel wheelchair concepts, and it is enabling innovative ideas to become truly market-led products that will make a significant contribution to the growth of the regional economy.

Recent work undertaken with UK Haptics illustrates this. The company approached InSTeP to develop a medical instrument adaptor for a new medical training and evaluation tool that would enable users to practice and be assessed on performing clinical procedures in a virtual environment.

Working with UK Haptics, InSTep helped develop the adaptor and ‘future proofed’ it. Effective liaison with partners to produce a rapid prototype of the solution

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also enabled the speedier progress of distribution talks with potential international partners. The system has now been sold to a number of commercial and research clients and the adaptor prototype is undergoing user and safety testing.

Key Services:

- Technology transfer management
- Design expertise
- Rapid prototyping
- Project management
- Strategic advice
- Marketing and PR support
- Access to finance
- Access to networks