

Critical chain project management delivers efficiencies at GSK

13 April 2023 – Birmingham, UK – University of Birmingham experts have demonstrated how Critical Chain Project Management can improve processes at pharmaceutical giant GSK.

The case study, which is being presented this month at international conference Critical Chain 2023, demonstrates how the method can be used to drive efficiencies in pharmaceutical product development.

Simon Wallis, a project manager at GSK, came across critical chain project management while studying for a MSc in Industrial Project Management at the University of Birmingham's School of Chemical Engineering.

He quickly saw how it could be adapted to GSK's product pipeline, moving new materials from Phase 3 (safety and effectiveness) trials, through to commercialisation and scale-up stages.

"GSK already has an extremely strong product pipeline, so we weren't starting from a point of failure," says Simon. "But the timelines in which we were required to deliver new products were becoming a challenge.

"Using the critical chain approach, we were able to simplify processes at key points, and also make the process of project delivery more transparent and collaborative. That meant we were able to take advantage of real practical opportunities to iron out problems that we were seeing on a day-to-day basis and really improve the whole project delivery process."

Ian Heptinstall, who leads the MSc in Industrial Project Management at the University of Birmingham, said: "Our students learn how to go beyond today's common practices in project management and to assess and critique new practices. Simon quickly saw the advantages and potential of the critical chain approach, and it's very exciting to see this being employed to deliver real-world impact at GSK."

The work is due to be presented at Critical Chain 2023, an international conference focusing on methodologies for addressing project management challenges. Critical chain is based on the 'Theory of Constraints', in which key pinch points within a project are identified and addressed.

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Notes to editor:

- The [University of Birmingham](#) is ranked amongst the world's top 100 institutions. Its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers, teachers and more than 8,000 international students from over 150 countries.
- The Masters in Industrial Project Management programme was developed in collaboration with GSK in 2010, and is designed for working project managers to study part-time. It is delivered through distance learning over three years. Today, whilst continuing to help develop GSK's in-house community of project professionals, it attracts students from a wide range of industries from across the globe.
- [The Critical Chain 2023](#) conference is an annual virtual event attracting over 1000 attendees. The University of Birmingham is a sponsor, with the aim to broaden the awareness of the critical chain method amongst the project management community. Limited free tickets are available to attend live from www.criticalchain2023.com.