

# Baker Dearing Educational Trust

## Effective UTC sponsor engagement





## Introduction

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) only exist because employers across a variety of industries (from digital to health, from engineering to creative media) recognise that the widening technical skills gaps in their businesses are not being met by the current education system. Each UTC is also sponsored by a university to provide a clear pathway for students into higher education. Between them, these sponsors (employers and a university) provide a range of activities to support the unique character and educational contribution of a UTC.

This guide brings together the collective experience of UTC Principals and Governors, and staff from the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, in developing a framework for effective and sustainable sponsor engagement. It will help senior UTC leaders and Governors to audit, assess, and strengthen their engagement with employers and a university, with the aim of improving the quality of education experienced by all students at their UTC.

Truly effective sponsor engagement is systemic throughout the UTC: from Governors' vision and ambition, through implementation by senior staff, to teachers' curriculum delivery and challenge. Its impact can be seen in students' knowledge, skills, personal growth and ultimately, the destinations they achieve.

The guide presents six key elements observed in successful UTCs which together build a framework for effective sponsor engagement and high impact.

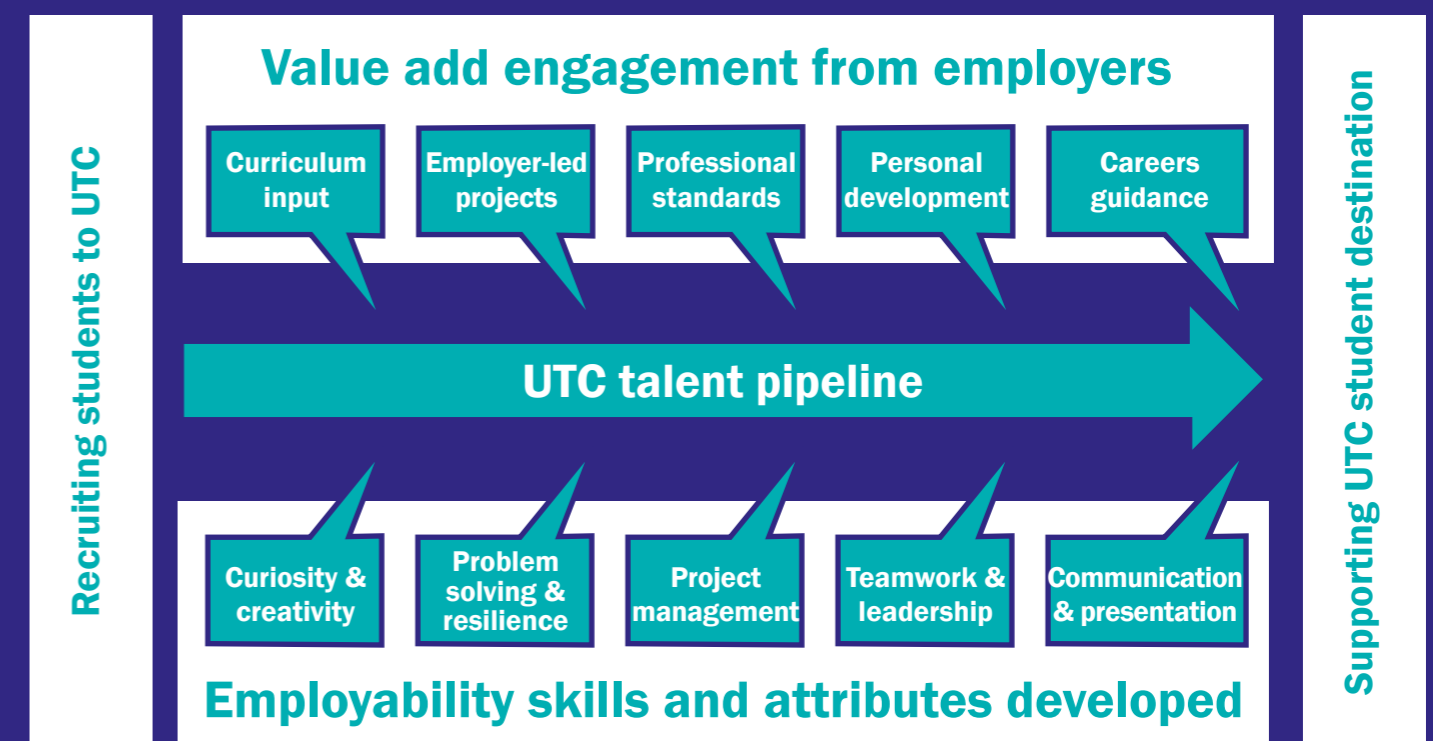
Where appropriate, accompanying the description of each element is a list of 'standards' which illustrate good practice. In addition to these key elements, this guide also includes a range of case studies from across the UTC programme, which demonstrate their implementation.

# Key elements of good sponsor engagement

## 1. Clear sponsor policy and plan

Effective sponsor, employer and university, engagement requires a consistent approach to implementation. As a starting point, a UTC has a succinct employer and university engagement **policy** from which all else follows. This policy sets out the vision, ambition, and purpose for sponsor engagement across the UTC, and for its students and staff. This policy is 'owned', and regularly updated, by Governors and senior staff at the UTC.

At the same time, a UTC's employer and university engagement **plan** identifies and schedules a range of activities designed to meet the aims of the policy. The UTC 'talent pipeline' is a helpful device for communicating the contributions to students' experience that the employer and university engagement plan should deliver. The 'pipeline' metaphor relates to a student's journey through the UTC, along which the benefits of his/her employer and university engagement activity accrue. The diagram below provides a practical example; however individual UTCs are likely to shape their own, in terms of priorities and terminology.



## 2. Sponsor representation on the governing body

A UTC's governing body is the 'gatekeeper' of the distinctive vision of the UTC. To ensure that this vision represents the needs of the UTC's sponsors, the majority of Trustees on its governing body must be nominated by the employers and university. In turn, the governing body's vision shapes the UTC's curriculum and purpose.

### Effective sponsor-nominated Governors:

- Ensure the governing body's vision is reviewed regularly so that it remains relevant in a rapidly evolving technical and economic environment.
- Review the curriculum and its purpose annually, and receive at least termly reports of its implementation. Progress made by all learners along the talent pipeline into the target sectors should be assessed as part of this review.
- Assist school leaders in securing the right level of commitment from employers and the university to deliver the UTC's curriculum.
- Visit the UTC regularly, and observe the delivery of technical education and the skills exhibited by students. They should also encourage the utilization of industry standards in terms of productivity, behaviour and health and safety, and add value to sponsor-led projects.
- Monitor and evaluate student destination outcomes on an annual basis. Conclusions and recommendations are acknowledged in the UTC's school evaluation form and carried through to the school improvement plan.



## 3. Sponsor engagement in the curriculum

As part of their commitment to a UTC, each sponsor makes a material contribution to its curriculum planning and delivery. This adds value to the quality and relevance of the UTC's education and leads to superior student leaver destinations.

The 'talent pipeline' identifies the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and aptitudes that young people need to succeed and flourish in their future careers, and should be embedded into the UTC's curriculum.

### Effective sponsors:

- Support senior leaders in mapping the curriculum into the target progression routes. As a consequence, a clear link exists between the curriculum and the knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes expected by employers. This is reviewed on a regular basis.
- Ensure the curriculum has sufficient stretch, challenge, application to real-life situations, and technical insights to be relevant for their needs.
- Provide an appropriate level of resource and expertise to support the UTC with curriculum delivery. This could be:
  - Development and support for employer and university projects
  - Specialist input to key lessons/lectures
  - Support to teachers and UTC technicians in providing specialist knowledge and training
  - Access to specialist equipment at the university or employer premises
  - Support for specialism-related clubs, competitions, and challenges
- Release an appropriate level of resource to contribute to the personal development of students in the UTC. This support includes:
  - Provision of personal mentors for individual students
  - Small group subject support from employees or apprentices, and in the case of the university, undergraduate or PhD students.
  - Input to assemblies or theme days and activities
  - Input to careers advice and guidance programmes
- Confirm the value of their engagement through student feedback (end of year survey or otherwise).
- Provide UTC staff with access to their internal training programmes where appropriate.

## 4. Sponsor engagement lead

The effort needed to commence, build and sustain relationships with employers and a university sponsor is extensive. This requires leadership and capacity from an effective individual, the sponsor engagement lead, who understands the UTC vision, its curriculum and purpose, and crucially, the function and ingredients of the 'talent pipeline'.

### Effective sponsor engagement leads:

- Are afforded sufficient time and resource to execute the role effectively. This individual should have strong communication and relationship building skills, as well as up-to-date knowledge of the region's skills and business environment.
- Have access to, and full confidence of, the UTC Principal and Senior Leadership Team. This individual should co-ordinate the UTC's employer and university engagement planning group (see below), and prepare regular reports for the Senior Leadership Team which are shared for discussion and action.
- Have the credibility and expertise to initiate and manage external conversations at a senior level; to work with employers and the university to identify future skills needs; and to co-ordinate efforts with UTC curriculum leaders.
- Have ambitious targets for employer and university engagement impact in the curriculum. Student feedback should confirm that their expectations of the employer experience are being met.



## 5. Planning and implementation of sponsor activities

A UTC's range of employer and university activities must be planned effectively, with appropriate processes in place to ensure they are implemented properly. A UTC's sponsors must be confident that the resources they are committing are used successfully and professionally, as they would expect from their own organisations.

### Effective planning:

- Involves employers and university partners in the annual planning of sponsor activities. The employer and university engagement plan should recognise and respond to variations in the level of resource and nature of expertise to be provided by sponsors, as well as the desired objectives of sponsors from their engagement with the UTC.
- Is driven by the UTC's employer and university engagement planning group, which meets on a regular basis (e.g. termly) to develop, implement and monitor the operational success of the employer and university engagement plan. The planning group should include sponsor representatives.
- Identifies and schedules activities which make essential contributions to:
  - The UTC's curriculum
  - Students' personal development
  - The UTC's marketing activities
- Ensures that procedures are communicated to, and supported by, all sponsors. These processes could be for:
  - Protocols and lines of responsibility and communication
  - Resources and funding implications
  - Risk assessment and safeguarding imperatives
  - Training needs and support mechanisms
  - Success measures
- Is communicated to all relevant stakeholders in a timely manner. This includes UTC staff, parents, and students. Ideally, this information should be published on the UTC's website.

## 6. Marketing and recruitment

University and employer sponsors are critical to a UTC's public profile and positioning. Strong sponsor presence and recognition drive up student numbers, and facilitate the recruitment of high quality staff.

### Successful marketing activities ensure that:

- A clear and distinct 'offer' is articulated to parents and pupils, conveyed by a credible and inspiring 'broadcast' message. Students and parents are attracted to a UTC by its link to skills and future careers.
- Students can speak with confidence about the value of their many activities with employers and the university, and the advantage these experiences provide in their career progression.
- The UTC's marketing strategy is developed in collaboration with employers and the university, who each provide insight into target markets and employment trends.
- Partner employers and university have a clear presence on the UTC's website, social media platforms and in marketing materials.
- Partner employers and university support and contribute to the UTC's public events, such as open evenings and awards ceremonies.
- Sponsor-nominated Governors use their valuable networks to promote the UTC throughout the local community and to attract a range of active employer partners.



## Case studies

We are grateful to the UTCs below for permission to present an aspect of their employer engagement work within our case studies.

- 1. Activate Learning Education Trust:**  
The Pipeline Programme: teams-based work placements
- 2. Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology:**  
Employer engagement planned effectively, and employer time is ringfenced
- 3. Energy Coast UTC:**  
A UTC is part of an employer's pipeline
- 4. Ron Dearing UTC:**  
Governance, brand and strategy. Harnessing the power of employer relationships
- 5. UTC Norfolk:**  
Dedication of a member of staff for employer engagement
- 6. UTC Oxfordshire:**  
Structuring and securing curriculum time for employer-led projects
- 7. UTC South Durham:**  
Dedication of a member of staff for employer engagement
- 8. UTC Leeds:**  
Enhancing the quality of education through stretching employer-led projects

## Activate Learning Education Trust (ALET) Pipeline Programme: Key processes introduced to support Pipeline Programme (teams-based work placements)

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor engagement lead** – all ALET UTCs have a staff member that manages relationships with employers and coordinates Pipeline Programme communications with all stakeholders
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – employers and universities are provided with clear schedules for the academic year that are supported by structured feedback review calls, group calls with employers and universities, and training provided for employer representatives
- **Marketing and recruitment** – employers are expected to post details of their activities following each Pipeline Programme day, in order to support the key messaging of the UTC's student recruitment programmes

Today, ALET has four UTCs in its multi-academy trust. Scaling employer engagement activities using a common model, as each UTC joined its trust, was vital to ensure that the increasing number of work experience placements could be met for each UTC's technical specialism. Measuring impact from employer activities in a consistent manner was also necessary. At the same time, while employers wanted to provide experience that enabled students to work in teams, they did not have the experience or capacity to design or implement such programmes. The Pipeline Programme allocates one day per half term for teams of students to work.

At the same time, while employers wanted to provide experience that enabled students to work in teams, they did not have the experience or capacity to design or implement such programmes. The Pipeline Programme allocates one day per half term for teams of students to work with their Pipeline Programme employer. For more details please visit [www.aletpipeline.org.uk](http://www.aletpipeline.org.uk)

### Case study: Fujitsu

Fujitsu Defence and National Security recruits up to 100 apprentices each year. The firm wanted to engage with both UTC Reading and UTC Swindon to identify suitable candidates, and to raise awareness of their career alternatives. The Pipeline Programme enables Fujitsu to work with up to 50 students per year in a structured process, and to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of each student. Fujitsu views this as an opportunity to undertake an extended assessment of these students, and values the chance to see them performing in teams over the course of 1-2 years. [Fujitsu Pipeline Testimonial video.](#)

### Benefits to Fujitsu:

- Increased numbers of successful apprenticeship applications
- Staff CPD in working with young people
- Working with other employers in the region

**“We were incredibly impressed, the ability to work with a large number of students in a structured way across UTC sites has helped us to develop our own processes and plans for future engagement.”**

**Mark Cone**  
Service Director  
Fujitsu

**Isaac**  
Year 13 UTC Student

### Students select their preferred Pipeline Programme employers

Each student selects his / her top 3 Pipeline Programme employers in order of preference, and is then allocated to a Pipeline Programme employer based on demand. All students find out their designated Pipeline Programme employer on the same day, which creates a 'buzz' at each UTC. Salient technology is used to streamline this process for over 400 students

### Benefits:

- Students are excited about their Pipeline Programme activities
- Students are highly engaged with their Pipeline Programme employer
- UTC staff administration time is reduced by over 50%

### Every Pipeline Programme employer attends training workshops with other employers from across all ALET UTCs

A simple schedule of events is provided for all employers.

### Benefits:

- An employer community is created
- Time needed to coordinate and direct the activities of many employers is reduced dramatically
- Engagement from those employers that might not be fully committed is increased

### Every Pipeline Programme employer has calls scheduled with the employer engagement team for planning and feedback every half term.

### Benefits:

- Plan for each day is reviewed with employer to ensure high quality engagement
- Regular structured communications enable strong relationships to be formed
- UTCs can request additional support from employers for open events, talks, workshops, marketing

### Student feedback is provided to employers after each Pipeline Programme day

Each student completes feedback using Microsoft Forms, which provides detailed insights into experiences with each Pipeline employer.

### Benefits:

- ALET UTCs are notified of iterative process improvements
- Employers receive evidence to validate their activities (useful for internal and external communications)
- Qualitative and quantitative data enable completion of trend analysis to determine student satisfaction and employer performance, which supports employers' CPD evaluations and helps to identify those students that are suitable for apprenticeship recruitment or additional support



## Cambridge Academy for Science & Technology – “The Challenge”: Effective planning of employer engagement and ringfencing of employer time

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor engagement in the curriculum** – each project has clear and explicit links to the curriculum, designed to complement and stretch the specialism subjects at the UTC.
- **Sponsor engagement lead** – each project is designed, coordinated, and overseen by a senior member of staff at the UTC, who communicates with existing sponsors and creates opportunities for future projects
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – employer projects are aligned to the students’ development and a clear, structured timetable provides ‘bandwidth’ to embed projects and to create focus and attention from all UTC staff.

Since opening, the UTC in Cambridge has reserved one day per week for The Challenge, employer-led projects which are designed and delivered by industry, with 4 key objectives:

1. Bringing science education to life
2. Making science education relevant
3. Providing an insight into scientific careers
4. Learning practical skills

Years 9-11 have 4 lessons per week allocated to The Challenge, and undertake specific projects. Years 12-13 have 5 lessons per week allocated to The Challenge, and choose between a range of projects.

Each year, students in Years 9-13 undertake multiple projects, which last 8-9 weeks. The UTC now works with a group of employers that deliver the same project each year, and this is now in a mature phase.

The UTC has a generic project model, which supports employers in incorporating the development of employability skills, careers advice and guidance, and PSHE into their project design.

Each year group runs their projects on a specified day of the week, which is recognised by teachers, students, and employers within the timetable. This ensures the continuity of teacher support for each year group for the projects that are run throughout the year.

Students receive consistent communications from the UTC on the importance of project-based learning, and the UTC has worked hard to quantify and qualify the outcomes of projects by linking outcomes to external qualifications, such as:

- EPQ (Extended Project Qualification)
- EDT Industrial Cadets Award
- Baker Award

### Challenge Day

Time is dedicated in each project for students to prepare for the Challenge Day, where they present completed projects to employers, parents, teachers, and the local business community. This:

- Recognises employer commitment and support for projects
- Provides a sense of pride and achievement for students and parents
- Demonstrates the high quality of students’ work to all stakeholders
- Raises the profile of the UTC in the business community
- Enables supporting employers to identify talent and to recognise those students of particular merit
- Provides opportunities in the UTC academic year for new contacts to be invited to meet students and employers in a relaxed environment

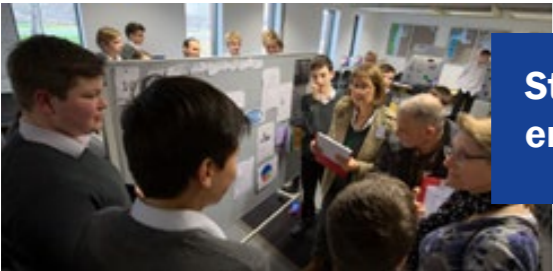
The Challenge - current projects

Year	Employer	Subject
9	Internal	Photosynthesis
9	Internal	Biofuels
9	Internal	Climate Change
10	Cancer Research UK	Mouse House
10	AstraZeneca	Drug Development
10	Mott MacDonald	Hydropower
11	Internal	Robotics
11	Mott MacDonald	Addenbrooke's Railway Station
12/13	Babraham Institute	Protein Challenge
12/13	Zeiss/Gurdon Institue	Microscopy
12/13	Redgate/AstraZenca	Bioinformatics
12/13	Cambridge Water/Anglian Water	Water Management
12/13	ARM	EDT Industrial Cadets
12/13	Internal	Robot Arm

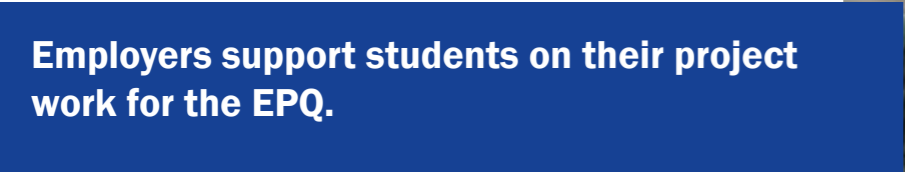
Between projects, the UTC schedules employer activities that support PSHE, careers advice and guidance, and the development of employability skills. Such activities are coordinated with employers that do not run The Challenge projects. This provides students with a high level of exposure to various organisations and industries.

Top tips:

- Try to develop projects around a specific industry
- Seek to find an employer lead for every project
- Note that the level of employer participation can vary from one project to another
- Avoid ‘one size fits all’
- Try to always incorporate a workplace visit



Students showcase their projects to parents, employers, and the wider business community.



Employers support students on their project work for the EPQ.



PSHE, CEIAG and employability skills are embedded into projects.

Energy Coast UTC: A UTC is part of an employer’s ‘talent pipeline’

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor representation on the governing body** – Energy Coast UTC has a significant number of Governors from both the sponsoring university and employer partners, who are actively involved in shaping the provision at the UTC.
- **Sponsor engagement in the curriculum** – the UTC welcomes employers regularly into the classroom to deliver projects and to provide briefings on various technical skills, which enriches the offer and motivates many of the UTC students to start careers with the UTC sponsors
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – Energy Coast UTC enjoys strategic relationships with those organisations within the nuclear industry, who collaborate to define a high quality schedule of activities for students throughout their learning journey at the UTC

With a clearly defined structure for employer partners, Energy Coast has secured significant commitments from employers to support students in technical and employability skills. Situated in Workington in North West England, close to Sellafield, Energy Coast is well-located to support the nuclear industry with the skills it needs.

Energy Coast UTC has a strong partnership with Morgan Sindall, and with many organisations that are involved with Sellafield, as well as with Energus to develop a cyber security skills pipeline for the nuclear industry.

Morgan Sindall has supported the UTC since 2014 and in 2019 became a platinum partner, committing to provide funding for the UTC. Morgan Sindall offers a comprehensive programme of support that develops young people, so that they are ready to join the firm’s Level 3 apprenticeship programme.

Students attend Outward Bound courses and work experience, and regularly meet the Morgan Sindall team on site at the UTC. Uniforms and PPE are funded by the company, which has also sponsored a room at the UTC. Extended work placements have been provided in preparation for T Levels.

Morgan Sindall also has senior representation on the governing body.

**“Our partnership with the Energy Coast UTC is a terrific example of how we can positively impact communities where we work, and is providing us with a blueprint of how we would like to work with other UTCs nationally. The school continues to flourish, and it is a privilege to work with such a fantastic group of teachers and students, many of whom are benefitting directly from our apprenticeship scheme.”**

**Simon Smith, Managing Director, Morgan Sindall Infrastructure**

Energus, which is funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and nuclear employers, is contracted by Energy Coast UTC to deliver a Level 3 cyber security curriculum for students. This serves as a ‘feeder’ for Level 4 cyber security analyst apprenticeships for the nuclear industry in the region.

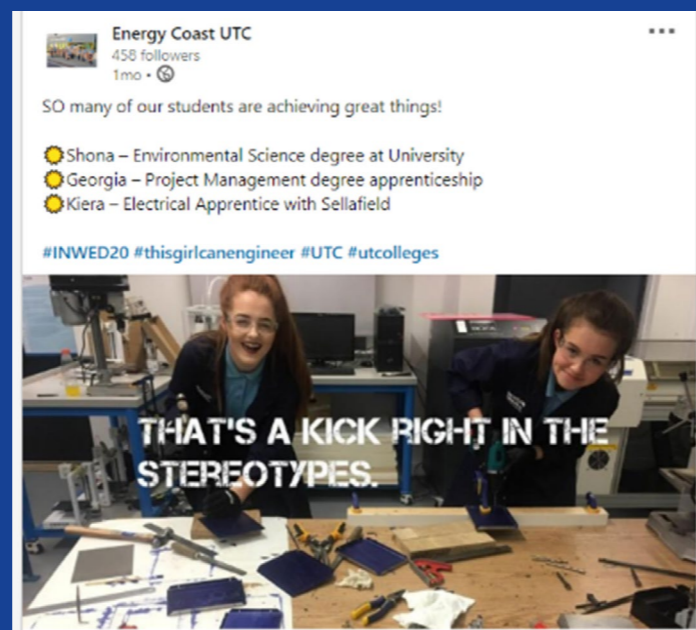
Energus is located next door to the UTC, and has industry-leading facilities; these include cyber lab, where professional training is conducted, to which students have access, and which coordinates regular employer engagement for students across the nuclear employer community incorporating talks and workshops from various other organisations. Students receive training and professional qualifications, enabling them to enter the local and regional nuclear ecosystem, either as apprentices or via university, to protect CNI (Critical National Infrastructure).

**“Pupils receive an excellent technical education. They take part in meaningful and wide-ranging academic and work-related learning activities with national and international companies who work locally.... They have had first-rate careers guidance and many excellent opportunities to develop high-quality skills, which makes them very employable.”**

Ofsted report, June 2019, ‘Outstanding in all areas’



**Energy Coast UTC uses social media to promote students that secure destinations with key employer partners, and highlights the success of female students.**



## Ron Dearing UTC: Governance, brand, and strategy: harnessing the power of employer relationships

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor representation on the governing body** – the UTC governing body is mainly comprised of senior representatives from the founding partner employers. With a clear and business-like approach to running the UTC, the Governors not only are integral to the strategic direction of the UTC, but also meet regularly with UTC staff to ensure high standards are maintained at all times
- **Sponsor engagement in the curriculum** – the UTC ensures that each unit in specialist subjects includes an employer-led project
- **Sponsor engagement lead** – all employer meetings at the UTC are attended by either the Principal or a member of the SLT
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – meetings are attended by senior decision makers within sponsor organisations, with clearly defined expectations and objectives. At these regular meetings, historic and planned activities are reviewed by the SLT and employers
- **Marketing and recruitment** – each sponsor organisation undertakes regular PR, and also contributes to the marketing activities of the UTC, to ensure that a professional and cohesive marketing strategy is executed

### Our founding partners

These major local organisations are key to the success of RDUTC. They give us unique industry insight that helps shape our curriculum and design real projects for our students to boost their development.



On 4th September 2017, Ron Dearing UTC opened its doors and welcomed the first cohort of students. Prior to this, the UTC had worked hard with its founding partners to write a business plan and to develop a clearly defined marketing strategy that resulted in securing Ofsted outstanding in all areas, which was achieved at the first inspection in 2020.

The endorsement and involvement of the founding partners has always been a critical factor in building the reputation of the UTC within the local business community. Together they provide the UTC with the following benefits:

- **Governance** – each of the founding partners has representation from the highest level within its organisation on the UTC’s **governing body**
- **Business community engagement** – each of the founding partners proactively engages with the wider business community to recruit additional partners
- **Strategic marketing for partners** – the offer from each partner is clearly defined; for example, a **sponsorship brochure** details each partner’s commitment, including its financial contribution
- **Design and delivery of curriculum** – every specialist unit is delivered with an employer project
- **Leading edge facilities and equipment** – industry-standard equipment has been provided, with specialist UTC staff trained in how to use it
- **Significant funding** – this is made available to support refreshing technology and ensuring SLT capacity to manage all areas of employer engagement
- **Student development and support** – extensive resources are provided for business mentoring, work experience, careers advice and guidance.

- **Employability Skills Sub-committee**
  - Members: SLT & Partners' Directors of HR
  - Monthly meetings
  - Agrees target generic employability skills
  - Develops and over-sees Generic projects
  - Leads CEIAG
  - Co-ordinates Work Experience
  - Co-ordinates Apprenticeship recruitment
  - Co-ordinates Careers Expos
  - Reviews impact to inform future planning

- **Curriculum Development Sub-committee**
  - Members: SLT & Partners' Middle Management
  - Termly meetings
  - Agrees target specialist skills
  - Agrees Qualifications
  - Develops and over-sees projects
  - Reviews impact to inform future planning

**Ron Dearing UTC holds regular meetings with partners with specific remits and objectives.**

The founding partners leverage their own marketing capabilities to support PR and ensure the UTC is regularly in the news. Examples of press and partner coverage:

[Siemens UK chief executive article](#)

[Spencer engineering Executive Chairman call for action](#)

[KCOM news article](#)

[Hull news article](#)

[Yorkshire Business Daily article](#)

The founding partners are recognised on the UTC's website and are presented as an integral component of the UTC's operations.

The UTC building benefits from partner branding, with facilities sponsored by the founding partners and other organisations, in order to provide students with a high-quality environment in which to study and develop. Facilities include:

- Smith & Nephew Conference Centre
- KCOM Digital Lab
- Siemens Gamesa Digital Lab
- Arco Digital Lab
- RB Innovation Zone
- Spencer Innovation Zone
- University of Hull Lecture Theatre
- Fujitsu Innovation Hub

Sarah Pashley, Principal at Ron Dearing UTC, credits the commitment and involvement of its partners with the successes that the UTC and students have achieved, and offers the following tips for success:

- Employer engagement is an integral part of curriculum design and delivery
- Being a partner means proactive involvement – it is a privilege
- Have a defined number of projects and do not make them too complicated; students should feel confident in completing every employer project
- The UTC's priorities are always higher than the employer's, to focus on desired and required outcomes for students
- Employer engagement is just as important as academic priorities. This is a UTC not a school, and students and parents expect a high level of involvement

## UTC Norfolk: A dedicated member of staff for employer engagement

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor engagement lead** – UTC Norfolk has sufficient time to cultivate, nurture, and manage relationships with employers and sponsors
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – the UTC has a collaborative approach with employers, often co-developing projects that are delivered to multiple year groups
- **Marketing and recruitment** – the UTC is particularly active on LinkedIn and other social media, recognising and thanking employers, and their employees, for their involvement, effort, and impact on the students.

Sophie Skipp, Employer Engagement Lead, has been in post at UTC Norfolk for a year and is building strong relationships with key employers.

Sophie has a business background and is an advocate of networking with the business community, to raise awareness of the UTC and to identify partners and supporters. Sophie is very active on social media, particularly LinkedIn.

As a full time employee, Sophie has the capacity to promote proactively the good work of employers, and to recognise the efforts of individuals within employer organisations, to create and to maintain commitment from the people that are involved 'on the ground' with the students. This effort ensures that engagements become regular activities that can appear on the schedule in coming years, and that employers and their employees are motivated to reflect upon and adapt their approach to have a tangible impact on student development.

Being afforded the time to cultivate strategic relationships with key employers has resulted in great successes for Sophie and the UTC. In July 2020 Aviva, a long-time supporter, delivered a week-long 'hackathon' for 80 students via MS Teams. Students were tasked to work in teams to develop solutions to challenges that Aviva faced.

### AVIVA RELATIONSHIP BACKGROUND

- Regularly attend UTCN ILG meetings
- Innovative business area recruiting apprentices
- Break in relationship for restructure
- CV and Interview Skills Day
- Regularly attend careers fairs and networking events
- School trips
- All this is helped by former UTCN student joining Aviva as an apprentice...

### MEET TONI...

- Attended 2017 hackathon event
- Visited Aviva on school trip
- Applied for apprentice role
- 2020 Aviva mentor

*"You can't be what you can't see"*  
Marian Wright Edelman

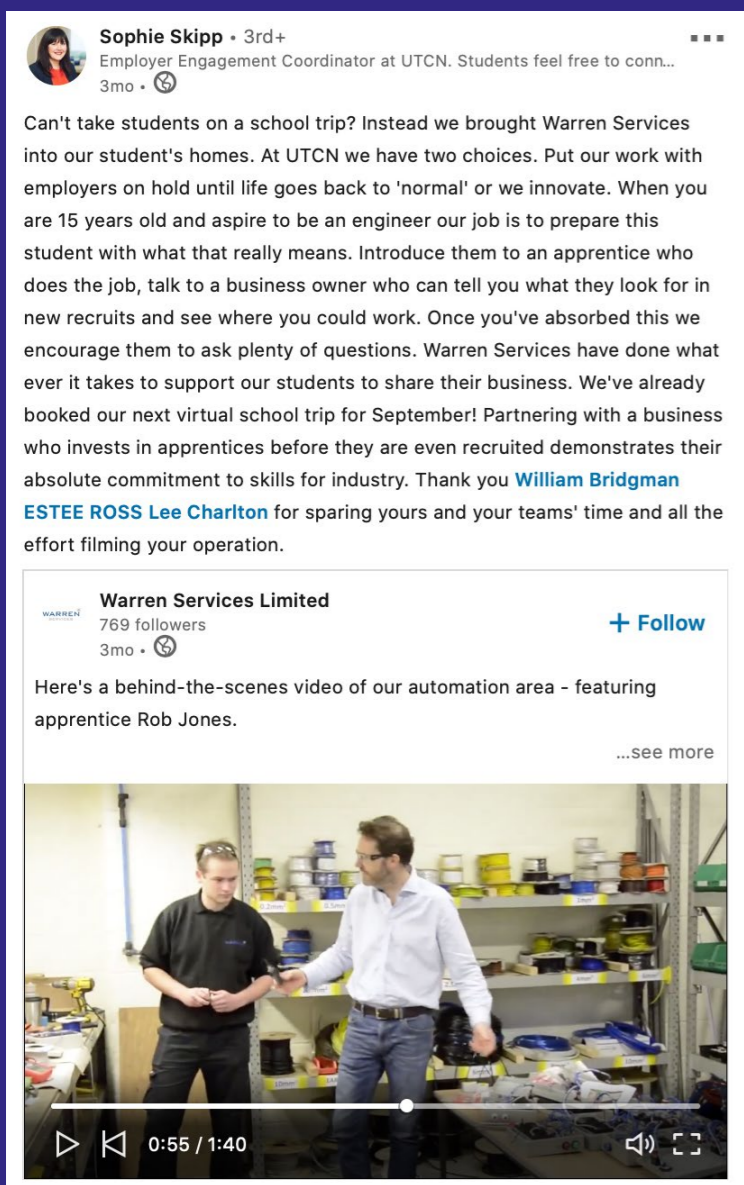
The planning required to coordinate the various activities for this programme involved preparing Aviva mentors, UTC staff, and students, creating MS Teams environments for each student hackathon team, and setting up Whats App groups so that students could communicate with Aviva mentors in line with safeguarding requirements.

As a result of Sophie's ability to manage the relationship, Aviva is now exploring how the company can engage with the wider UTC network. **Key to their considerations will be whether a UTC has a dedicated member of staff that can provide a similar level of service, as they seek to develop their relationship with providers of technical education.**

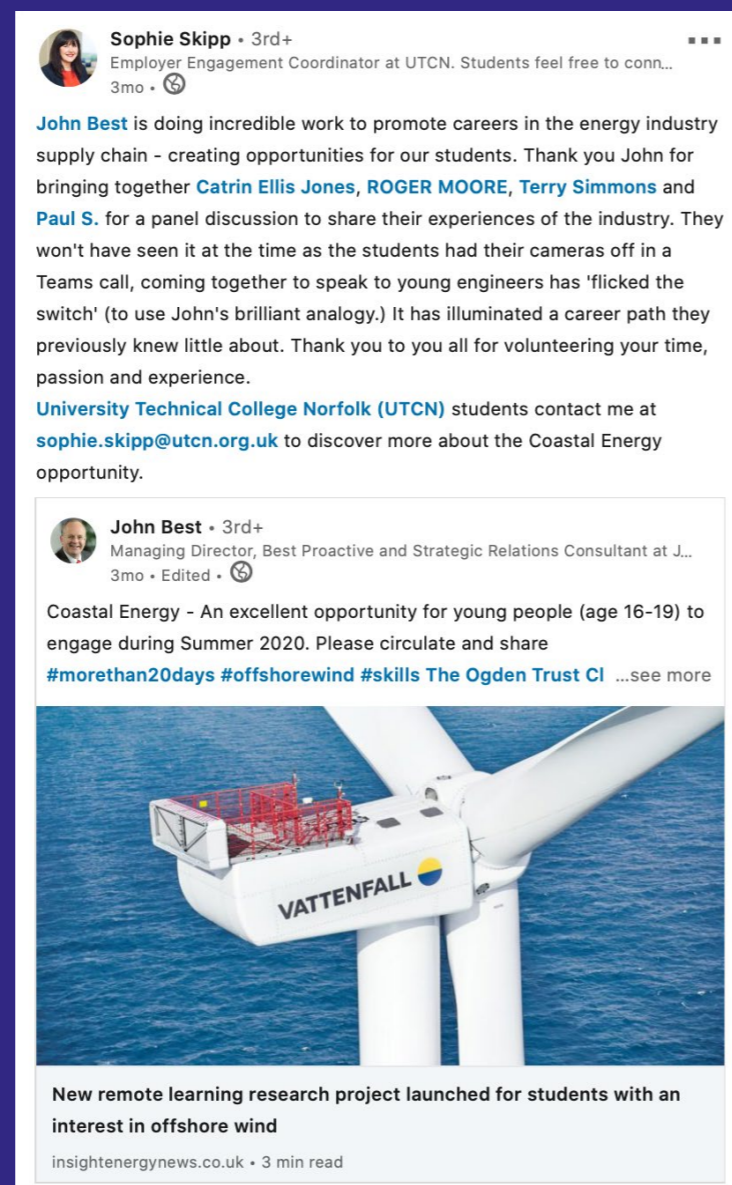
[You can watch the presentation and Q&A, including lessons learned on the Aviva hackathon, here.](#)

## Capacity to recognise support

Sophie ensures that every employer encounter and activity is recognised on the UTC's social media channels, mentioning individuals as well as their organisations. This recognition supports the building of relationships and the sense of belonging that employees have to the UTC.



LinkedIn post - founding partner Warren Services Limited inspiring students.



LinkedIn post - John Best creating careers in the energy industry and opportunities for students.

## UTC Oxfordshire: Ringfencing employer time for ELPs (employer-led projects)

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor representation on the governing body** – each of the lead employers are represented on the governing body, and oversee the direction and development of the UTC
- **Planning and implementation of sponsor activities** – all employers understand and embrace the structured timetable that affords every student the opportunity to work on multiple projects throughout the year, for half a day per week. Employers regularly review and improve their project scopes and delivery.

At UTC Oxfordshire, employer-led projects (ELPs) are an integral and unique part of the core curriculum, providing the opportunity for students to work at solving real world problems set by science and engineering business partners. ELPs run alongside, and enhance, the technical and academic curriculum. These group tasks develop key employability skills such as communication, creativity, problem solving, leadership, resilience, time management and presentation.

**Each ELP runs for about 6 weeks and is part of every students' weekly timetable.**

- **Week 1:** Employer launch
- **Week 2 – 5:** Solving the problem in small groups often with support from final year apprentices within the organisations
- **Week 6:** Presentations to panel of senior staff from the employer partner – winners receive a variety of rewards ranging from Amazon vouchers to VIP days with the employer.

**BMW Mini runs multiple projects at the UTC. In 2019, each year group was assigned a project as part of the ELP, with all of the projects based around BMW's new battery electric vehicle (BEV):**

- **Year 10: dashboard design** – students had to create a design for a dashboard, considering key design fundamentals such as safety and manufacturing feasibility. Students had to provide a proposal for the model including design research, sketches and final design, and to submit this to BMW's design board at the end of the project.
- **Year 11: overall design improvements** – following designing the new dashboard, Year 11s were tasked with making improvements to the MINI. They had to choose five design features they would change and conduct a feasibility study.
- **Year 12 and Year 13** – with both a sub-team and a steering group, students were challenged with electrification of the automobile. Teams looked at current blockers, transition from ICE to electric engines and future technologies. The steering group was responsible for coordinating and aligning the activities of the sub-teams. This was the first time a steering group had been introduced in an ELP, and it worked very well.

***“Employer-led projects are a win-win for everyone involved. Students benefit because they learn how to improve their employability. Companies benefit because the young people they may ultimately take on have the required skills to help drive future success. I think the partnership between the UTC and MINI Plant Oxford – organisations which are motivated by a passion for engineering and technical excellence – is a great example of what can be achieved in this regard.”***

– Steve Houseman, BMW Mini

Running the projects is a whole-school responsibility. Every Wednesday morning, all students work on the project set for their year group. All teachers are scheduled to support groups of students; to focus on building teamworking skills; and to introduce the relevance of their academic and vocational subjects to the projects.

This approach is integral to the performance of students in their academic and vocational subjects, and the Sixth Form provision at UTC Oxfordshire is now ranked in the top 1% of schools and colleges in the country for results, sitting behind only two local independent schools in Oxfordshire.

The coordination of the ELP is ‘owned’ by various members of the SLT, with each contributing to designing, delivering, and reviewing the ELP programme.



## UTC South Durham: Having a committed member of staff for employer engagement

This case study links to:

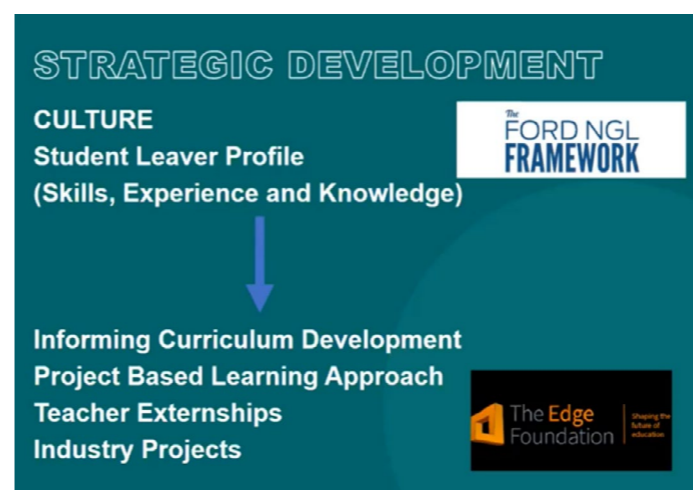
- **Sponsor representation on the governing body** – with several Trustees from employers and the sponsoring university, UTC South Durham benefits from insights, guidance, and support across the UTC
- **Sponsor engagement in the curriculum** – the SLT meets regularly with employers to plan projects and other activities to enhance the curriculum
- **Sponsor engagement lead** – Catherine, as Vice Principal, has a dedicated role and the authority to lead on decision-making, communications, and planning with an extended employer community

**Catherine Purvis-Mawson** · 3rd  
Vice Principal (Business Engagement, Careers and Marketing) at UTC South Durham  
Darlington, United Kingdom · 461 connections · [Contact info](#)

UTC South Durham  
Durham University

Catherine joined the UTC in 2016 as Business Engagement Manager, and was later promoted to Vice Principal. This full-time senior role recognises the time required to establish and maintain the inherent links between employer engagement, careers, and marketing functions, which all serve to support student recruitment. Catherine works with over 100 companies and ensures that the UTC has regular visitors from supporting organisations.

- This is a full time, senior role.
- UTC South Durham had 0% NEET in 2019
- 120+ active employers, all managed by Catherine.
- Employer engagement is directly linked with careers advice and guidance.
- Catherine uses Compass (CEC platform) to track employer engagement.



## Your employers are your team:

- 10-12 key employers meet with Catherine every month for 1.5 hours.
- Together they plan activities and projects, review progress, and collaborate to improve operations.
- The UTC has never asked for money, but funding has been provided, as employers value the effort, commitment, and output evident at the UTC.
- Tips:
  - If the Employment Engagement Lead is not a Senior Leader, SLT should always be present at regular employer meetings to ensure employer commitment. Employers need to feel valued, recognised, and engaged by the SLT.
  - Always ask key employers for help, support, guidance. They want to help.
  - The 90 minutes per month spent with employers should leverage their commitment and output. This includes marketing, systems thinking, problem solving, operational expertise, funding, and securing other partners.
  - The team meeting reduces the need for one-to-one communications with key employers, and facilitates a group approach to designing, planning, and delivering programmes.

### DO'S AND DON'T'S

**Partnership Engagement Opportunities (Menu)**  
**Never ask for money! (It will come with time)**  
**Protect your relationship**  
**Have a named contact for Employer Engagement**  
**Always reply and follow up, thank you!**  
**Manage them as a team**  
**Courtesy emails/calls**  
**Networking**  
**Recognition of impact and contribution**



### EVENTS AND RESOURCES

**Multiple events throughout the year**

- Breakfast meetings
- Careers events
- Open evenings etc.

#### Resources

- Take the time to build a relationship



[You can view Catherine's presentation and discussion from a weekly call in June 2020 here.](#)

The role enables all stakeholders to benefit from clear communications relating to strategic direction, tactical planning, and event planning.

This capacity also allows the UTC to support other UTCs, by sharing good practice and developing new models that enable the UTC continuously to improve operations and engagement methods.



## UTC Leeds: Making a significant contribution to the quality of education

This case study links to:

- **Sponsor engagement in the curriculum** – the UTC worked closely with AGFA to design a project that supported multiple units, and enabled students to work collaboratively with the employer to develop and demonstrate key technical and employability skills

AGFA Graphics runs a project within the curriculum at UTC Leeds, based upon a real-world challenge they face within their manufacturing environment:

**“We provide a project about conserving energy to help the environment. We use sulphuric acid in our production process and we bring it on site 90% pure, then we dilute it down to 64%. When you dilute sulphuric acid it releases a huge amount of heat. At the minute, that heat just goes into the atmosphere. We ask the UTC students to find a way to use that heat productively.”**

The project supports students in meeting the learning aims of multiple units within the engineering curriculum:

- Design specifications + legislation (engineering design)
- Materials and testing (manufacturing)
- Properties of materials (manufacturing)
- Prototyping (manufacturing)
- Research and development (systems and control)
- Quality control (systems and control)
- Control systems solutions (systems and control)
- Test plans (systems and control)

The project is broken down into key milestones:

**Stage 1** – Research

**Stage 2** – Plan

**Stage 3** – Generate solutions

**Stage 4** – Compare solutions

**Stage 5** – SMART targeted solution development plan

**Stage 6** – Technical specification of solution

**Stage 7** – Solution and final presentation

Various elements of the project are linked to other subjects within the curriculum, such as English language, geography, chemistry, biology, physics, mathematics, and product design, enabling students to form a rounded perspective on the value and relevance of their chosen curriculum to the world of work. AGFA Graphics supports students by providing a clear brief, supporting documents, and visits to site to understand the parameters and conditions of the challenge that the project seeks to address. Students are provided with support from AGFA Graphics in developing their solutions to a challenge faced within the business environment.

Graham Cooper, site manager at AGFA in Leeds, and UTC Leeds Governor and member of the trust board, says:

**“I got involved with the UTC because, in my industry, we’re facing a skills cliff with a mainly ageing, male workforce heading for retirement soon. It is apparent to me that the UK needs many more young people coming into skilled technical trades. I saw the UTC as a fantastic way of achieving that.**

**When the students come round our factory, they learn what modern manufacturing is really like. They learn some chemistry about dilution of sulphuric acid and the fact it’s exothermic; they learn some engineering about heat exchanges and heat flow; then they do a project on how to use our waste heat better. All those students who’ve been round here are learning in real life – learning in context.**

**The curriculum they’re taught at UTC Leeds was designed by employers – I was in the room when it was designed. It’s unashamedly focused on the skills and knowledge that industry needs.”**

Outputs:

UTC Leeds promotes 7 key attributes; the project is linked to each one of these, to support students in developing not just the technical skills needed but also the employability skills in the context of the AGFA Graphics operation. These are considered outputs which are demonstrated throughout the project and assessed on completion.

### 1. Curiosity and imagination

- Researching problem
- Generating practical solutions

### 2. Enquiry and analysis

- Evaluating problem
- Analysing potential viable solutions

### 3. Problem solving and resilience

- Comparing the viability of solutions
- Testing and re-testing solutions

### 4. Self-management and organisation

- Preparing a diary of research and development
- Managing time in preparing solution

### 5. Teamwork and collaboration

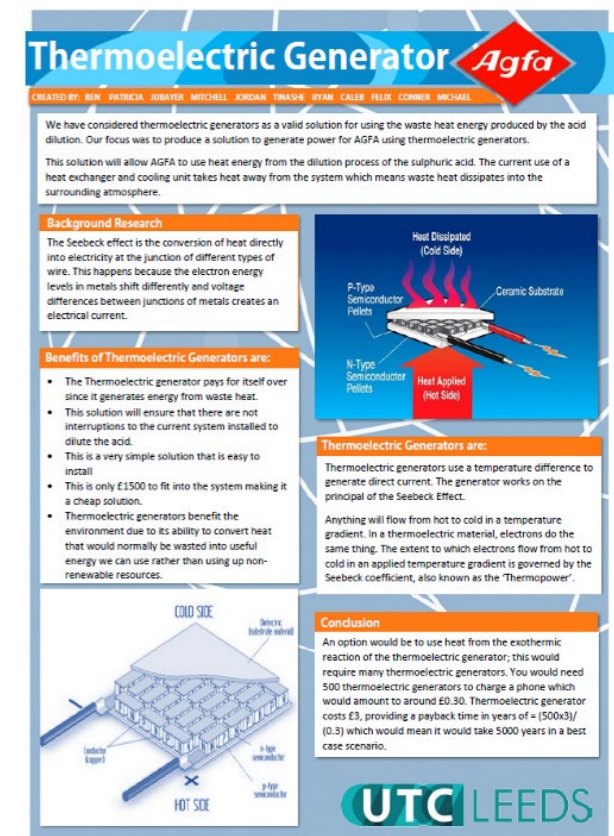
- Working as a group in production of solution
- Collaborating on final presentation

### 6. Technical confidence and technical skills

- Ensuring solution is technical in nature and will work / is working
- Accounting of technical skills shown in approach

### 7. Creativity and ingenuity

- Addressing the problem creatively and generating ingenious solution(s)
- Considering a new method of delivering the final product



**Students are also tasked with producing a poster of their solution design, which is also considered as a key component of being able to communicate the benefits of the solution that has been developed by the student team.**



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