





Driving the pipeline of competent and confident engineers

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To be successful in any field, aspiring professionals require role models and guidance in subject matter, career direction, and general support. For young engineers, mentoring can help them reach their potential quicker by tapping into the expertise of senior and experienced engineers.

To find out about the importance of mentoring to the engineering profession and their personal experiences we talk to Engineers Australia's National President, John McIntosh *FIEAust CPEng EngExec NER APEC Engineer*, Newcastle President, David Sparkes *FIEAust CPEng NER*; and College of Leadership and Management Newcastle Chair, Leon Fabrikanov *FIEAust CPEng NER*.

Why did you become a mentor?

JM: *As a younger person I was fortunate enough to have mentors - and so I am happy to give back in that same way. It is a case of what goes around comes around.*

DS: *I had a great mentor throughout my first engineering degree and at the start of my career. This is now my opportunity to give back to the profession and provide experiences for young engineers.*

LF: *I have been privileged to have many mentors throughout my career and their teachings still influence my professional knowledge and behaviour to this day. I became a mentor to help the next generation of engineers and leaders improve their skills and contribute to economic development of the community.*

What have you gained from a mentor relationship?

JM: *There was a lot to learn outside the technical skills I gained during the engineering and business courses I studied at university. These included how to work effectively with people, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and the 'unwritten' business rules and politics. My mentors were most generous in sharing their experiences and wisdom to help me over those potential 'speed bumps'.*

DS: *Having mentors throughout my career has been essential to my development. I still have senior engineers and managers who act as a mentor for me. To be able to interact with a senior person that has had similar experiences and challenges and get advice or just chat about current issues and projects cannot be underestimated.*

The learning I obtained from my mentor could not be gained in a classroom nor textbook. The face-to-face personal interaction and time spent is very empowering.

LF: *As a mentor I have experienced personal satisfaction from the act of passing on knowledge, skills and experiences, in the knowledge that what I have learned in my career will be perpetuated. The ability to help even up the playing field for those younger engineers, who have the capability and drive but not had the same opportunities as some others in society, is a great feeling.*

What does mentoring mean to the engineering profession?

JM: *Mentors (or coaches) can assist engineers refine the soft skills required for business that may not come naturally such as how to work with people from different disciplines and cultures, how the business works, or how to be an effective team member.*

DS: *Mentoring is an important way of transferring knowledge and advancing our profession and capabilities.*

In a style akin to the old Master-Apprentice relationship, we can get great synergy with this style of leadership.

I encourage practising engineers to become mentors so that they can work with some really great young engineers. Similarly, I encourage younger engineers and students to align themselves with senior mentors as there is so much more that can be gained from this relationship.

LF: *Newcastle has a long and proud tradition of engineers leading business, project management and technical proficiency that is recognised internationally. Mentoring is one tangible and viable way in which this community can maintain and develop the very people who will perpetuate this tradition and in turn help secure the ongoing prosperity and competitive advantage the region has established over our history.*

Mentoring can have a wide spectrum of applicability where you can mentor undergraduates as a new graduate yourself, mentor young engineers as an experience professional, and mentor future board members as a senior business leader.

Engineers Australia, Newcastle is hosting the EngMentor program to connect local engineering students with practicing professionals as mentors. To register your interest, [submit a registration \(https://engineersaustralia.wufoo.com/forms/engmentor-mentor-registration/\)](https://engineersaustralia.wufoo.com/forms/engmentor-mentor-registration/) or [find out more \(/sites/default/files/shado/Divisions/Newcastle%20Division/Mentoring/engmentor_program_2017_mentors.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/shado/Divisions/Newcastle%20Division/Mentoring/engmentor_program_2017_mentors.pdf).

For students interested in the program, please [download an information flyer \(/sites/default/files/shado/Divisions/Newcastle%20Division/Mentoring/engmentor_program_2017_students.pdf\)](/sites/default/files/shado/Divisions/Newcastle%20Division/Mentoring/engmentor_program_2017_students.pdf).

Image: Mentor relationship, iStock.

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