

Editorial

A new year, a new initiative



Norman Train Chairman, Business Practice and Regulatory Control Committee

It is a pleasure to have been invited to contribute this editorial. Can I wish you all a Happy New Year and encourage you to add a further resolution to your list for 2017 with the launch of the 'Business Practice Notes' (BPNs) in *The Structural Engineer* this month?

This new series is being produced by the Business Practice and Regulatory Control Committee with the objectives of encouraging best practice and highlighting areas of unacceptable practice in the structural engineering profession. On the latter, we have had feedback from the Professional Conduct Committee that the majority of complaints received by the Institution relate to poor communication or unclear appointments/duties rather than any technical matters.

The strength of the BPNs is that they are written by experienced practising engineers for other engineers. The notes do not attempt to be cutting-edge management school papers, but offer sensible advice with a target audience of newly chartered engineers setting off into middle management. For engineers further on in their careers, the BPNs can not only be a useful aide memoire but also good continuing professional development (CPD), with emerging business opportunities and threats. Graduates and students will also find them pithy, useful introductions to specific topics.

The first few notes have been chosen around the theme of fee proposals, resource management and payment/debtors, as areas that are important for all practising engineers. Included in these

is use of the *Official Journal of the European Union* (OJEU) as a source of work, an area of which I, for one, had no knowledge. We start this month with a note on 'Clarity in fee proposals' (page 22). There are many, many more BPNs in the pipeline. The field is as large and wide as the interests and passions of the Committee. There are a number of notes on the different facets of communication, including, for instance, 'communicating bad news' as an item that is not often addressed. Other notes will cover subjects such as time management, Building Information Modelling (BIM) and whistleblowing.

Each note has a lead author supported by a 'buddy' to act as a sounding board/supporter. The draft notes are reviewed by the whole Committee, to ensure that they are of a sufficient standard, with feedback to the author on specific suggestions with the text. It is this peer feedback that is most valuable in turning what may be a reasonable note into a humdinger, feeding off the collective experience of the whole Committee.

At the Engineering Leadership Group Technical Forum in December, the Director of Communications, Tina Cardy, challenged the audience to embrace social media in getting out their message. As a mature engineer, who often finds he is beaten by the technology of his mobile phone, I will have to wait for the BPN on 'using social media' before I can take up Tina's challenge!

Try the first few BPNs and, whatever the stage of your career, I am sure that you will find them informative.

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- promotes the learned society role of the Institution by publishing peer-reviewed content which advances the science and art of structural engineering
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- has over 27 000 members in over 100 countries around the world
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- supports and protects the profession of structural engineering by upholding professional standards and to act as an international voice on behalf of structural engineers

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