



Case Study: CEng

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I currently work for HS2 as Requirements and V&V Manager for Area Central; where HS2 is split into North, South and Central sections. I oversee and assist contractors with their Requirements Management and Verification and Validation activities so they can demonstrate compliance to HS2 requirements, in turn allowing HS2 to do the same. HS2 is currently a mix of civil engineering, stations assets, and utilities diversions; all provided by organisations with different or even zero experience of Systems Engineering. It's surprising how many ways there can be in interpreting plans, processes, and instructions. Consistency is a challenge when not all "speak" the same Systems Engineering "language" or have similar experiences. My achievement and reward since joining two years ago, has been an improvement in quality and consistency of work that a longer-term relationship can bring. The joy has been in building those relationships with new colleagues and across organisations and solving issues together. The scale of HS2 also brings challenges for metrics, continuous improvement, and automation, so there remains a lot to grapple with outside of looking at pure requirements work or DOORS.

When it comes to the question "where you see yourself in five years' time", I can only say "doing something new". But only because HS2 is evolving, taking on Rail Systems, Rolling stock, etc. There's scope to stay within the same organisation, yet if fortunate, to have an opportunity to try my hand in a different arena and keep learning.

Congratulations on gaining your professional registration with INCOSE UK. What inspired you to apply?

On and off, friends and colleagues had suggested I should do it or were surprised I wasn't already professionally registered. Like perhaps many people I get sucked into day-to-day work and had put registration to one side. As my career progressed, I found more and more it was a differentiator. So, I decided it would be something positive I would do for myself, and to take stock of where I was.

How did you find the application process through INCOSE UK?

Very straightforward, templates were available to assist with formatting and the workflow was clear. I also had a mentor, who provided useful feedback on my draft application.

Was it challenging to document all the workplace evidence required for the CEng application and did it take a long time?

The challenge is in being able to recall one's experiences and apply them to the UKSPEC. This takes some time, not because it's a long process per se, but because that drawing up of experience and the acknowledgement of "oh yes, I have done that" is best done over a few sessions. I worked iteratively, dipping in and out; starting with notes against each competency and expanding over time.

How easy was it to track down references in support of your CEng application?

Not too hard. I'd discussed professional registration with line managers and colleagues and found out many who knew me and my work were chartered. I'd also recently joined a new organisation and found colleagues I'd left for a new role were still willing to support me and offer advice too.

How long did the application process take?

Around four months from submission to end; there are periodic panel reviews of applications and so there's a natural cycle to the process. I'll note that this was during early 2021 covid lockdown, so may not be typical.

How did you find the professional review interview?

Friendly and relaxed; it was a drawing out of information through guided questioning as opposed to direct challenge. There was a feeling of genuine curiosity in the experiences I put down in support of the competencies.

In what ways has registration benefited your career?

I've only recently been registered, but the immediate effect was a recognition and congratulations from colleagues. It certainly helped with yearly appraisal goals; if it's possible to tie both registration and competency goals into that process it's worth doing. In the long term, I also know when I see "chartered or equivalent experience" in vacancy there won't be an additional hurdle in demonstrating that vague "equivalent" term.

Do you have future plans to support others in the professional registration process?

Yes, I have already volunteered to help a colleague at work.

Finally, what advice would you give to future INCOSE UK CEng applicants?

I was unsure of the process and whether I had the necessary experience for the competencies. The truth of the matter is you don't know until you try and so the first hurdle is taking interest enough to look into it

through a professional registration session. My next piece of advice would be to talk to friends and colleagues who are Chartered. They'll offer advice, encouragement, de-mystify areas if anything is unclear and can make suggestions where you find you may come up blank. Also, ask for a mentor through the INCOSE professional development team, who I found were always willing to help.