

Graham Skinner – Vice Chair Energy4me Schools Career Guidance Committee



Graham is a Chartered Engineer with a Masters in Drilling and Well Engineering from Robert Gordon University. He began his career in drilling and currently regulates Major Accident Hazard during the whole well life cycle for the UK Health and Safety Executive. Graham currently sits on the Energy Institute HPHT steering group and the Oil & Gas UK Well Integrity Working Group.

Graham has supported STEM activities as a STEM ambassador since 2014 joining the SPE Energy4me SCG committee in 2016. Since joining the committee Graham has promoted the value of volunteering within the wider SPE community and worked to quantify and measure the valuable work done by the committee. He developed a STEM learning game based on an offshore production platform that was launched in November 2018 and has been delivered widely around STEM events in Aberdeen city and shire.

In the Spotlight

What career advice would you give your younger self?

I was really proactive during my early career and gained a huge amount of experience volunteering for assignments or putting myself out to get to site in time to participate in interesting operations however I didn't always get the 'people' part right. So, I would tell my younger-self to always take time to think about the person I am interacting with and consider what is important to them.

What do you think are the benefits of being a member of SPE?

I believe SPE membership is great value for money, keeping abreast of technical developments through the webinars, publications, conferences and technical sessions that can count towards professional CPD. I also value the opportunity to serve as an SPE volunteer supporting the industry. Through my volunteering I have built an industry network with a more diverse base than simply my specialist discipline which I believe is very important.

Best Achievement so far?

I was honoured to receive the SPE Aberdeen Section Offshore Achievement Awards Young Professional of the Year 2013. Sadly in December 2017 I became too old to be considered a Young Professional anymore. 😞

What did you want to be when you were younger?

A marine biologist but work experience at London Aquarium and Deep Sea World showed me the practical reality of typical marine biology jobs: it's nothing like Blue Planet II most of the time.

What are the main career stepping stones you have taken?

I joined the industry on a Graduate Training Scheme to become a rig manager where I was fortunate to get lots of hands on practical experience of drilling. During that time, I completed my MSc in Drilling and Well Engineering and more recently have achieved chartered engineer status. I am grateful for steady employment during the downturn and see it as a good opportunity to consolidate previous experience.

Anything you would do differently?

I would have really benefited from a strong mentor outside of my employment who may have been able to give some impartial advice during a few tricky situations. I discovered SPE eMentors a little late for my own career but try to support the scheme as a mentor today.

Who has been your greatest influence?

I read *The Prize: the epic quest for Oil, Money and Power* by Daniel Yergin early in my career. If you know it, you'll know. If not – read it.

What's your idea of perfect retirement?

Wow, that seems a long way off! Nothing more exciting than a quiet life surrounded by family.

What would your autobiography be called?

I cannot imagine many people would find my life story at all interesting. But I am keen to leave a small private archive for family; inspired by reading my Grandfather's flying logbooks and photographs from WWII.

What is the best way to motivate others?

I find having a genuine passion for the job, a desire to be professional, and being personable goes a long way towards a good team dynamic.

Your favourite stress-buster?

First and foremost, it's spending time with my two young kids Lachlan and Murdoch. Secondly, it's a fine malt whisky in front of the fire once they have gone to bed.

What's your dream job?

I'd have loved to play professional rugby.

Where is your favourite place to go on holiday?

My wife and I are very fond of the Western Cape of South Africa.

What are you reading, listening to or glued to on TV?

Reading anything by Julia Donaldson to the kids. Listening to modern Scottish folk music and poetry. Watching Masterchef the Professionals or the Great British Menu.

What's on your bucket list – the things you still want to accomplish?

I've already dived with Great White Sharks in the kelp forests off California which helped with that Marine Biology itch. I look forward to having more time as the kids get older to be a little bit more creative. Perhaps take the kids on Safari?

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