

"Engineer" inappropriate

I read with pleasure the article "OIQ satisfied by court judgment" (pp. 22-23) in the May/June issue of *Engineering Dimensions*. It is about time someone stood up and attacked the inappropriate use of the term "engineer," when the term "specialist" would be more appropriate. I wish OIQ the best of luck with its enforcement of the court ruling.

Here in Denmark, I have had the opportunity to work with some very knowledgeable people from the certifications programs of both Novell and Microsoft. Granted, the sample is not large. But it is nonetheless my judgment that while these people are extremely competent at deployment and maintenance of the system created by the companies mentioned, their certification does not make them capable of the kind of general problem solving a university education prepares engineering students for.

The university engineering education, and lately also the university computer science education, provides students with tools to attack general problems that, to the best of my knowledge, lie outside the scope of any certification program, whether IBM DB2, Novell NetWare, Sun Java or even Microsoft. IBM and Sun apparently use the more appropriate term "developer" or "specialist" in their certification programs.

*Niels Jensen, P.Eng.,
Slangerup, Denmark*

Diverse experience sets us apart

The quote by Denis Leblanc, ing. ("OIQ satisfied by court judgment," pp. 22-23) in the May/June issue is not helpful.

A group of engineers all with the "same standard of training and experience" would be an office full of robots. I have been an ing. and latterly a P.Eng. for over 40 years and I have been associated with engineers for 50 years and have never encountered two with the same standard of training and experience. And for that I am thankful.

It is precisely the spectrum of skills, training and experience across a group of engineers who meet a desired minimum

standard that gives us our power. It is the willing cooperation between and among such groups that ensures the safety of the public.

I use the word "desired" advisedly. PEO can set requirements, but it is the desire and commitment of each individual every day that achieve those standards and reward us with our sense of accomplishment.

Students and young engineers need to cultivate that desire and develop that commitment in a team environment to their own highest and best level of training and experience. That is what will carry our great profession into the future.

R. Edgar, P.Eng., Alfred, ON

In need of some fun

Engineering Dimensions should add more human interest content. This would increase the excitement level of the magazine and raise the image of engineering.

Other publications by professional societies, such as accountants and lawyers, always have human interest stories. For example, *CA Magazine* has regular articles about people, trends, company profiles, including "cool projects," and personal interest stories about the lives of accountants outside of work, such as travel or hobby. These stories relate to their professional development.

Although *CA Magazine* has a lot of content about drier accounting topics, recent issues showed an accountant standing confidently in front of a wind generator farm, an accountant playing ice hockey, and an accountant wearing a white hard hat at a construction site. It showed accountants being successful in accounting and business and having fun.

I never sense much fun from reading *Engineering Dimensions*. Although some is interesting, most of the content is somewhat logical and dry. Most photos of people are usually simple portrait photos. The only smiling face in the entire issue of a recent *Engineering Dimensions* was in an ad for a law firm. How unexciting.

Engineering is a dynamic field and profession. Engineers have opportunities. Many engineers have fun at work and out-

side of work. Showing this would inspire all of us and others.

*Blair Kingsland, P.Eng.,
Richmond Hill, ON*

Little benefit to membership

Each issue of *Engineering Dimensions* makes me wonder why I am a member of PEO while employed in the electronic R&D industry. In the May/June issue, Ken McMartin's article "Evolving role of the P.Eng.—Is certification necessary?" (pp. 34-36) further proved the point that there is little to gain by my membership other than access to great rates for auto/home and life insurance. His article failed to even mention the electrical/electronic engineering industry of which I am a part. I applaud the work of PEO to uphold public safety and ethics in industries that have a great impact in this area—civil, mechanical, and chemical—and this is a benefit of being a citizen of Ontario. However, PEO holds hostage the "engineer" title from the rest of the engineering work force who are nowhere near public safety and ethical issues. There have got to be more reasons than great insurance packages for my being a P.Eng., but in my industry they fail to be apparent to me. Am I alone with this view? I hope that PEO will address and promote the relevance of certification for the electronic R&D industry.

Barry Robinson, P.Eng., Kitchener, ON

Influence waning

Several articles in the July/August *Engineering Dimensions* suggest blaming others for a declining status of engineers, which can hinder us at the policy table ("Low profile hinders P.Engs at policy table," pp. 16-17). If this stagnation has filtered down to the employer/employee level, how much damage has resulted from our muteness in government/association meetings?

Good engineers do not ask questions, they have answers. Yet in the same issue of the magazine, we learn that PEO was "surprised" and "reserved detailed comment" on the newly enacted Brownfields Regulation (OR 153/04). Moreover, sev-

eral (limited) licence holders have been denied access to work they have conducted safely for years. It seems PEO may view itself as a cog with a single tooth (civil) that has periodic contact with regulators, rather than a double tier drive wheel with licence holders on the upper level, synchronized with government and right-to-title technologists in lock step on the other.

Some blame a surplus of engineers on uncontrolled immigration, but the number of licensed members remains constant, suggesting that work is being done by unlicensed “engineers.” Walkerton, changes to the *Ontario Building Code* (Bill 124 and Regulation 305/03), the 2003 power blackout and the need for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to hire 500 new safety inspectors over the next two years are just a few examples of “qualified persons” (QPs) doing work that was once the sole domain of licensed professionals, yet we downplay our own right to title when discussing public safety with those

for whom status is paramount. Moreover, work by people who lack professional liability merely increases demand for financial “insurance” and detracts from an engineer’s ability to bid on contracts.

If we are to achieve our President’s goal of making PEO “proactive instead of reactive,” we need to find faster ways to communicate with members. This letter will not be read until the current President’s mandate is half expired. Efforts to regain primacy in the public perception require an effort by all, not just a few personally motivated members in an affiliated society. It is one of PEO’s four mandated duties.

Our Past President also highlighted “change and progress,” but as Canadian Council of Professional Engineers’ Gold Medal recipient Art Johns noted, engineers lack the passion required to shout from rooftops in promoting our profession. As a result, our ability to protect the public is being eroded.

Peter Broad, P.Eng., London, ON

Earning less

To maintain brevity and not steal anyone’s thunder, I strongly agree with the two letters “Bill 124 needs further thought” and “Licence irrelevant” (September/October 2004, pp. 6-7).

My two brothers and I attended University of Toronto and obtained our BAsSc degrees. I alone went on to get my P.Eng. and a Certificate of Authorization.

Given my substantially less earnings in comparison to my brothers, it is highly unlikely that they will ever choose to get their P.Eng. licences.

Allan Koivu, P.Eng., Port Stanley, ON

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