DigitalCity

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Hobgoblin 3D
Established: **2016**
Founders: **Kevin Miree, Jordan Knights and Lawrence Williams**
Based: **Middlesbrough**
Staff: **4**
Principal products: **3D table top printables**

Case Study

> *Teesside University and DigitalCity have really allowed us to carve our own path and allowed me to turn my life around, which is something I'll always be grateful for. There has always been support and encouragement.*
>
> **Kevin Miree – Managing Director, Hobgoblin 3D**

In a tech-first world of seemingly endless possibilities, where others are seeking the holy grail of 'the next big thing', it's good to know that the past can still play a part in the future.

Classic tabletop board games have entertained us for generations; now there's a return to home-based, social contests, albeit with a modern makeover.

At the forefront of this revolution is Hobgoblin 3D, a company that is building a growing reputation in the world of tabletop games for its 3D printable fantasy scenery and characters. Players choose their items online, download the files then print at home, magical realms appearing before their eyes. Friends come together for games that are run by a game master, who implements the rules and sets the narrative.

Hobgoblin 3D co-founder Kevin Miree explains: "Video games can leave people disconnected and they're limited within the bounds of technical creativity. Tabletop games bring people together to enjoy a more sociable, interactive experience and that's why we're seeing a resurgence." It's estimated that the tabletop games market is worth around $1.4bn. Sales of home-based 3D printers increased from 500,000 in 2017 to one million last year; early adopters can pick up a good model for £450-£650 but they're forecast to become general consumer products in price and availability by 2021.

After coming together as computer games students at Teesside University, Hobgoblin's founders spent a year researching the market, understanding audiences, studying projected sales of 3D printers and developing their business plan.

A grant from DigitalCity's Fellowship programme helped them buy their first 3D printers and hone their business model. Further support helped them market the brand to pitch for Kickstarter crowd funding from the game-playing community, which generated £22k in additional income. A second Kickstarter campaign raised even more investment. Now they're working with a major online retailer that has embedded Hobgoblin files in its 3D printers.

"Teesside University and DigitalCity have really allowed us to carve our own path and allowed me to turn my life around, which is something I'll always be grateful for. There has always been support and encouragement," says Kevin, who was 33 when he graduated.

Hobgoblin is paying back the support by always having at least one intern and sharing their experience with students.

Scott Watson, of DigitalCity says: "DigitalCity has a long and successful track record of helping talented graduates apply their skills to the creation of new businesses. In Hobgoblin's case, its business model was so unusual that it could be argued that they created an industry of their own. "We were able to help them to develop this innovative business via bespoke mentoring and coaching. Hobgoblin are great supporters of the Fellowship Programme and we appreciate Kevin and his team regularly coming in to speak to the new businesses we are working with."

Within six months, Hobgoblin was being talked about alongside much bigger and long-established names. In terms of product development, they have focused on detail and designing files of high quality, handcrafted items, which has struck a chord with their audience.

On the horizon are plans to create their own game world, accompanying rule book and bespoke characters as well as future collaborations. Kevin says: "We have the potential to build a world and add elements that captivate people and get them excited. I think we need more of that in today's world. It provides an escape. That sense of magic is in everyone – we just provide the outlet for it."