In March, Virgin Atlantic launched the first direct route to San Francisco from Manchester. As well as opening up access to a popular leisure destination, the move was hailed as a major boost to the Northern Powerhouse.

Insider joined more than 20 tech leaders from the north on a trade mission to learn from the expertise in San Francisco and potentially tap into some funding. Delegates heard from Silicon Valley Bank, cloud communications company Twilio, software provider Salesforce and social network LinkedIn.

“For all its tech dazzle, genuine product innovation and intention to disrupt at the edges of the possible, a single underlying theme emerges from the Bay Area powerhouse: talent,” says Jon Corner, chief executive at The Landing, a technology incubator based at MediaCityUK in Salford. “People are the precious commodity here underpinning the success of product development, company culture and exponential growth. They call it ‘talentism’. The process of inspiring and keeping talent; not ‘finding’ talent – which is sometimes the case in the UK.”

Building large teams quickly that can embrace an entrepreneur’s vision is a fine art. Corner says: “The entrepreneurs here are essentially teambuilders as much as innovators. And you could argue that this has its consequences. For example, salaries here are super-heated with graduate developers earning as much as £140,000 to £160,000.” And that’s in addition to the accepted convention in the Valley to award all employees share options in the business.

“Employee experience is not an add-on here, it is a fundamental component of the business plan,” says Corner. “Without it, the next Twilio or Salesforce would not be able to grow by 300 to 400 people a month with dedicated individuals willing to share long hours, aggressive targets and a solid outward-facing company culture.”