

CASE STUDY

Yewande Akinola

Innovation Lead at Laing O'Rourke



How did you get to where you are now?

From a young age, I was very interested in buildings. I was almost 100% sure that I was going to study architecture. I wanted to be able to design comfortable living spaces for people around me. Just before I started applying to universities, my mum said something along the lines of 'Wande, I know that you are interested in architecture but if you studied engineering you would be able to design a whole host of things'. I wasn't 100% convinced, so I applied to four universities to study architecture and two to study engineering. I then got a place at the University of Warwick on a fantastic degree programme

studying engineering, design and appropriate technology.

It has since been a fantastic journey on the whole. With great times and also challenging times, I have come to really appreciate the beauty of engineering. The creativity, the daring to dream, the art of storytelling of conceptual ideas. Achieving an exact expression of sequence, relation and logic is what creates the built environment and technologies that shape and influence our daily experiences.

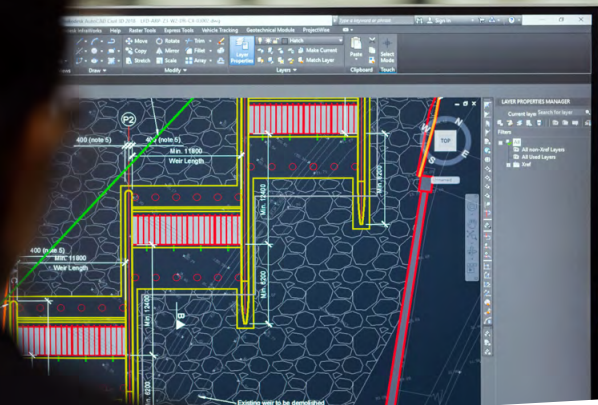
What challenges do you face on a day to day basis?

One of the challenges I face on a day to day basis is ensuring that the solution that I come up with meets all the requirements. Finding an engineering solution is not just about the solution but about the

varied applicability of the solution. It is also very important to me to be able to demonstrate my expertise. People you work with always require you to demonstrate your expertise in whatever you do, so I am constantly working to ensure that I am able to demonstrate competence, and bring something new and creative to the table.

How do you approach these challenges?

The way I approach these challenges is by ensuring that I am constantly going through the motion of thinking about 'the complete story' of an engineering design solution. For example, if I design a water supply system for a building, I think about the people who are going to use it, and I think about who and how the system will be installed. It is the same approach I have when developing



"Engineering in a work environment is all about finding correct solutions to real life problems/challenges."

"I have come to really appreciate **the beauty of engineering**"

a product – how it is made, how it is moved around (in terms of logistics) – a complete solution comes from designing for the ‘the entire value stream’. I enjoy carrying out relevant research as well as speaking to lots of people. This always helps to improve my knowledge.

What is the biggest difference you noticed between work and university in terms of engineering?

The biggest difference I've noticed is that work is very practical. Engineering in a work environment is all about finding correct solutions to real life problems/challenges. University is mainly about gaining the theoretical know-how to then be applied in industry (work). The University environment provides a space for new, fresh and innovative thinking that has the potential to improve industry work.

Real life example of engineering applied to your work.

I once worked on a project that started off as building services design projects and then extended to include product design and development! So, I applied to do a Masters in innovation and design for sustainability at Cranfield

University and loved it. Over the years, my interests in development and developing countries have inspired and encouraged some truly fulfilling experiences – where I have been most grateful for my engineering skills. I have also presented Engineering TV programmes for Channel 4, Discovery Channel and National Geographic... and once, did a TV campaign advert for a clothes retailer – it had a brilliant engineering theme.

What would your advice be to someone who aspires to be like you?

Engineering is about finding solutions that improve people's

lives and there is a great need for the superb, interactive, unique and creative contribution we all have to offer.

Engineering is about creativity. With creativity, amazing Engineering is possible. Learning the principles of engineering is a great way to equip oneself with the ability to design/build some pretty cool things.

There's also the fact that engineering skills are applicable any and everywhere in the world: in the most developed parts and the developing parts. The fact that engineering solutions are so visible is a great reason for young people to consider careers in the profession.



Royal Academy of Engineering
Prince Philip House, 3 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DG

Tel: +44 (0)20 7766 0600
www.raeng.org.uk

Registered charity number 293074