

Graham Dallas - Section Chair



Graham is the Business Development Manager with ABL Group in Aberdeen. ABL operates in the Maritime, Oil & Gas and Renewables sectors, providing loss prevention, loss management and marine and engineering consultancy services. Graham has worked in engineering for nearly 30 years, with the last 24 in energy sectors.

He started his career as a Mechanical Technician Apprentice in a precision engineering firm but quickly transferred to equipment design and subsequently into oil and gas specialising in subsea and surface completion systems design. In 2003 Graham made the move from engineering to sales and business development and has worked for a range of service providers from SME and start-ups to multi-nationals in a variety of areas such as drilling, completions, subsea installation and construction, facilities and decommissioning.

In addition to Section Vice-Chair, Graham was Chair of the Continuing Education committee 2018-2020 which organises the technical conference program throughout the year. In addition to the SPE, Graham is an active participant and volunteer with several industry and non-industry bodies past and present such as Decom North Sea, EIC, Step Change in Safety, and AXIS Network. Graham is also a STEM ambassador.

In the Spotlight

What career advice would you give your younger self?

Look at each opportunity as it becomes available. Listen, learn, then act.

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

An opportunity to learn, an opportunity to share, an opportunity to meet great people. Coupled obviously with the high-quality events and activities throughout the year.

Best Achievement so far?

Aside from my family, surviving in the oil and gas arena over 20 years, through 3 downturns and 4 lay-offs and still getting a buzz from it.

What did you want to be when you were younger?

Always something related to engineering, even from a young age. Although in my late teens I was obsessed with Total Quality Management.

What are the main career stepping stones you have taken?

There have been a few significant ones; I started off with an apprenticeship in a factory, as soon as I finished I moved into precision equipment design. I joined the Oil and Gas industry on the strength of a phone call interview, which was over 20 years ago so I must be doing something right. Finally, taking the plunge to move from engineering into Sales and Business Development around 17 years ago. Luck and timing has played a large part in most of the above.

Anything you would do differently?

Not really. With the benefit of hindsight, I have had a few questionable career moves and made a few interesting decisions, but I've gained experience as much from any negative aspects as I have from positive ones. You can go through life with regrets but it's not going to change anything.

Who has been your greatest influence?

I got my interest in engineering from my father initially, but I have typically been influenced by a number of former managers and mentors. I'm also fascinated by historical engineers who have knocked up the most amazing things in their sheds or on their kitchen table.

What's your idea of perfect retirement?

Hopefully still being able to contribute something to the world, whether that's to the Oil & Gas industry, engineering or just life in general. Otherwise, a quiet life at home with family and friends nearby.

What would your autobiography be called?

Right place, right time.

What is the best way to motivate others?

Show passion and enthusiasm in everything you do and always lead by example. Treat everyone with equal respect, give everyone a voice and have the courtesy to listen.

Your favourite stress-buster?

I try not to "do" stress but on occasion I shut myself in my music-room and play my electric guitars very loudly. What's your dream job? Most likely music related, probably running/owning a music studio or venue.

Where is your favourite place to go on holiday?

It's not so much about the place, it's the company. Warm and sunny can always help though, maybe a quiet Greek Island away from the crowds. I am equally happy and content spending time at home.

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

Books – non-fiction typically biographies, Music, mainly rock orientated but anything that has real artistic value, so not the churned out manufactured stuff that seems to have appeal these days. TV, I genuinely watch very little TV other than the news but I do enjoy movies.

If you were a character in a TV series or movie who would you be?

Scotty from Star Trek, you can fix anything and always save the day.

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

To finishing rebuilding my Land Rover, it's become more of a lifestyle choice rather than a project. Learn to play the piano properly.

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