

PMI and Cannes Lions launch global forum to bridge the gap between education and industry

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Project Management Institute (PMI) and Cannes Lions have partnered to launch the LIONS Educators Forum, a new global initiative designed to help educators better prepare students for the rapidly evolving demands of the modern workplace.

The programme brings together academic institutions, industry leaders and creative professionals to address a challenge facing organisations worldwide: ensuring graduates leave education with the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly complex, technology-driven and AI-enabled economy.

As industries continue to evolve at pace, employers are placing growing emphasis on capabilities such as creativity, adaptability, collaboration, problem-solving and project delivery. The new forum aims to strengthen the connection between education and industry so that academic programmes remain aligned with real-world workforce requirements.

Preparing students for the future of work

The initiative will focus on helping educators develop future-ready curricula while creating stronger pathways between education and employment.

Through a combination of virtual discussions, in-person events and ongoing collaboration, the forum will provide educators with access to industry insights, emerging trends and practical guidance on preparing students for modern careers.

For project professionals, the announcement highlights a growing recognition that technical expertise alone is no longer sufficient. Organisations increasingly require individuals who can navigate uncertainty, work across disciplines and translate ideas into measurable outcomes.

Steve Latham, Global Head of Strategic Learning Initiatives at Cannes Lions, said:

“Creativity is now one of the most important skills in the global economy, yet the connection between education and industry has never been more critical. The LIONS Educators Forum is designed to close that gap by creating a space where educators and industry leaders can collaborate, share insights and shape the future together.”

Three-part programme

The forum will be structured around three core elements:

- **Global Roundtables** – two virtual sessions each year bringing together educators and industry leaders to discuss emerging challenges and opportunities.
- **Cannes Lions In-Person Forum** – a dedicated programme during the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity in June 2026.
- **Year-Round Network** – an ongoing global community enabling educators and industry professionals to collaborate, exchange ideas and share best practice throughout the year.

The initiative will be chaired by Vann Graves, Executive Director of VCU Brandcenter, alongside a leadership team from Cannes Lions.

PMI brings project leadership perspective

As founding partner, PMI will contribute expertise around the skills increasingly required to succeed in an AI-driven workplace.

While creativity remains essential, PMI argues that future success will depend equally on the ability to execute ideas, manage complexity and deliver meaningful outcomes.

The organisation believes project management capabilities are becoming critical across a wider range of professions, extending far beyond traditional project roles.

Menaka Gopinath, Chief Marketing Officer at PMI, said:

“The future of work will reward people who can do more than generate ideas. We need to equip students and the educators who guide them with the skills to bring people together, make sense of complexity and turn creative ambition into real-world impact.”

A changing skills landscape

The launch comes at a time when educational institutions are facing increasing pressure to adapt to technological disruption, changing employer expectations and the growing influence of artificial intelligence.

Research across multiple sectors continues to show that employers are placing greater value on transferable skills such as leadership, communication, adaptability and problem-solving alongside technical expertise.

For project leaders, the initiative reflects a broader shift in workforce development. As organisations become more project-based and transformation-driven, the ability to manage change, coordinate diverse stakeholders and deliver outcomes is increasingly viewed as a core professional competency.

Building stronger links between education and employment

PMI already works with thousands of educational institutions globally, helping students develop industry-relevant skills and improve employability.

The new partnership with Cannes Lions extends that mission into the creative industries, where rapid technological change is reshaping both job roles and required capabilities.

For educators, the forum offers an opportunity to gain direct insight into industry expectations. For employers, it provides a platform to influence future talent development. And for students, it could help ensure that the skills developed in the classroom remain closely aligned with the realities of the modern workplace.

As AI continues to transform how work is performed across every sector, initiatives such as the LIONS Educators Forum demonstrate that the future workforce will need more than technical knowledge alone. Success will increasingly depend on the ability to combine creativity with execution, innovation with collaboration and ideas with delivery.