

University Students Solve Real-World Problems with Project Management

Imagine a small business owner quietly leaving her darkened shop on Headingley High Street in Leeds, United Kingdom. She turns her key in the door and twists the knob to confirm it's locked, just as she has done for the past four years. But then, she affixes a "Permanently Closed" sign to the glass. With a sigh, she walks away from her dreams and into uncertainty.

But, what if she had more business resources and support available to her?

Or, think about an older man who has been homeless for years. He's always been good at repairing things, but he just can't seem to repair his own situation.

Is there a way for him to use his skills, find a job and potentially make his community a healthier place?

Across the UK, students from more than 50 universities are implementing unique projects that aim to solve some of the world's most challenging issues, including ones like these. Empowered by the international not-for-profit Enactus, and with assistance from experienced project managers and faculty, these students are initiating and managing projects that positively impact their communities and are setting themselves up for success after graduation.

PMI and Enactus: A Strong, Supportive Relationship

"Enactus is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to inspiring students to improve the world through entrepreneurial action. We provide a platform for teams of outstanding university students to create community development projects that put people's own ingenuity and talents at the center of improving their livelihoods," explains Andrew Bacon, OBE FRSA, chief executive officer, Enactus UK.

"Guided by educators and supported by business leaders, our students take the kind of entrepreneurial approach that empowers people to be a part of their own success. Our work transforms both the lives of the people we serve, and in turn, the lives of our students as they develop into more effective, values-driven leaders," he continues.

Project Management Institute (PMI) began sponsoring Enactus in the United Kingdom in 2014, building on the already successful PMI/Enactus partnerships in the United States, Poland and France.

Heather Ramsey, manager of the Academic Programs department at PMI, says PMI's support of Enactus and Enactus teams around the world is a unique way of promoting the value of project management knowledge and skills to students. "Whether they become project managers or choose a different path, they all benefit from acquiring project management knowledge and skills."

Enactus: a community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a better, more sustainable world.

To learn more, visit enactus.org.

"Enactus develops students' skills and competencies in a completely different setting. Most students become much more confident and aware of what they can offer an employer," says Kellie Forbes-Simpson, former entrepreneurial development officer at Newcastle University and the former academic advisor of the Enactus Newcastle team.

PMI UK Chapter Volunteers Support Enactus

PMI chapters and volunteers are key to the support that PMI provides Enactus. In the UK, more than 14 PMI UK Chapter volunteers have served as business advisors to local Enactus teams, mentoring them, supporting their projects and delivering project management trainings and workshops. For these volunteers, Enactus presents an exciting opportunity to help students make the world a better place and shape the development of the leaders and project managers of the future.

Ms. Forbes-Simpson notes that "business advisors are critical for the success of the Enactus teams. By offering support, guidance, and training and skills sessions, they help the teams grow personally and professionally."

Generally, the Enactus teams present their ideas to a group of their business advisors, their academic advisors and peers. They discuss their project, their plans, any perceived obstacles and ask for assistance when they need it.

"These students are some of the cleverest people out there," marvels Jon Clay, PMP, one of the business advisors for the Enactus team from Leeds University and director of regional events for the PMI UK Chapter. "They take the input you give them and change it, shape it and improve it."

David Bewick, PMP, PMI-ACP, who serves as a business advisor to the Enactus Newcastle team and North East committee chair for the PMI UK Chapter, echoes Mr. Clay's sentiment. "I'm constantly amazed, constantly surprised at how much these students, without fear, are trying to achieve." He adds that he tries to work in the background as someone the team can call on when things get tough or when they need guidance.



Enactus Leeds team members discuss their project plans at a team meeting.

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Business advisors also sort through career questions and challenges. Joanna Newman, MBA, PMP, one of Enactus Southampton's business advisors and administration director for the PMI UK Chapter, shares that "as a mentor, I try to be available to support their project challenges as well as their career questions. I review CVs, help with interview questions and discuss 'the real world.'"

In all, the PMI volunteers who serve as business advisors become an integral part of the team and the team members are grateful for the time and expertise they offer. Claire Procter, one of the Leeds University students Mr. Clay mentored, confides that "the training [Mr. Clay] provided on project management was so valuable and everyone on the team took so much away from it."

“Enactus students are challenged to create, plan, resource and execute multiple projects and programs within any one year,” says Mr. Bacon. “It’s no surprise that the number one ask by all students is for training, mentoring and support in developing project management skills and expertise. PMI resources and volunteers have been our single go-to solution to fill this need and the partnership has been hugely successful.”

PROJECT MANAGEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Exposing students to project management techniques during such a crucial time in university—when they’re expanding their interests and determining career paths—gives them a unique advantage over their peers. And with 1.57 million new project management roles being added each year, it’s important that students learn about it sooner rather than later.¹

“It [project management] makes them much more rounded individuals. Learning project management, being part of a team and working on a project that benefits the community makes the students more adaptable when they enter the workplace,” explains Mr. Bewick. “The change from when you enter university and when you enter the workforce can be jarring.”

“The key thing about project management,” muses Mr. Clay, “is that it’s a fundamental life skill. Working on these types of projects at a young age is an experience that very few other students have, and that many people take years of their professional career to gain.”

Ms. Forbes-Simpson agrees that the project management skills, techniques and experience that the students obtain through Enactus makes them more confident and aware of what they can offer an employer. “Employers feel that Enactus students are much more aware of their skills, their passions and ultimately, what they want from an employer. That kind of maturity is very appealing.”

Ms. Procter, a former Enactus Leeds team member currently completing her placement year at IBM, notes that “learning about project management has absolutely helped when it comes to my career...it’s given me the skills I need to organize tasks, determine requirements and deliver results. These kinds of skills are key enablers of change, and what employers want in their employees.”



Students take advantage of PMI resources, such as *PM Network*[®], as they work through project logistics.

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~ Jon Clay, PMP

Student Membership

PMI offers student memberships and group student memberships at reduced rates. These memberships provide students with access to a wealth of resources, including networking opportunities. Mr. Bewick believes that all students should consider obtaining a PMI student membership. “It’s the best US\$32 you’ll ever spend,” he says.

If you’re interested in an individual membership or a group student membership, visit PMI.org/membership.

¹PMI’s *Industry Growth Forecast, Project Management Between 2010 + 2020*, March 2013

ONE STEP AT A TIME

All Change in the World Happens through Projects

The size, scope, requirements and challenges may differ, but at the core, they are projects. Project management fundamentals, which students on Enactus teams learn from their business advisors and through hands-on experience, enable students to manage successful projects that positively impact individuals and communities around the world, and position themselves for a lifetime of personal and professional successes.

To learn more about PMI’s academic programs, as well as our academic research, please visit PMI.org/learning.aspx.

What the Teams Are Working On

The chart below highlights just some of the projects coming from the Enactus UK teams at Newcastle, Leeds and Southampton Universities.

Enactus Southampton <i>2015 Enactus World Cup Champion</i>	Enactus Leeds	Enactus Newcastle
<p style="text-align: center;">Right Light</p> <p>Right Light, one of Enactus Southampton’s more mature projects, provides individuals in Kenya with solar lamps to rent to their communities. These solar lamps are meant to take the place of traditional kerosene lamps, which are costly, dangerous to use and damaging to a person’s respiratory health.</p> <p>Through this initiative, Kenyans have a cleaner and safer light source, and the opportunity to increase their income.</p> <p>For more information on Right Light, visit enactussouthampton.com.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Consulting You <i>Winner of the Wilko “Entrepreneurship” Individual Topic Competition</i></p> <p>As new shopping centers opened nearby and residential halls closed, the shopping traffic on Headingley High Street began to decline. Businesses in the area experienced a loss in revenue exceeding £30 million.</p> <p>Struggling to survive in this environment, small businesses were eager for a collaboration that would help them sustain, improve and protect their profits.</p> <p>Since 2011, the Enactus Leeds team has worked with 10 local businesses, empowering the owners with business and economic concepts that help them achieve their chosen goals.</p> <p>Learn more about Consulting You at enactusleeds.com.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">UniCycles</p> <p>This project, launched in 2014, focuses on improving the livelihoods of the homeless in Newcastle upon Tyne by teaching them how to fix bicycles, which have been largely donated by the Margaret Carey Foundation. The repaired bicycles are then sold at student-friendly prices around nearby campuses, and the profits are reinvested into the community.</p> <p>By learning new or using existing skills, the homeless become more employable and benefit from the profits of the repaired bicycles. Additionally, bicycling, a healthy and environmentally friendly hobby, can become more prominent among local citizens.</p> <p>More details about UniCycles is available at enactusnewcastle.org.</p>