The Digital **Residency**

A business and arts residential campus in Manorhamilton, County Leitrim

AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO INNOVATE

The concept

An immersive experience for tech teams in the heritage and cultural town of Manorhamilton, Leitrim, where history, technology and the arts are already intertwined. By embedding the team with the life and amenities of the town and stunning landscape, and integrating it with creative arts practitioners and their own process, tech teams, managers and executives can unlock discover insights and find solutions.

The reason

While the work done in digital technology firms is essentially creative, and the language of the creative process has become normal in the industry, the approach is essentially an engineering approach; *i.e.*, it attempts to rationalise creativity. It is also shaped by business imperatives. These are necessary, but they miss out on the interplay between culture, the built environment, heritage, physical spaces, and social exchange as essential elements of creativity. Without going outside the rational approach, genuine innovation - the kind that discovers the underlying unity in seemingly contradictory concepts and phenomena - will remain elusive.

With the acceleration of change brought about by digitisation, we can't identify problems - let alone solve them - quick enough using rational approaches. To be genuinely innovative, these firms and teams need draw on subconscious resources, real well-springs of imagination and creativity. The usual tools and methods, and the usual environments in which they are employed, usually don't reach those places.

Tech teams need artists in their midst, not as adjuncts, but as integral team members, and they need a more expansive environment where physical activity, an intimate society and symbolic expression can blend into business and technological innovation.

The benefit

Teams - product development teams, project delivery teams, consulting service providers, executive and management teams - will come to the Digital Annaghmakerrig to change their way of thinking and remove the subtle barriers to new thinking created by their familiar surroundings, habits and pressures.

No one can make you creative, but we can create an environment as conducive to it as possible. In short, the benefits include inspiration, and accelerated problem solving, stronger team relationships, new ways of imagining problems and their solutions, new methods and approaches.

These benefits go beyond the specific driver for the residency: the product needing revamping, the strategy needing development, the service offering needing definition. The benefits of a residency at the digital Annamakerrig will percolate through the company and its employees for a long time.

Why Manorhamilton?

It is a small town of about 1500 people, nestled in the glens, rivers, lakes, boggy uplands and neolithic ruins of North Leitrim. Founded by Sir Frederick Hamilton in the mid 17th century, it bears the mark of Irish history from that day to this. It has a vibrant local community and abundant opportunities for outdoor (and indoor!) pursuits.

It also has the Leitrim Sculpture Centre - the largest visual arts centre in the country, with over 20 artists studios, a steady stream of visiting artists, a large exhibition space and facilities for stone carving, glass blowing, brass and bronze casting, printmaking, wood turning and other art forms.

It also has the Glens Centre - a magnet for performing artists all over the country and internationally. Famous for its brilliant acoustics and intimate atmosphere, there are 3 theatre companies that make their home here as well as youth theatre, cross-border projects and an annual programme of over 50 performances a year. The Glens pioneered the concept of a "performance laboratory" nearly 20 years ago when it offered long term residencies to visiting performers, some of whom have made Leitrim their permanent home.

They have the latest technology to support tech teams - high-speed broadband, conferencing, co-working space, and high-spec accommodation.

Manorhamilton also has award winning restaurants, coffee shops, traditional pubs, and less than 3 hours from Dublin by road. It's also 30 minutes from the Wild Atlantic Way, Sligo, Mayo, Donegal and Enniskillen, and 1 hour from Ireland West Airport.

What you can expect

Coming to Manorhamilton will be fun and rewarding, but it won't be easy. Teams will come here to be challenged in ways they are not used to and in ways for which they may not be prepared. This is the point.

For example:

• A team of 6 people are responsible for a major new release of their customer service chatbot. They want something new, something innovative. They don't want to use the same approaches - even the popular ones like Design Thinking, UX analysis, and Agile methods feel like a box that they'd like to think outside of. But how to break out of these constraints, to be genuinely challenged at all levels of thinking and planning for this release?

• The team temporarily moves to Manorhamilton. They live and work in Manorhamilton for a few weeks, or until they feel they have broken through these barriers.

• While they are here, they live in W8, or in the Hamilton townhouses, use the Hub and W8 as their office, have their lunchtime meetings in Osta, Bia Slainte and the Loft, socialise in the local pubs, get surfing lessons in Strandhill, enjoy water activities in Glencar, use the gym in the Bee Park. They get an historical tour of the

imposing castle of Frederick Hamilton, and some of the aspects of its construction that were innovative for its time. They tour the old fever hospital and famine graveyard and learn about the re-usable coffins with false bottoms. They see a dramatisation of the closing of the local railway line - the SLNCR - developed by the local youth theatre. They go to the sculpture centre and learn about the custom design for the largest glass kiln in Ireland, where C1700 internal temperatures only radiate out C35, without the need for vents and radiators.

- The Rabbit's Riot Theatre Company joins the team. They participate in all meetings - the brainstorming workshops, but also the status meetings and document reviews. They don't replace the team's existing skills, they simply and yet powerfully use their own background and ideas to challenge the team - either by challenging their ideas or by offering their own. Similarly, the team participate the theatre company's next production, maybe sitting in on rehearsals and providing feedback, or even by helping with the lighting, sound and props during a rehearsal of live show.

- During one of the brainstorming sessions, the memory of the bottomless coffin (resuable without loss of function) combined with the design innovation of the kiln (high efficiency through recirculation of waste heat) leads to a breakthrough for the problem of customers terminating chat sessions prematurely.

- When the team leave Manorhamilton, the change of scene, shared experience with the town, the region and the artists has enveloped them. The total experience has inspired them and from now on they will recall this experience and the recollection continues to bring forth lines of thinking that leads to new ideas and new values. Now, back at the office, they incorporate metaphorical thinking, play, and arts into their "normal" processes.

The price

We are developing two different pricing models. A fee based model and a royalty. The fee-based model will cover all services delivered during the residency - room and board, office space, engagement with artists, and selected amenities (outdoor activities, *etc.*). The royalty model will cover direct costs only, but a royalty will be payable for the output that was part of the scope of the residency.

CONTACT US

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SOURCES and RECOMMENDED CONTENT

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