

Highlight on the FIDIC Young Professional Management Training Program (YPMTP) 2015

One of the best trainings? – An account of a 2015 YPMTP participant

When I came back from YPMTP in Dubai, most of my coworkers asked the same question to me, "How did the training go?" My first and spontaneous response was, "Great! One of the best trainings I've ever attended!"

I'm not one for exaggeration, but training courses normally follow a set pattern of lectures. YPMTP was different. It was a unique and rewarding experience in which I not only gained new knowledge, but I also built new friendships and professional network and broadened my horizon.

So what made it so special? Before I can answer this, let me start at the beginning.

Myself and Lauren Connors won the 2015 Richard Kell Scholarship through our company Cardno, an Australian based engineering consulting firm. It is a scholarship program that Cardno organises every year, in which the award is participation in the YPMTP.

My initial expectations of the YPMTP training was the course would provide an overview of key skills in management of a consultancy in particular in topics including business development, human resources and financial management. I also looked forward to the case studies, as I had understood that they were drawn from real life experiences.

YPMTP started with an online training between February and August 2015, in which we learnt different topics financial management, business development, project management and human resources through a series of case studies. We had to present our opinions, thoughts and discussed our responses to different case studies through an online platform. The mentors prepared excellent case studies. The situations that we discussed were relevant and were situations that could arise in our day-to-day work. It was fascinating to learn other participants' experience, opinions and approaches to the various circumstances.

The online training was followed up with five day training in September 2015 in Dubai. The training consisted of three days of lectures and two days of preparation for a presentation which would be presented at the FIDIC Future Leaders Workshop as part of the FIDIC International Infrastructure Conference.

When I first walked into the training room, I was surprised by the number of participants. There were 60 participants from 20 countries representing five continents. We all came from a range of engineering backgrounds with different expectations of the training. However, the common theme for everyone was that we were all keen to learn.

The first three days of lecture series covered topics such as human resources, marketing, financial and integrity management. The lectures were designed to emphasise key messages discussed during the online training. The interesting part about these sessions were the discussions following the lectures. In most of these discussions, we could discuss anything as long as it was in keeping to the topic of the prior lecture. It was challenging because we had to come up with ideas to discuss ourselves. Lively debates occurred but all in the spirit of trying to gain understanding from different perspectives.

The following two days of the presentation preparation was the highlight of the training. We were given a brief to prepare a 30 minute presentation, to be delivered at the Future Leaders Workshop. The topic could be *anything*, the method of presentation could be *anything*, and how to prepare the presentation was *up to us*. To be honest, it almost felt impossible. I kept asking myself, "How do you get a consensus from 60 people to agree on a topic? How would you manage the work between 60 people?"

On the first day of the presentation preparation, we started with a brainstorming session and everyone contributed their best ideas. Discussions, thought provoking ideas, controversial ideas were thrown in during this session. Not only we had everyone debated their ideas, defended their arguments but we also listened to each other's

perspectives. At the end of the first day, we decided on a presentation topic and also selected our presenters. The second day was spent to prepare the presentation slides, the speeches and practiced our presentation. It was a mix of feeling being rushed to finish the presentation and excitement in seeing our presentation coming together.

The flexibility of the session brought out the best in all the participants with everyone contributed their diverse skills. We had volunteers to organize the YPMTP group, and in a way project manage the preparation of the presentation. Smaller teams brainstormed to prepare the speech of the presentations. Another group would work on finding images that would resonate with the key messages of the presentation. When we did the practice for the presentation, the feedback from the group was really constructive and helped the presenters to present their ideas better.

It was a challenging task to prepare a presentation that involved sixty people. However, the spirit of teamwork, the supportive environment and a great learning atmosphere helped us all achieved the goal. The tight deadline and the challenging task build camaraderie within our team.

We decided that the topic of the presentation was "*Advisors to Influencers*". We presented our idea at the FIDIC Conference that for engineers to contribute more to society, the "*Consulting Engineering profession needs to become leaders in identifying and implementing solutions to society's problems and not just part of the solutions put forward by others*".¹



Photo 1: All YPMTP participants worked in groups to prepare the presentation for the FIDIC Future Leaders Workshop

So, "What made YPMTP so special?"

In terms of professional development, I have gained a very diverse and international perspective on the day to day and major challenges facing the consulting engineering industry. The solutions proposed and discussed by my fellow participants in the training have broadened my horizon and demonstrated that there are alternative approaches to challenges. Furthermore, the case studies and experiences shared by the mentors were very valuable as they were relevant and practical. Through the training and the conference, I have also extended my professional network internationally and also from my home country, Indonesia.

The highlight of the YPMTP was the two day session to prepare the presentation. It was very unique and rewarding experience to be successful to prepare a presentation with 59 other training participants.

The YPMTP has definitely surpassed my expectations. I hope that I could put the lessons that I learnt on my day to day job and the experience could help me to become a better practitioner in the consulting engineering industry.

¹ FIDIC Future Leaders Workshop 2015, closing speech

I would like to thank our YPMTP mentors and the FIDIC team for an excellent training course, to Cardno for providing me with the opportunity to join the training and to my fellow YPMTP participants for sharing their knowledge, experience and ideas.



Photo 2: YPMTP 2015 Participants

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