

CIBSE/ASHRAE Mentor Programme

Mentorship critical to skills development

John Sheelan is an ex-tradesman who had been heavily involved in a family-run business servicing the bio-medical, pharmaceutical and semi-conductor industries since 1996. During those years he received great exposure from his father's teachings within the sector. He started off as a general operative, progressed to a welder, then fitter/cleanroom installer, then to a contract manager running various sites across the country, and finally qualifying as a building services engineer. As such he was an ideal candidate for the inaugural CIBSE/ASHRAE Mentor Programme. Here he outlines his experience of the programme, beginning with when he started studying for his degree.

During the 2008 crash I decided to further my education and study on a part-time basis as a building services engineer, qualifying in May 2022 with a distinction. Since then I have gained experience in a number of sectors, including residential, commercial, industrial and energy.

In February 2019 I joined Integrated Project Solutions (IPS) who work predominately in the pharmaceutical sector, an area I am excited to be back working in. It was here that I met Ryan Loney, CIBSE YEN Chair, when he came on board the company in 2021. We became firm friends while working on a number of projects together and that's how I came to learn about the CIBSE/ASHRAE mentorship programme that was about to start. It was Ryan who suggested that participation in the new programme would greatly benefit both my technical ability and networking opportunities and so I duly signed up.

Another of the reasons I joined the programme was to help back-fill my technical knowledge as I wanted to learn further, gain access to like-minded individuals and to engage with accomplished people with years of experiences in their fields. An added bonus was that the mentor I was assigned was Conor Murray, Head of the Irish Cleanroom Society. I had also engaged with him in the early 1990s when he worked with my father in Ardmac.

The CIBSE/ASHRAE mentor programme helped me enormously over the last few months, both from a networking point of view and the access it gave me to other mentors within the programme. It has particularly strengthened my technical ability and confidence.

My work mentor in IPS, Damien Flynn, has also been very supportive and a great help with my studies. He advised me that this programme would be ideal for my career prospects and in harnessing additional points of view from other SMEs and senior engineers within the building services industry.

The mentorship programme offers on-line meetings/workshops and in-person meetings. It is my opinion that this type of programme can be shared electronically. However, I think it would be best if some of the meetings/workshops were face-to-face. I believe you would get more out of the programme when you can personally meet the other mentees and mentors to exchange your experiences. It's harder to do this when we are all in a meeting together, only one person gets to talk at a time when its on-line, whereas if it was face-to-face we can have lots of smaller break out spaces to talk and discuss matters separately. With regard to meeting or chatting with mentors,

I suggest it should be monthly, even if only to touch base.

I have been the recipient of a great amount of correspondence and interaction with Conor Murray, my mentor. He has been instrumental in guiding me with regard to my career options, the pathways to getting my chartered status and to furthering my qualifications. I have also been fortunate to travel with Conor to Turkey for the "ISCC'22 International symposium on contamination control" with ASHRAE and the Irish Cleanroom Society.

I really enjoyed participating in the programme. The training and workshops were excellent and introduced me to top industry SMEs within the global controlled environment. It also gave me a great network with access to young engineers/bio scientists and professionals that have taken the same path as myself with their careers. I am looking forward to getting

more involved with the Irish Cleanroom Society, CIBSE and ASHRAE in the months and years ahead.

I would highly recommend this mentorship programme to any person within this sector as it develops your confidence and your ability to value-engineer designs. The access to the team of mentors is invaluable as, in addition to their technical ability and professionalism, they also have a wealth of practical experience that they are willing to share. I actually find it hard to believe that a programme like this was not started before now.

Looking ahead, I hope to become a mentor on this programme sometime in the future. I know that I have a great deal to share with younger people, not just from my engineering point of view but also from my construction management and life-long experiences working on the tools. ■



John Sheelan, Building Services Engineer, Integrated Project Solutions.



To participate in the 2022/2023 CIBSE/ASHRAE mentor programme – either as a mentor or mentee – see <http://forma.gle/sy4xtzjF9kQk8Eai8>