

I Am a Volunteer and I Do...

Philip Wilson



What activities have you undertaken as part of your volunteering?

I have been involved in volunteering for a number of years now. I particularly enjoy engaging with students and early careers engineers, so some of my volunteering has been within that sphere. I have run recruitment stalls for my employer at early careers fairs at colleges, speaking to students and their parents about careers in engineering. I have also worked with a University Technical College (UTC) that opened near my employer. UTCs are educational establishments that specialize in STEM subjects for 14-19 year olds. In working with the UTC I helped to run STEM activities for prospective students visiting the establishment. I also went on to develop an activity that the UTC would run with their older students. It involved a simplified engineering lifecycle where students would design a turbine blade, based on simple requirements, and then have to navigate Design Reviews and eventually manufacture their product using 3D printing. For the last 7 years, I have also been a regular member of the Women in Brunel Engineering and Computing (WiBEC) scheme, a scheme run by Brunel University that provides support for their female students who are studying STEM topics, including providing them with a mentor from industry. The scheme aims to help smooth their transition into working life in what are typically male-dominated work environments. For INCOSE UK, I have been a member of several groups such as the MBSE Working Group, the MBSE Interest Group, the Energy Systems Interest Group and the Agile Systems Engineering Working Group. I also recently began my path to being a Professional Registration Advisor and a CEng Assessor for INCOSE UK. I have also had a lot of engagement with the SEMAP scheme, and was my company's representative on the working group that developed SEMAP, as well as mentoring SEMAP candidates within my business, and being one of the group of End Point Assessors who run the assessment events for the candidates who are ready to complete the scheme.

What originally inspired you to volunteer for INCOSE UK?

I initially joined the INCOSE UK MBSE Working Group to learn more about the topic, and for the opportunities to engage with other people from other organisations who also had an interest. I am very keen on the learning experience, and very much enjoy being part of collaborative working environments, so it was a great group to be a part of. I was an enthusiastic proponent of MBSE and I was keen to learn more, and share good practices and new developments in the field. Soon after that, I was asked to be the UKAB representative for my organisation at the time, and engaged with the UKAB community on a regular basis, contributing to meetings and workshops. Since then, I went on to join more groups around topics that I feel are beneficial to Systems Engineering, would be beneficial to my organisation, or even beneficial to wider society, and I find the idea of being a part of that exciting and rewarding.

What do you feel you get out of your volunteering?

Like many volunteers, I find the experience hugely rewarding. It is the activities that involve developing others that I am particularly keen on. I still recall my first day on the job when I joined my company's graduate scheme, and what those early days, weeks, months and years were like. With now over 20+ years' experience in engineering, it gives me a sense of pride and fulfilment to be able to use my knowledge and experience to help to support and guide others who are in the same position I was back then. I also recall how stark it was working in an office of around 80 people where only 7 or 8 of them were female, so being able to help and support females who wish to progress in their career in engineering is also something I am very keen on. Being involved in schemes like the SEMAP scheme, being a Professional Registration Advisor and mentoring others, it all gives a great sense of giving something back – to quote the old Superhero trope, “using your powers for good”. To be able to be a part of something that can help an individual progress their career, or that can help to benefit INCOSE UK and the INCOSE UK community, or that can help provide support to Systems Engineering practitioners around industry is a very privileged position to be in, and a position I am honoured and proud to be able to be in.

Do you have any advice or feedback to offer anyone who is considering volunteering?

I would say go for it! It is a very rewarding experience. You do have to be prepared to take on the additional responsibility, and the time that it can take, but from my own personal perspective you get far more out of it than you can put in. The activities that I have been a part of can be hugely beneficial to others, and the more people that we can encourage to volunteer and support activities of this nature, the better it will be for everyone. It is a win-win!