

# Gaining Support for your **ENACTUS TEAM**

**Best-Practice Paper By Enactus UMKC**



“Return on Investment.” “Shameless Self-Promotion.” “Can’t Hurt to Ask.” Are these phrases part of your team’s vocabulary?

At the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), these terms have enabled the Enactus team to achieve a premier status and be designated a Strategic Initiative of the Henry W. Bloch School of Management. The mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, has formally recognized our team as “a major contributor to our city,” and a proclamation was signed to designate “a day of celebration, recognition and appreciation” of the team.

In the last 10 years, Enactus UMKC has grown from one pivotal student to a group that we have capped at 70 members. The team has been evaluated as one of the top U.S. teams and was named the 2012 Chicago Regionals All Star Team. Enactus UMKC currently enjoys strong support from university officials, school and department heads, faculty from across the university campus, administration, city officials, our Business Advisory Board, the Enactus UMKC Alumni Association, community partners, students, and parents.

This support system, built up over the last 10 years, is the driving force behind the success of Enactus UMKC. The success of any student group hinges on the commitment of the student members, but a truly successful Enactus team must build beyond this. UMKC Administration recognized that the first step for success was to have a highly-engaged faculty advisor who was dedicated to student development. Cary Clark’s efforts allowed the Enactus UMKC team to grow the support system we now enjoy. Clark challenged the team to create a plan for success that involved researching successful Enactus teams around the country, deciding on a leadership structure that would allow the team to thrive and creating a recruiting and succession plan that would sustain the team for years to come.

The team surprised many by placing 1st in their second Regional Competition in 2007. Enactus UMKC used this as a springboard to start promoting the team at every opportunity. We found that it was important to position the team as the premier student organization at UMKC and to use the success at competitions and the community impact to support this premise. “Shameless self-promotion,” or SSP, is a phrase often heard among Enactus UMKC students. We have found that nobody knows what your team is doing unless you tell them, but once you tell them, they are extremely interested and happy to help the team or pass on the word to their own connections. This broadens the program’s reach and its standing on campus and in the community.

The next step was to build the formal support structure. Team success, along with SSP, gained the attention of key business and community leaders. This enabled our team to proactively reach out to those with vast experience, visibility, and networking strengths that could effectively bring the team to prominence.



The team decided to create a 10-person Business Advisory Board (BAB) filled with people that could meet the specific needs of Enactus: mentorship, funding, networking, and experience. This board consisted of regional vice presidents of major international companies, retired CEOs, Chamber of Commerce members, and other prominent members of the community known for their management strengths.

Through Clark's connections, the newly appointed BAB, and the growing reputation of the team, new community connections were easy to come by. The team found that having committed community champions increased the

level of projects we were able to accomplish and increased the success rate many times over. The willingness of community members to support our Enactus team projects helped to further increase the team's success and reputation.

Once our team built and sustained this community support, we focused on highlighting the return on investment to each key stakeholder who invested time and money in our team – things like project impact, student development, university PR, and new opportunities. This return on investment is what most people are ultimately concerned with. Enactus teams must show, prove, and remind everyone at the university and in the community of the return on investment that this program provides. We always remember SSP.

The team has realized that the success of Enactus UMKC is based on the support we receive and that this support must be sought out. After major projects, it is common for the team to hold debriefings and celebrations where we invite high-level university and community members to learn about our successes. We believe that shameless self-promotion results in a better understanding of what the team is doing in the community and a further expansion of support. Our list of invitees to these events includes CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, university deans and chancellors, our mayor and city councilmen, state and U.S. congressmen, and other high-profile community leaders. While we do not always receive responses from everyone, we have never encountered negative responses from those invited, and we are usually pleasantly surprised by the turnout at these events. Once again, if the major players in the university and community have not at least heard of you, they cannot be expected to help you.

Congressman Emmanuel Cleaver II even joined us for one of our projects because we had the audacity to invite him. Our policy has always been that it can't hurt to ask. Once we gather an audience, we know it is time to shamelessly self-promote and tell everyone about the great return on investment that the Enactus UMKC team provides. We have realized that much of our success comes from the team's support system and that a big portion of our efforts must go into marketing the team in order to maintain this support. UMKC's diligence in marketing our program and our proactive approach to reaching out to community leaders are the reasons that this program has gained the level of support we currently enjoy in Kansas City.

To aid your team in rallying strong support from key stakeholders, we have included the UMKC 8 Steps to Gaining Support for your Enactus Team that have worked well on our campus.



## UMKC 8 Steps to **GAINING SUPPORT FOR YOUR ENACTUS TEAM**

**1**

### **Identify core group of motivated, committed student leaders.**

- ✔ Attract freshmen through seniors to create a team leadership pipeline.
- ✔ Recruit multi-disciplinary students from all campus majors.
- ✔ Emphasize leadership opportunities and personal skill development.
- ✔ Establish a year-round/ongoing recruiting effort (not only during fall semester) to attract diverse team members in terms of year in school, discipline, etc.

**2**

### **Designate a highly-engaged, involved faculty advisor.**

- ✔ An ideal advisor provides one-on-one mentoring to students, organizes the team and provides continuity, has a network of campus and community supporters, constantly promotes the team, and encourages marketing efforts.
- ✔ The advisor should build a close relationship with your Enactus Regional Program Manager as well as university, city, and community members and leaders.

**3**

### **Construct a purposeful, aligned team structure**

- ✔ Reach out to other successful Enactus teams for suggestions and advice.
- ✔ Establish regular team meetings and determine team leadership structure (executive board, officers, project leaders, etc.).
- ✔ Consider if open enrollment or an application process better suits your university culture.
- ✔ Develop plan for team funding and continuing recruitment.

**4**

### **Market and self-promote a premier student organization.**

- ✔ Consistently promote Enactus and build relationships with university administration (president, provost, deans, etc.) and other key university stakeholders/supporters.
- ✔ Actively/repeatedly/unashamedly publicize competition success and project impacts.
- ✔ Highlight how Enactus supplements the classroom with experiential learning and hands-on experience. Emphasize the "complete" graduate.
- ✔ Align your Enactus team with the university's mission and goals.
- ✔ Take a chance on reaching out to "unattainable"/high level community members to promote your cause. The worst they can say is "no," but you will be surprised how many say "yes."
- ✔ Build connections with media outlets – both university and community.

**5 Assemble a supportive, accessible Business Advisory Board.**

- ✓ Ideal BAB members provide access to community networks, project support/feedback, company resources, mentoring, and potential funding sources.
- ✓ Target at least one community member with prior Enactus experience.
- ✓ Educate new BAB members on Enactus culture, structure, competitions, etc.
- ✓ Middle/upper mgmt. members are ideal due to time availability and company resources.

**6 Partner with community champions and Enactus alumni.**

- ✓ Community champions provide project outlets and resources, team visibility and endorsements, expanded networks, and ultimately larger/more impactful projects.
- ✓ Build a collective partnership with alumni, BAB, faculty and staff, the surrounding community, local government, etc.

**7 Emphasize and prove RETURN ON INVESTMENT for students, university, and community.**

- ✓ Aggressively self-promote project accomplishments/reach in the community (e.g., end-of-year celebration).
- ✓ Discuss importance of Enactus regional/national competitions, one-on-one mentoring, etc.
- ✓ Highlight progression of project scope/impact over time (e.g., university and community media).

**8 Prioritize student growth and development.**

- ✓ Focus on individual skill development as a precursor to success at Enactus competitions.
- ✓ Emphasize one-on-one and group mentoring, leadership and project management skills, coaching opportunities, etc. Encourage students to mentor each other.



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