

‘Be bold and brave’ to make projects successful, business leaders urged

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Businesses should ensure they have qualified project professionals in their teams to increase the chances of successful project delivery, leaders were urged at a forum supported by APM.

Attendees from international, national and regional businesses attended to hear an expert panel discuss project delivery and other business-related topics at the event in Reading, south east England; a regional commercial hub and a centre for retail, technology and insurance services.

With predicted annual GVA (Gross Value Added) growth of 2.5% between 2024 and 2027, Reading is projected to overtake Manchester as the UK’s fastest growing location^[1]. It is also ranked in the top 10 UK locations for growth potential^[2].

However, a survey of UK-based business leaders by APM found that over a third (34%) nationally and over a quarter (27%) in south east England lacked confidence in their organisation’s ability to deliver projects effectively. The most common reason for this was their organisation not investing in ongoing training/professional development of its project professionals.

When asked what businesses can do to maximise the chances of delivering a project successfully, Nigel Horton-Baker, Executive Director, Reading’s Economy & Destination Agency, advised businesses to invest in professionalisation of their project teams by recruiting people with recognised qualifications, or helping existing staff obtain them.

He said: “You have to invest in your people and recruit people with qualifications and experience, then invest in the continuing development of that.

“For small businesses, it’s not always easy to pay high salaries for highly experienced project managers, but there are practical things you can do: Have key milestones – work in stages. Have good communication between all the players involved. Raise issues when they arise. Avoid a blame culture.”

Jackie Yates, Chief Executive of Reading Borough Council, echoed this view, stating: “Clearly, having the right people to do the job is important.

“Communication is vital. Escalation and being able to problem-solve and collaborate is really crucial. Being clear about how you’re going to do something when there are blockages and what you’re going to do about it is essential.”

Tom Fletcher, Founding Director of real estate firm Hatch, commented: “It’s about being bold and brave. It’s about having confidence in your business.

“When you do the bold and brave things, you have success.”

Photo: Catherine Hadler

[1] https://www.ey.com/en_uk/newsroom/2024/03/ey-uk-regional-economic-forecast-2024

[2] <https://foleon.irwinmitchell.com/uk-attractiveness-index-summer-2023/the-best-cities-to-invest-in>