

# FUJITSU UK

## Developing Early-Career Project Managers

### CHALLENGE:

#### Learning That Makes a Difference

*What's the best way to prepare project managers at the start of their careers?*

Fujitsu UK's Program and Project Services (P&PS) team realized that it **needed a new way to develop project management capability** in its early-career professionals.

**Fujitsu** is a multinational information and communications technology equipment and services company with more than \$35 billion in annual revenue (2020).

### CONTEXT:

#### A Need for Project-Specific Training

Fujitsu UK's **traditional approach to project manager development** was to hire a small class of university graduates and apprentices and put them through a two-year general business management training program. This **fell short for four reasons**:

- **The training did not include any project management content**, focusing instead on general concepts and skills such as leadership and time management,
- **It failed to address the needs of apprentices.**
- **The two-year time horizon was not long enough** to develop the depth of project management capability that the job required.
- **The attrition rate of employees who went through the program proved problematic.** While it was no higher than Fujitsu's overall attrition rate, the small size of the program meant that every individual who left the profession was a significant loss.

*"A two-year graduate program isn't going to turn you into a project manager. It's going to be the experience you get delivering projects as well as some formal learning and a strong support network. You need the opportunities to fail and get back up again—to gain scars."*

*— Sinead Graf, Head of P&PS Early Career Initiative*

## SOLUTION:

### Early-Career Development Framework

Fujitsu UK developed a framework built on three pillars—structured learning, learning from others, and experiential rotations—intended to span the first five years of a participant’s career. The framework’s design is informed by the [70-20-10 model for learning and development](#), which recognizes that most learning takes place on the job.

This professional development opportunity is funded by a government initiative to support apprenticeships through structured learning programs that lead to industry-recognized certifications.

**It begins with a three-week structured learning and induction (onboarding) program** that covers essentials including an overview of the organization and its operations, foundations of project management, and general business concepts such as profit and loss and stakeholder management.

At the end of the course, **participants are placed in a rotational assignment in the program management office (PMO)** for the first six to eight months.

**“If you understand the way the PMO operates, supports, and controls the environments in which projects work, then you will be a better project manager,”** says Sinead Graf, who developed and led the initiative for its first two years. “You will understand the impact that your work has on other people.”

**After the first rotation, participants take on a new assignment,** preferably in the same sector that they’ve gained experience with during their rotation in the PMO. They manage a small project for the next six months before being assigned to a different project in a different sector for a rotation that could last up to a year.

***“This program has transformed our ability to create consistently high-performing young professionals, driving improved customer experience and outcomes whilst ensuring the participants have every opportunity to grow their careers in a great DX environment.”***

- Nichola Clark,  
Head Project &  
Programme  
Services UK and  
Global Community

***Having the rotation system and experience matrix means we know the early career professional can hit the ground running and immediately slot into delivery and customer facing teams.”***

- Ian Prangley,  
Public Sector  
Projects Delivery  
Lead

**The support systems for each participant include a buddy from the previous class of project management trainees, a coach, an assignment manager, a senior leadership team (SLT) sponsor within the P&PS organization, and the head of the early-career initiative.**

**After two years in the program, all participants are assessed** to determine overall progress and identify strengths. **Over the last three years of the program, participants go through at least three more rotations**, though some cycle through four or five positions during that time.

**"A strong support network has been in place at every step to provide mentoring and guidance where required."**

- Adam Lewis,  
Class of 2019

## RESULTS:

### Higher Employee Engagement Scores

Surveys taken after six months in the program and six months later found that participants reported the greatest gains in growth and sense of purpose.

|             | July 2020 | Dec. 2020 | Change |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| Growth      | 69%       | 83%       | +14%   |
| Purpose     | 53%       | 60%       | +7%    |
| Career      | 63%       | 68%       | +5%    |
| Engagement  | 69%       | 73%       | +4%    |
| Recognition | 69%       | 68%       | -1%    |