

Team builder

Andrew Pettifer, M.AIRAH, is an Arup principal, and leader of the Australasian building services engineering team, based in Sydney. He's also on the conference committee for AIRAH's The Future of HVAC conference to be held in Melbourne from August 13–14.

Responsibilities

With 60 staff to look after, there is a fair amount of management to be done, but I also make sure that I stay involved in project work. In addition I lead building services engineering for Arup across the Australasia region, which involves developing business strategy and working with senior colleagues to make sure that we are effectively sharing our skills, knowledge and resources.

Passions

I am really passionate about building teams of people with complementary skills, and creating an environment in which they can thrive and do great work. Good teams are then self-sustaining, provided you create a culture of generosity and meritocracy.

Finest professional hour?

At my previous practice in the UK we designed and built our own headquarters. It was a little gem of a building in a rural setting and an early example of innovative sustainable design. Winning the Office Building of the Year at the Building Services Awards when we were up against a range of much larger and higher profile buildings was a pretty special moment.

Lessons learned

As a consulting engineer I consider that I am providing a professional service to my clients, which to me goes beyond a contractual or commercial arrangement. With the consolidation that has occurred in the consulting engineering market, I fear that some of the big players are becoming very corporate in their approach, which I am not comfortable with.

I have learned that in our work no single person can achieve much without a team of others who have diverse and complementary skills around them – not only other consultants but contractors, sub-contractors, suppliers, tradesmen and so on. Collaboration is the key to success but is often sadly lacking in the way our industry works.



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I have also learned the value of acting with integrity and authenticity. Sometimes things don't go to plan, mistakes are made, and disputes arise. In these circumstances it is important for me to be able to lie in bed and know that I acted honorably and was fair in how I treated others. In my experience, taking this approach tends to facilitate solutions and achieve better outcomes in any case.

Whom do you most admire?

I have always admired Mike Brearley, the former England cricket captain. He was actually a pretty mediocre batsman by international standards but held his place in the team purely on his leadership skills and ability to get the best out of those around him, most notably one I.T.Botham.

Professionally I have had the good fortune to work under a number of leaders who I have admired and who have helped mentor me through different stages of my career.

Dream sabbatical

Joining the Barmy Army for an England tour of the West Indies. I am proud to say that I became an Australian citizen recently but I still draw the line when it comes to cricket.

Wise words

I wouldn't say I have one but I do like Sartre's "We are our choices" – the idea that we are defined by the choices we make. People sometimes say to me, "Don't you feel lucky to live in Australia?" And I think, well, lucky to have the opportunity maybe, but I chose to live here.

Greatest personal achievement

Other than being profiled in *Ecolibrium* you mean?! My two children, George and Anna, fine young people and a source of great pride to me.

Favourite book

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. It's about what gives something "quality" and the notion that rationality and romanticism are not mutually exclusive.

What is success to you?

Personally the concept of success has changed for me over the years. It used to be about climbing the slippery pole of professional achievement, now it is about enjoying every day as it comes and making a positive connection with those around me, be they friends, colleagues, professional peers or clients.

As an organisation Arup measures success by the quality of our design work, the satisfaction that our staff derive from working in our firm and the feedback we get from our clients. We know that commercial success follows from getting all of these things right.

What does AIRAH membership mean to you?

I am a relative newcomer to AIRAH but I have been impressed with the position that it holds as a key influencer in the mechanical services industry in Australia. I like that it is not just for consultants, contractors or suppliers but a unifying body that can help us to all work better together. ■