HEAD TO HEAD

Joe Parry, CEO, Cambridge Intelligence

Cambridge

Our Capital's startup scene is booming, lavished with a disproportionate share of government funding, co-working spaces and headline-friendly young companies.

But just 60 miles north, Cambridge has been quietly building its own world-class technology cluster for decades.

The city's high-tech sector employs 53,000 people and turns over more than £13bn each year. Fourteen companies founded in Cambridge enjoy £1bn valuations - two of them have also surpassed the £10bn mark. They sit alongside global giants, like Microsoft, Apple and AstraZeneca, who have chosen to establish R&D centres in the city.

What's the secret to our success? It's Cambridge itself.

Firstly, it's a student city. Students flock from all over the world to study and research at our universities, and many later choose to stay here to work. Companies reliant on bright minds and fresh ideas find plenty of both in Cambridge.

Secondly - and this may come as a shock to those inside the M25 - Cambridge enjoys possibly the most complete support ecosystem for entrepreneurs in the UK. Decades of innovation and growth have created a network of serial entrepreneurs, mentors, angels and investors. The concentration of so many experts (and cash) in one small city makes it easy to find the help you need.

Thirdly, Cambridge is a city that knows its place. Media or finance types might feel out of place here and fashion is not one of our strongest points. High tech is what we do best. Companies here think technology first, then the market.

Which brings me neatly to my final point. Cambridge isn't London. Life is led at a more laid-back pace. House prices are high, but we don't pay £1m for a dank basement flat. We can cycle to work without risking a run-in with a Routemaster. We enjoy spectacular architecture, beautiful parks and peaceful countryside. It is a great place to get work done, yet we're still just 60 minutes from the glamour of Silicon Roundabout. It's hard to argue with that.

Jon Bishop, CEO, 850 Sports News Digest

London

I'm from South Africa originally but have lived in London for 11 years. I often get asked why I wouldn't go back to such a beautiful country.

The answer is really simple: I can't do what I do in London over there. Once you are in sync with the rhythm of this city and have built up a strong network, there is no better place in Europe to do business. If you're looking for investors and advisors, they're all right here. Investors are even coming across the pond to invest in London and get away from the crowded Silicon Valley space. Ping them an email and you've got a coffee meeting in the diary.

If you're looking for talent, and everyone knows to be the best startup you need the very best people, Europe's best are right here. Ambitious and talented people move to places like London, New York and Silicon Valley to realise their ambitions, so a big city naturally attracts a large pool.

And let's face it, London is a major tech capital known the world over. Startups in pretty much any vertical can thrive because all the support they need is right here: media, advertising, finance, government, public sector, arts. That's why those shirts say New York, Paris, London.

And the rest of Europe is a stone's throw away. It means the best people from there are coming to London to establish and grow their startups, as they know this great city is the biggest startup hub in Europe.

The easy access to Europe also works the other way as it means we have access to cost effective talent in the rest of Europe. My app, for example, is developed by a highly talented team of developers in Lithuania, an easy two and a half hour flight away from London, and I get to spend a few days a month in the beautiful city of Vilnius.

London is also a travel hub, it's in the middle of the world, and flies direct to almost anywhere. It's usually quicker and cheaper to fly from London than from anywhere else. Very useful for when your business starts to go global. It's as simple as that.