



Case Study: CEng

Kevin Mountford



Kevin Mountford, CEng ASEP MINCOSE, MEng (Hons)

My role as a Systems Engineer at Synoptix has added experience of early Vee-Model processes to my core knowledge of requirements and architecture engineering. My greatest enjoyments in Systems Engineering come from working with people in a collaborative manner, whether that be with colleagues or customers. I manage to build this ethos when working in customer needs elicitation tasks or whilst requirements engineering, and I count projects where I build this atmosphere amongst my greatest achievements. My biggest project achievement has been leading a small team in a capability discovery project (capability requirements, trade study & development plan) for a branch of the UK MoD. This project had a very tight timeframe and involved mentoring two junior engineers in order to build an effective project team, but I managed to balance all the priorities whilst also achieving the best outcome for the customer. The relationship built with the customer and the prime contractor has lasted beyond the project end and significantly added to the profile of my organisation and me. In five years' time I want to be managing a group of engineers to help them achieve their professional development goals and I want to be leading more significant packages of work. I also understand my deficiencies, so I have targeted V&V and acceptance as an area of work I want to gain experience in during the next five years.

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

I have encountered countless amazing Chartered Engineers in my relatively short career so far – I thought that CEng would put me on the path towards becoming like them! I also have to give a lot of credit to my amazing Industrial Placement year at JCB that made it so easy for us to achieve EngTech with IMechE. The habits that I learned whilst achieving EngTech have stayed with me for four years and put me on an easier route to CEng. Lastly, great mentors have helped me in immeasurable amounts – without their guidance and energy, the many stumbling blocks I encountered could have been the end of my journey.

How did you find the application process through INCOSE UK?

The application process was very low friction and there are great people in the Professional Development team who are always ready to help and guide. There is a personal touch at

every stage – if you forget to fill in a field in your application or something like that, the Professional Development team is always quick to help resolve the issue.

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

This process is much harder if you leave it to the point at which you start actively applying for CEng. I have been documenting my work since my Industrial Placement year, firstly in bullet-point form on a weekly basis, then writing quarterly reports of those work experiences. I then use both these resources to try and improve my evidence for capabilities on my application form. The most challenging part is having the willpower to keep improving your evidence and adjusting them to follow the feedback from your mentors. Also it is important to just start somewhere and not stress about not having started yet – once you start writing about your recent experience, it usually triggers memories of past work that is also relevant!

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

I found it easy to do this – they don't need to be Chartered as well, but that does help. LinkedIn and keeping in contact with friends you make along the way certainly makes it easier!

How long did the application process take?

The total time I have spent on the application is something I can't measure as I've been contributing to it over several years. However, I do know that putting together the final application would have taken a lot longer if I did not work on it whilst I was going through my career!

How did you find the professional review interview?

I found this a very pleasant conversation! I did a lot of prep for it but I am not sure it was all useful, as it was mainly an exercise in gaining more evidence for my application. I would focus on knowing the weak competencies in your application and how you will address gaps in your experience in the future. Know your application and think about what kind of questions someone would ask about it after reading it.

In what ways has registration benefited your career?

It will help me stand out in any company that I work for and I can point towards it as an accredited recognition of my achievements. Many people have told me that more opportunities will come from this recognition!

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

I have been doing this even before I achieved CEng! Your experience of the journey is always valuable to anyone else on the same path. The only difference now is that I have a bit more credence behind my recommendations! I plan to use this to encourage and help those in my company on taking the same path, and then hopefully turning towards groups outside of my company in the near future.

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

Start writing up your professional experience early (or now!) and keep doing it – frequency and persistence is key. There were many times where I took a break from working on my application for months at a time and it was really hard to come back to it. I should have just worked on it in small but frequent bursts in those times where I didn't feel up to it. Also, I highly recommend writing mindlessly about a piece of work experience (without reviewing as you write), leaving it alone overnight, then coming back to it the next day. This made writing the application much less daunting and it was so much easier to improve an evidence if I had a block of text to work with that I wrote the day before. Finally, I would talk to the Professional Development team to see if they can set you up with a mentor from INCOSE UK – this was probably the biggest help in my application! Shout out to my INCOSE UK PRA.