

New top team takes place at Newcastle tech accelerator Ignite

A business accelerator in the North East has appointed one of its former cohort members as its new CEO.

Newcastle-based Ignite Accelerator – which was started by Tristan Watson and Paul Smith in 2011 – has announced that Jo York will be new CEO. Mr Watson will become chairman to support Ignite’s strategic direction.

Ms York has been involved with Ignite since 2013, when she took part in one of its programmes as co-founder of social video startup Reframed. She has since worked with Ignite as a mentor and joined full time in 2020 after her company Ricochet was acquired.

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In her new role she will continue to lead the delivery of the North of Tyne Ignite programmes, which are funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority to drive digital business growth in the North East of England.

She said: “It’s such an honour to be appointed as CEO of Ignite. I’m all too aware of the number of other alumni whose lives have been changed for better by Ignite programmes and I feel the weight of responsibility to continue that momentum very keenly.

“It feels very surreal to think it was nearly a decade ago when my co-founder Kev Price and I applied for the programme. I’m excited to be able to bring my experience as founder, mentor and Ignite Alumni to the role.

“Both Tristan and Paul have left an impressive legacy within

Ignite and the UK startup ecosystem, which will be very difficult to follow. But I am really excited about steering the next chapter with the rest of the team.”

Mr Watson said: “I remember the first Ignite programme launching at our Campus North hub like it was yesterday. Back then, it was called ‘Ignite 100’ because start-ups would benefit from £100k in investment.

“Since then, Ignite has changed a lot. We’ve delivered programmes across the UK and consulted other accelerators across the globe. In 2021, we received the news that we were able to bring Ignite back to the North East, the place where it all began, through a brand-new partnership with the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

“I’m humbled to have been able to work with so many founders over the years, and I’m really proud to hand over the reins to Jo and to see her continue the Ignite legacy.”

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