RESOURCE 2

Industry's getting involved in my teaching: As a student, what does this mean for me?

This leaflet aims to give you, as a student, a better understanding of the benefits of an industrialist getting involved in your teaching and provides ideas for how you can get the most out of this opportunity.

What's in it for me?

There are a number of different ways in which industry can become involved in your teaching. This could be through a design project, case studies, site visits, advice clinics or something else. Whatever the context this is an opportunity for you to:

- Access up to date, specialist engineering knowledge.
- Relate the theory to real issues in industry.
- Experience dealing with people in industry.
- See and experience a live site.
- Tackle real world design problems.
- Broaden your understanding of the wider business of an engineering company.

A discussion with a professional engineer outside the University can help to **broaden your technical knowledge**. An industrialist brings their own view point based on their engineering expertise and experience; industrialists know what is going on and what's realistic. This is a great opportunity to discuss your ideas, get technical advice and more.

engCETL Engineering Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Industrialists can provide **a real world perspective** of the engineering industry. Chances are you've only been exposed to one small aspect of industry. An industrialist can give you a broader understanding of the duties, responsibilities and routine of engineers and an insight into the areas they've worked in.

The experience has the potential to **enhance your employment prospects**. The opportunity to broaden your understanding and experience elements of working in an industrial environment are invaluable to your professional development and will give you **industry-linked experience** to draw on in interviews and application forms.

Having an industrialist involved in your teaching is a great opportunity for you to make a good impression and **be noticed** which could open the door to career or placement opportunities. Knowing someone in a company could prove to be a **useful contact** in the future. They might be able to give you an insight into what to expect in their company's technical interview, or put you in contact with the right person for finding work experience.

"[For] the project we would go on a tour of the plant, be given access to data from the design office and have questions answered by a contact based there....we would be getting answers and advice from current industry specialists... [it was a] chance to work on a project that had real meaning, and [the] issues we were trying to solve were of current interest to the company."

Rob Littlewood,
Loughborough University Graduate

Getting the most out of the experience

How you get the most out of the experience will vary depending on the task set. However there are three things you can do, irrespective of the task, which will help you to maximise the experience.

1. Be professional

In your interactions with your industrialist, remember that they are professionals and will expect you to act professionally too. Things that they will expect from you as standard include:

- Prepare in advance for your interactions with your industrialist.
- If working on a project, keep your industrialist regularly informed of your project's progress. They will need to feed this back to others in the company.
- Produce deliverables on time, in an appropriate industry standard format.
- Respond to all emails, even if it is only to acknowledge that you have received them.
- When talking on the phone remember to introduce yourself and to check that it is a convenient time for them to talk.
- In emails use formal English and include an appropriate greeting and title.
- If you are visiting the company or giving a presentation dress smartly.
- In all your interactions with your industrialist be on time.

2. Interact

To get the most out of the experience you need to engage with your industrialist. Communicating with your visiting industrialist and asking them questions is vital. Remember, they enjoy the experience of exchanging ideas with people with a fresh approach so don't be afraid to ask questions or to chat. If you are working on a task like a design project, try to avoid bombarding your industrialist with hundreds of emails. It may be appropriate to channel your emails through your team leader or lecturer.

3. Have realistic expectations

It can be helpful to be aware of what you might be able to expect in your interactions with your industrialist.

- **Help:** If you need to ask an industrialist for help at any stage, then be aware that they are likely to provide less step-by-step help than your lecturer and will expect you to be more self reliant.

- **Feedback:** Be aware that any feedback you receive might not always be constructive.
- **Information delays:** Recognise that industrialists might not always be able to respond quickly to requests for information.
- **Conflicting advice:** Expect to receive apparently contradictory advice. You will be able to judge for yourself which advice is correct or you may be able to ask the question in a different way to refine the answer given.
- **Be proactive:** Don't give the impression that you are expecting them to do the job for you. If you don't know the way forward, approaching them with a range of options asking for their opinion shows that you have given the problem thought. This looks a lot better than asking them to tell you what to do.

Further reading

For an insight to students' first hand experience of working on a project linked to industry then read the students' case studies at **www.engcetl.ac.uk/iit** (see the case studies by Littlewood, Kellett and Cheung).

CONTACT US:

Email engcetl@lboro.ac.uk

Web www.engcetl.ac.uk

Loughborough University