



London
Metropolitan
College



How apprenticeships are driving standardisation

within the project control industry and how LMC is uniquely placed to capture a global audience.



Read the thoughts of our CEO, Anil Godhawale



Project control (PC) has seen rapid growth over the past 15 years and is fast becoming a key function within the project management domain, but with so many sectors and industries adopting PC, how do we ensure industry standardisation?



Like many new industries, roles often develop to address a unique need, whilst project management has its roots in the late 1950s with the development of CPM/PERT the project controller was not noted until much later and application was predominantly linked to large scale infrastructure but continued to remain and understudy or Critical Friend, over a discipline in its own right. Part of the challenge for the Projcon Group was to consider how more formal recognition and standardisation could be brought about and where this might start.

THE ACCIDENTAL PROJECT CONTROLLER

Anil Godhawale CEO Projcon Group

The challenge we face is project controls are still not being seen as a profession and the majority of project controllers around the globe are accidental project controllers, like myself, they have fallen into this industry to address a need.'

When we look at sector comparisons, for example defence and infrastructure, we can see the application of Project Control is poles apart. This presented challenges for industry in terms of recognising standards, as each sector had its own unique viewpoint.



Trailblazers



As any good project manager knows, the key to successful project management is stakeholder engagement, so when London Metropolitan College (LMC), Part of the wider Projcon Group, embarked on their journey to consider the standardisation of education in the sector, they knew it would not be plain sailing.



Importance of Standardisation

Standardisation is one way of ensuring the transferability of skills and creation of a global workforce able to transition across projects and industries and be responsive to sector demand, right now if you are a project controls in the defence sector it is very difficult for you to apply the same knowledge and skills into the infrastructure sector, because the way they perceive project controls is different.

Standardisation is one way to break down barriers and help the movement of talent across sectors ensuring there is a consistent understanding. This in turn will raise the profile of project control as a major professional pathway.



Anil Godhawale

CEO Projcon Group

'It took one year for us to define what project controls is but at the end of the day we managed to agree '

LMC, with the support of the Projcon Group, worked closely with ECITB, the nuclear sector, including build and decommissioning, consultancy firms, such as Wood Group, Turner and Townsend and defence, to create a standard that was able to transverse industries. The creation of the new apprenticeship standard

was a pivotal moment and a major step in the standardisation of training for the sector, highlighting the key competencies required for our next generation of project control entrants.

The apprenticeship route would provide vocational based training, alongside full-time employment, to support entry level careers into PC, creating a pipeline of talent for UK based industry, the challenge was then how to achieve this on a global scale.

Continuous routes to development

Our first cohort of L3 Project Controllers joined LMC in 2018 and graduated in 2021, Last year those early adoptees were looking for their next progression and we went back out to industry to consult again and agree a further standard at Level 6.

The Degree Apprenticeship in Project Control is the first of its kind in the world, the employer led qualification, written, and validated by industry, is incredibly exciting and a fundamental step forward. Allowing employers to access government funded and levy funded training and operate graduate scheme within this industry.





A Global Vision

This year will see the launch of LMC's BSc (Hons) Global Degree in Project Control, which incorporates the key knowledge competencies of its sister qualification but places the emphasis on employers outside the UK to consider skills development and utilise UK models, as a basis to develop these alongside their employee's study programme.

Anil Godhawale CEO Projcon Group

'There has to be a career path, there has to be a defined path to become a project control professional, and qualifications that develop alongside this industry.'

The UK has provided a starting point and our next challenge is how we develop this model to support global project control.

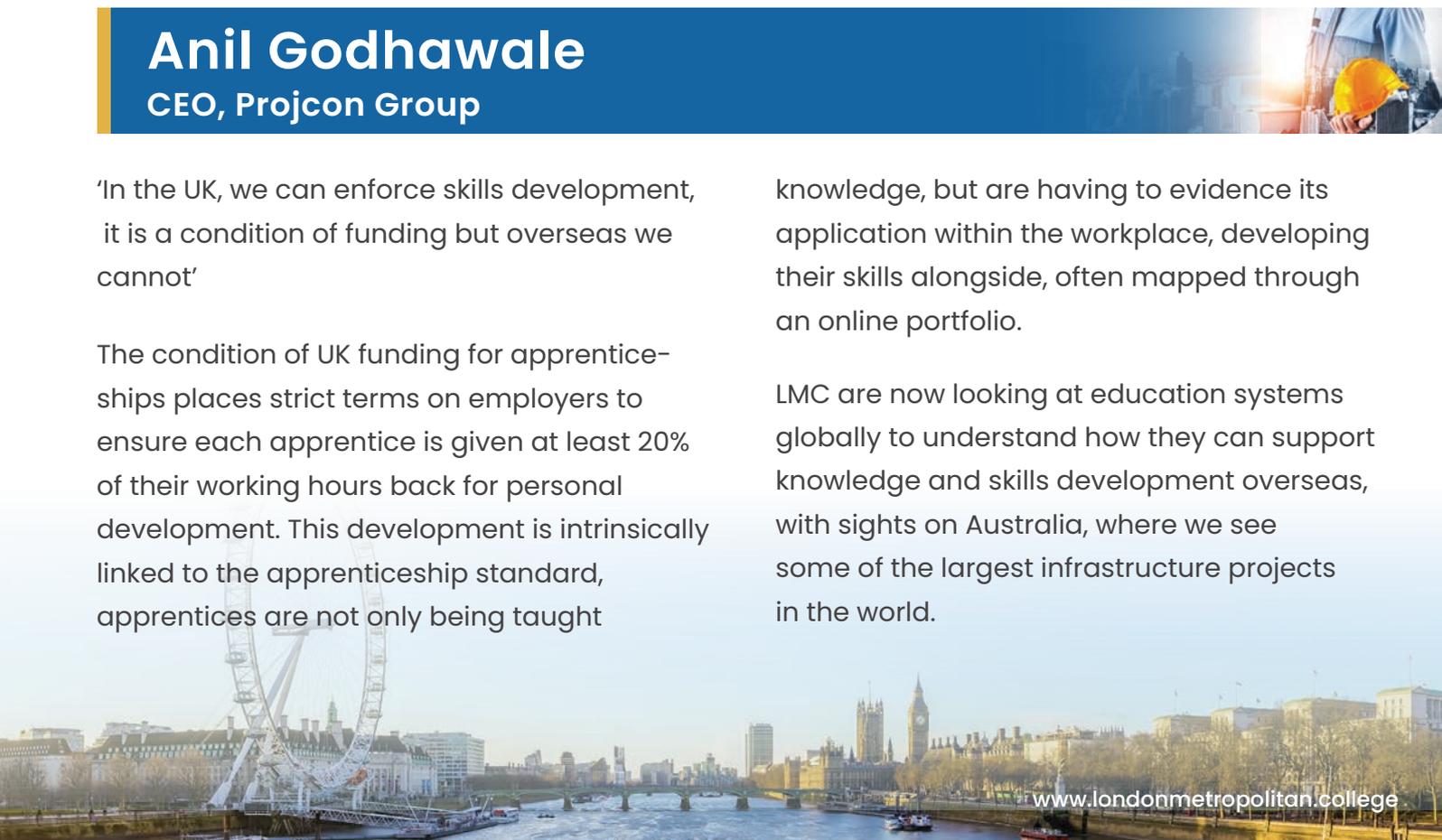
Anil Godhawale CEO, Projcon Group

'In the UK, we can enforce skills development, it is a condition of funding but overseas we cannot'

The condition of UK funding for apprenticeships places strict terms on employers to ensure each apprentice is given at least 20% of their working hours back for personal development. This development is intrinsically linked to the apprenticeship standard, apprentices are not only being taught

knowledge, but are having to evidence its application within the workplace, developing their skills alongside, often mapped through an online portfolio.

LMC are now looking at education systems globally to understand how they can support knowledge and skills development overseas, with sights on Australia, where we see some of the largest infrastructure projects in the world.



Attracting Talent

Creating career pathways and qualifications is an excellent way to standardise the future of project control but equally important is talent, how do we attract younger people into an industry that is barely known and currently has relatively little exposure?

Efforts need to be done at multiple levels, building awareness in industry, across government and employers. Acknowledging this is a profession, promoting this as a career to a wider audience and helping people to understand what it is all about.

One way to make this an attractive career route in the UK is to sit this within the engineering classification, because of the way it operates and the technical elements that are associated with it, however as its application grows, particularly in the public sector or creative sectors, we also need to be careful about placing this in a box.

Project control should be adaptable to industry needs but the core standardisation must remain to support the credibility of training and the career pathways into the sector.

Since our first introduction of the PC Apprenticeship in 2018, we have seen interest grow year on year.

Part of the awareness building has come through national recognition as an apprenticeship standard with government endorsement, this has been reinforced by industry who have launched their first few recruitment cycles targeting school leavers into industry and our own Project Control Expo that continues to raise the profile of PC. The introduction of industry awards in 2018, and the expansion of award categories, particularly our UK Apprentices of the Year has provided new entrants with an aspirational vision and has really celebrated and shone a light on the great work and new ideas young people can bring to the industry.

What about the future of project control and its adaptability?

In many respects a project controller can be seen as a mini business manager, particularly when looking at cost, schedule, and risk. Ultimately, they try to match to the deliverables and strategy, to ensure alignment. However, the application into wider industry is not without its challenges.



Anil Godhawale

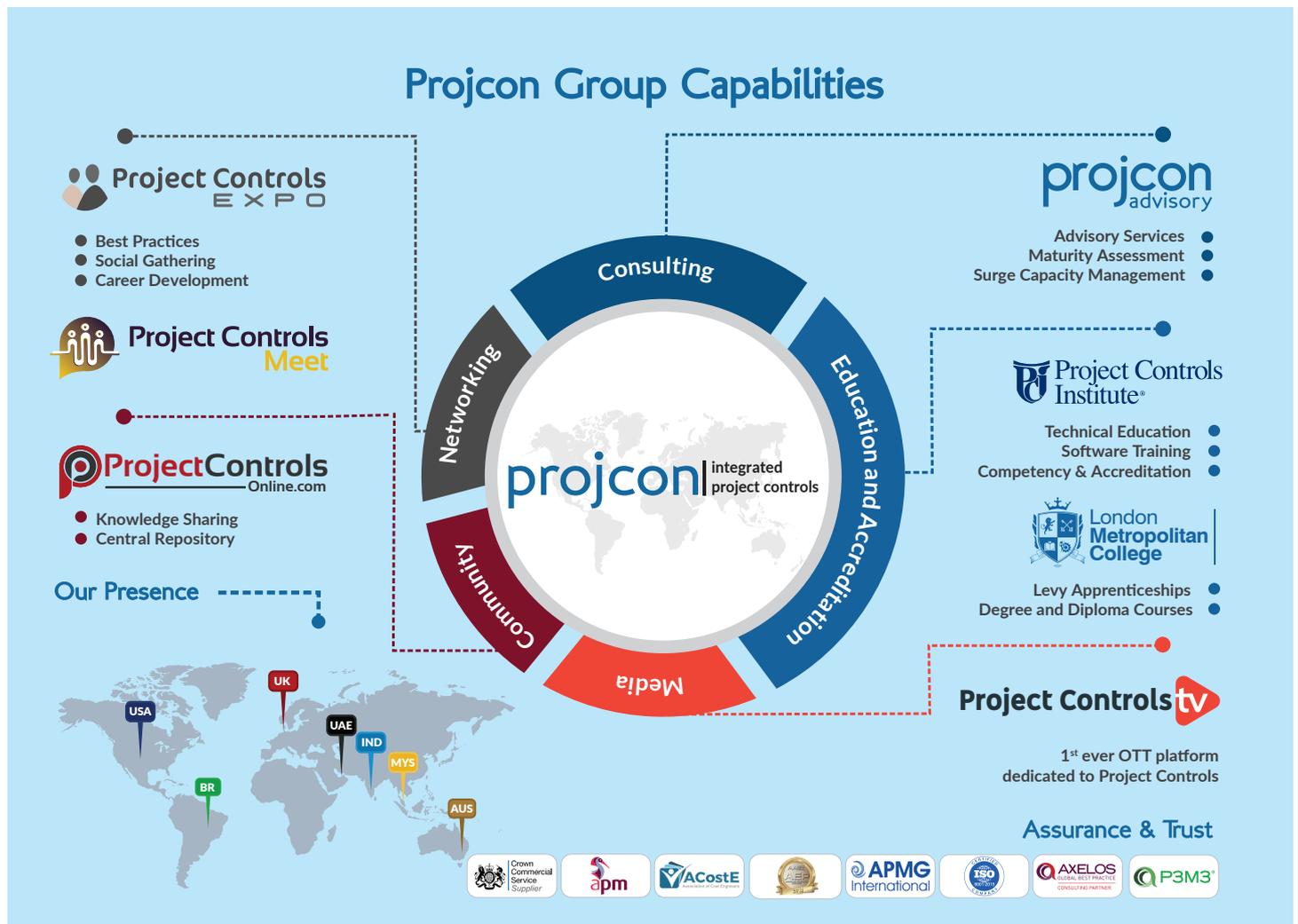
CEO Projcon Group

'There is less awareness outside of traditional industry and we have seen a bit of a pushback. Ultimately though once you have applied and seen the benefits, word spreads and we are now at the stage in the UK where we are seeing a wider application of project control in new and emerging industries. When we apply project control to social projects, for example police or prisons reform, when we look at total project spend, it is no less than a capital project. Theoretically, they can apply project controls principles, but the challenge is traditionally they work with old frameworks, and it is difficult to change the way they work.'

'It is naturally more challenging to change the

approach in the public sector, particularly when you are also dealing with bureaucracy, it makes the job that little bit harder but with the right encouragement there is no reason why social projects should not start to embrace project controls within their organisations.'

At LMC we are seeing a continuing uptrend towards public sector engagement, including the NHS and regional councils paying consideration to both project management and project control. There is little wonder, when these projects are funded through the public spend, but equally interesting is the application of project control to the creative sector, with agencies running project control principles to deliver campaigns to clients on time and in budget and it is great to see how innovation continues to drive this sector, the future for project control is certainly bright!





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