

HANDSHAKE – AN EXPERIMENT TO CREATE MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS IN CREATIVE BUSINESS

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Handshake is a project with the aim of building a sustainable relationship between the universities of applied sciences in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and the networks of creative industry in Amsterdam in order to provide meaningful learning experiences for students in creative business.

The creative industry in the Netherlands is characterized by a huge amount of freelancers and small companies that operate in networks. You might say: ‘There are no jobs, but there is plenty of work.’ The world of the traditional educational institutes differs in many ways from the highly flexible and fast changing environment of the creative industry. Building this bridge is therefore difficult but absolutely essential to the universities to remain relevant for the next generation creative professionals. Though the traditional connections to the field of work such as internships and a diversity of project based initiatives is already contributing to this relationship, it is hardly enough to qualify the students, for they are not prepared to participate as an independent creative professional in the networks.

With Handshake embedded research started to find new ways for the educational institutes to connect to the networks of the creative industry. Teams of students, educators and research fellows now function as hubs in creative clusters and co-working spaces throughout Amsterdam, where the creative business is actually present. More than fifteen events took place already to experiment with new ways of collaboration. In these experiments students for example learn how to co-create in networks that are available in those co-working spaces.

Three conclusions can be drawn so far. First, students participating in Handshake easily connect to the real world and the real thing: side jobs are traded for jobs in the creative industry, they easily built a relevant network of which they benefit during and after their studies, making it easier for them to start as an entrepreneur. Second, creative entrepreneurs are more than willing to coöperate. Not because they demand knowledge (they think

knowledge in education is outdated), but because it's in their nature to benefit from meeting fresh creative minds and they always have more ideas than they can realize, so they often need help to get things done. Third, if the activity doesn't take place in their regular study program, students are hard to persuade to take part, so the whole idea needs to be adapted by curricula.

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