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## Connecting people

**M**y key focus during my presidency will be on the Society's ability to attract and retain apprentices and young engineers. And by 'retain' I mean to connect them to the SOE and to other engineers for their entire career. From being aspiring young engineers who can innovate and influence, through to their more senior years when they may wish to develop others by volunteering for a regional-level responsibility and/or a trustee board role.

To do this, the benefits case for membership must be clear. For our members, their connection to wider society must also be clear. I'm keen to create an SOE that brings together engineers of differing disciplines: opportunities for our plant engineers to experience the environment of our road transport engineers, and vice versa; opportunities for our civilian engineers to experience the workplaces of our military engineers.

The routine interaction I'm imagining might involve local Society groups being shown the fleets and facilities that other parts of our membership take for granted, e.g. our environmental engineers visiting Leyland to see DAF's production plant or our road transport engineers visiting a military fleet. Creating opportunities for professional connection will not only open our minds as engineers but will also foster the personal relationships which for me is the whole point. The Society is a great network that exists to share ideas, lead working practices and develop understanding of others' approaches. All of this is made easy through professional, individual relationships; connections that are mutually beneficial and can endure across entire careers. I feel fortunate that I have a large network of both civilian and military engineers across the SOE.

In the main of course, our apprentices might not see these benefits immediately. The focus I had on the job in hand, the day-by-day learning, and my hunger to prove myself during my own apprenticeship was enough to keep me busy without thinking about through-life career benefits! For those of us that are more senior, it is our job to kindle an awareness of this and steer our young engineers towards greatness.

Adam Fraser-Hitchen  
**President, Society of Operations Engineers**



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