

## What's the object behind the Costain Project Management Academy?

“To build a model of project management excellence, benchmarked against world class standards and use the model to recruit, develop, and build succession to achieve project excellence, customer delight and best profit.”

### Testimonial: Andrew Bull, Project Management Academy delegate

“Using the Costain PMA as a framework for my personal development plans over the past 12 months has been great. The personal assessments have provided an increased self-awareness of strengths and capabilities; the models, frameworks and career planning helped to improve visibility of my longer-term goals and where I am heading.”



Project management constitutes the single group of skills most obviously responsible for the success of a project.

Senior executives have in the past gone so far as to say that Costain's fate depends, to a large extent, on the Group's Project Managers (PMs). However, not only PMs themselves but all the onsite and headquarters staff involved in project management bear the greatest responsibility for ensuring that jobs are delivered on time, to cost and to a standard that delights the customer.

“Effective project management can be the most significant influence as to whether the project is a success or not,” comments Jeremy Galpin, Costain's Group Skills and Development Manager.

**“The Academy is enhancing the capability of our Project Managers to deliver total solutions for our customers”**

Jeremy Galpin, Costain Group Skills and Development Manager



Ensuring the current and continuing quality of project management staff is therefore critical. It is for this reason that Costain has set up its Project Management Academy (PMA).

The Academy is a structured and mentored development programme that aims to bring the highest quality to the Group's project management staff. Staff, ranging from new recruits to experienced Project Managers, self select for a major development process. The model will eventually be expanded and offered to customers and the supply chain.

“The Academy is about improving everyone's capability, it's not a 'high-flyers only' thing,” says Jeremy. “We want average people to be good and good people to be excellent. It's about raising project management capability across the board.”

Potential Academy delegates complete an application form and have to obtain sign-off from their divisional Managing Directors to apply.

Since its creation in 2007, 55 project management staff have been engaged in the programme, 28 joined the Academy in 2009.

Progressing within the Academy is a challenge in itself. Career aspiration is taken as read and technical knowledge is obviously assessed, but applicants also have to complete a battery of tests that look at how their behavioural profiles fit Costain's needs, as well as their personality traits, motivation and cognitive abilities. These measures were drawn up, working with Business psychology specialists Crelos, after eight of Costain's industry-leading PMs were studied to identify the mix of skills that made them so successful.

When an individual is accepted by the Academy, their training needs are assessed against this ideal skills combination. Assessment tools include one-on-one interviews, 360-degree feedback and a development centre that includes psychometric testing. Every Academy 'student' assesses their own training needs against the ideal model gathered from studying the successful PMs. A 'traffic light' assessment highlights the needs of individuals, who decide which level to target when they join the Academy. They remain for two years.

Benchmarking is also conducted at a national level through the Association of Project Management where Costain has targeted the APM top qualification.

Measuring individuals' progress takes several forms, including gaining professional qualifications, assessing behavioural change and 'project level metrics' such as project profitability, customer service, teamwork and engagement.

The Academy, with its emphasis on nurturing the highest quality staff, is also designed to fit in to Costain's strategy of 'Being Number One' and is increasingly in demand from our customers.

Independent evidence suggests the Academy is a leading example of best practice, especially in the eyes of its industry peers: it won the Training Award at the 2009 *Construction News* Quality Awards.

For further information on the Academy please contact Teri Dawson on 01628 842444.

**construction  
news**

**QualityAwards**



**Testimonial:  
Andrew Wyllie, Costain  
Group Chief Executive  
Officer**

"Excellence in project management is key to the future success of Costain. It is therefore imperative that we have a leading team of project managers in the industry fully skilled and highly motivated. The Project Management Academy has a key part to play in meeting this objective."



**Testimonial:  
Customer Project Manager**

"As a result of Project Manager, Kyle Clough's participation in the PMA he has gained broader business awareness in the management of the project life cycle from concept to close-out. This has enabled Kyle to move on from a construction project manager to a business project manager. This step change brought about from the PMA has been both significant and measurable."