

## Meet the Advantage trainer: Paul Atkin

For Paul Atkin, the advantage of PRINCE2 is clear. "It's a step-by-step process from conception to close – with commonsense added." Paul draws these conclusions from over 20 years of experience as a project manager and his hands-on use of PRINCE2 since 1998.

In fact, Paul admires PRINCE2 so much that he founded a company to deliver training in it and Advantage Learning is now one of the world's leading PRINCE2 Accredited Training Organisations.

"I first became involved with PRINCE2 while I was working with Computacenter, one of the largest systems integrators in the UK. I was a project manager, or team manager, running the training side of IT upgrade or roll-out projects.

"My first impression of PRINCE2 was that it was very clear and documented and the whole team were on the same page. It was good that we had the whole team speaking the same language – and that included the customer. It was organised and it was structured and my responsibilities and deliverables as a project manager were clear."

Since then Paul, who has Post-Graduate Diploma in Management with Personnel from Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and a BA Hons from the University of Sunderland, has gone on to train over 900 project managers in PRINCE2.

Paul was once quoted as saying PRINCE2 is worth 15 minutes a day to a project manager. "It's true. You don't need to be thinking up unique solutions all the time, because PRINCE2 is based on 30 years of best practice. You are executing well-worn processes. There is something in the manual that will help you. It's suitable for any size of project and in any industry sector and that's where its attractions lie."



Paul Atkin

Paul is also something of a guru on how to make the Microsoft Project software work best for PRINCE2 managers. His deep understanding of the software, gained from many years of both using it and training it, has been encapsulated in Advantage Learning's exclusive "Using MS Project with PRINCE2" course which wins praise for the way it simplifies what can be a daunting program.

Alongside being a highly effective – and popular – trainer, Paul is an effective project manager and has used the PRINCE2 methodology to deliver projects in the financial, manufacturing and IT sectors. His personal clients include leading financial companies like the Royal Bank of Scotland, JP Morgan and Aegon UK. Projects have been also been delivered for utility companies including Scottish & Southern Energy and East of Scotland Water, as well as in the whisky industry for William Grant & Sons, owner of Glenfiddich.

Paul runs his own business using PRINCE2. "We have a small project on the go at the moment to upgrade the website, which is running under PRINCE2. There's product

descriptions, quality reviews, risks and issues all being monitored and managed.” His suppliers seem to like this approach: “When we go to our suppliers and say here’s a project brief, this is the project that we’re thinking of running, they are really pleased because they don’t usually get this clear explanation of what a customer wants. They are much happier working in a very explicit environment.”

In addition, PRINCE2 helps Paul face up to the challenge of developing his company further. “All organisations are facing constant change and it’s no different in the PRINCE2 training market, so if you can’t implement change successfully you will stagnate and eventually be overtaken,” he reflects.

This walk-the-talk approach to PRINCE2 means Paul has become a highly regarded consultant across the whole spectrum of PRINCE2 project management issues and is increasingly being invited to address international conferences.

“PRINCE2 is my living, but I choose it because I strongly believe in it and it adds value and it makes projects easier to deliver at the end of the day. It helps you work with customers better,” says Paul.

Developing the Advantage Learning brand has taken a great deal of Paul’s attention over the past few years, but he has recently found time to return to a teenage hobby. “I did karate for a couple of years in York when I was about 15 and my wife’s always been saying I should go back to it. Finally, just before Christmas, I took the plunge and I’m really enjoying it. I’ve got my first grading coming up.”

Typically for this goal-setting businessman, he set the bar high for this leisure activity: “I joined the university club because it’s close to home, but I also thought that if I go and practice with people half my age, then they will literally keep me on my toes! And that’s very much the case. It’s physically quite challenging: it’s a good workout and definitely an antidote from thinking about the day to day challenges in the office.”

## 2 things we didn’t know ...

### Who is your business hero/heroine and why?

“I was quite inspired by what Jon Huntsman did. His book *Winners Never Cheat: Everyday Values we Learned as Children (But May Have Forgotten)* tells how he almost runs his business to give it away and he used to challenge his executives to make more profit so he could give it to charity. He ran the largest privately owned chemical company in the United States and wrote this book just after the Enron scandal. It was quite inspirational: business is not totally about making money.”

### What was the last music you bought?

I get my music from YouTube and I’m usually on a mission to make sure my daughter knows about all the music that is out there – or at least the music I enjoyed as a kid. I think the last stuff I was introducing her to was the Ramones. I’ve also introduced her to *Monty Python* through YouTube.



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