

Interaction is the focus of informal conference

Fazeley Studios will this week play host to an "unconference" focusing on interaction between social media, digital tools and the built environment.

The informal conference event, called Be2Camp, will take place on Wednesday and is aimed at people interested in using digital tools to improve buildings and space.

The event has been organised by Rob Annable, of Axis Design Architects, and Lorna Parsons, practice manager of Bryant Priest Newman Architects.

Ms Parsons said: "Along with Paul Wilkinson and Martin Brown, the

founders of Be2Camp, and a team of likeminded people including Daden (Second Life specialists) and John Cave, from EH Smith, we've found that organising the event is testament to the strength of Birmingham's social media scene."

"Web 2.0 is the future of communication and Be2Camp is about getting that message through to the construction industry."

Speakers lined up for the event include World Technology Award winner Usman Haque, the founder of Pachube, and Dave Harte, from Digital Birmingham.

Also speaking is Jon de Souza, from Constructing Excellence, Nick Booth from Podnosh, and Phil Clark from Building Magazine.

Ms Parsons added: "The real beauty of the event is its informality and flexibility. Nothing is set in stone and the format of the day can change as it goes on."

"It's a very social affair and attendees are invited to contribute by sharing ideas and joining in with the debates and conversations."

■ Details can be found at <http://be-2campbrum.eventbrite.com/>

Marketing 'still facing barriers'

The Chartered Institute of Marketing has chosen Birmingham as the location to launch its latest White Paper on the future of the profession.

The organisation said it would bring out the document, compiled for the institute by Aston Business School, on September 1.

The result of this latest research paper reveals senior managers' perceptions of marketing and the barriers the profession faces in gaining influence within both private and public organisations.

Although marketing is critical to

business performance, the paper argues that it can be hampered by short-term thinking by the business and a lack of accountability, creativity and courage on the part of marketers themselves.

The institute said the paper shows that sometimes marketers are their own worst enemy.

It points out that they often fail to account for their often considerable budgets, fall back on dull and uninspiring campaigns and flounder when questioned on the financial impact of their strategies.

Embassy staff in digital visit



From left, Toby Barnes from 'Mudlark' based at Fazeley Studios, Jane Holmes of AWM, Meagan Blanton of UKT&I San Francisco and Professor Bob Stone from the University of Birmingham

Picture, SIMON HADLEY

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Key players in the West Midlands' digital economy played host to a fact-finding visit by UK embassy staff from the USA, India and Brazil keen to learn about the region's growing expertise in the area.

An influential 12-strong UKT&I delegation went to see the work of cutting edge digital media businesses operating in the region during a one-day visit arranged by the Inward Investment team at Advantage West Midlands.

The day took in visits to leading video games companies in the region who are developing a world-renowned strength in areas like serious games.

Leamington Spa-based Blitz Games, whose expansive portfolio includes games such as Trauma Trainer, an interactive medical programme, was one of the firms receiving a visit as well as Professor Bob Stone, from the University of Birmingham.

Prof Stone is one of the world's leading experts on serious games, who demonstrated some of his team's digital media developments for the Ministry of Defence, the National Marine Aquarium and English Heritage.

Prof Stone said: "If you're looking for innovation and talent in digital media, look no further than the West Midlands."

"Where else can you find such a range of relevant skills - computing, psychol-

ogy, digital art, games design, not to mention applications in defence, medicine, education, heritage and commerce all within a single region."

The delegation also visited Fazeley Studios in Digbeth to meet with Tom Loosemore, head of 4iP, Channel 4's fund to encourage growth in digital media projects designed with the public interest in mind.

The team learnt about the business opportunities for regional companies offered by the £10 million creative pilot fund which is also supported by Advantage West Midlands through the Digital media cluster and Screen WM.

Also at Fazeley Studios, Toby Barnes from Mudlark presented some of the firm's cutting edge games ideas. Mud-

lark, which has also received 4iP funding, has recently relocated to Fazeley Studios in the West Midlands so it could be part of the digital community.

The UKT&I team also visited the Birmingham film set of BBC TV drama series Hustle to meet senior executives from Kudos Film and Television.

The programme was relocated to the region with the help of investment by Screen WM through the Advantage Media Production Fund supported by Advantage West Midlands.

Advantage West Midlands head of inward investment Richard Butler said: "We're committed to being at the forefront of the digital media sector - and it is vital that in such tough times for the global economy, we promote our region's

capabilities and expertise in international markets.

"For companies looking to invest in digital media, the West Midlands is the place to be.

"The collaboration between the region's universities, science and technology parks and companies of all sizes combined with regional support and funding for digital media is paying dividends.

"We now have a track record of attracting world-class digital companies to a region which is also rich with home-grown talent.

"There's a real buzz to this business sector and we hope that creativity, innovation and support will attract investors from overseas."