

EMERGING TALENT MEMBERS IN FOCUS



The Emerging Talent Network has been established by Infrastructure New Zealand to develop the next generation of infrastructure leaders. In this changing COVID-19 landscape we will be profiling a different ET member working in a different part of the industry each week. If you would like to be profiled, or would like to nominate someone to be profiled, please answer the questions below and send your picture through to [Tara](#).

We would like to introduce Gracen Luka from TSA Management as this week's Emerging Talent Member in Focus. In addition to her role at TSA Management, Gracen is also Co-Deputy Chair of the ET Auckland Committee.



GRACEN LUKA
PROJECT MANAGER



1. What organisation are you with, and what do you do day-to-day (normally)?

I've been at TSA management for almost three months now and it's fair to say it's been an interesting time to have joined a new organisation. I work as a Project Manager across various projects and at the moment, am specifically working with KiwiRail and Auckland Council. Fortunately, at TSA, people are at the heart of the organisation. This has meant team bonding has been very organic and immediate, so three months quickly feels like a year. Through this time, I've been able to continue work on my projects without experiencing too much stress or uncertainty as there's constant, transparent dialogue between TSA employees and management.

2. How has your perspective changed since going into lockdown?

On a personal level, I've found it at times demotivating and challenging. To combat this, I've established an at-home routine. It's amazing how something as simple as having a shower and getting dressed can set you up for the day.

With an infrastructure lens, I've developed further appreciation towards the entire supply chain we rely on to deliver infrastructure in New Zealand. A few weeks ago, Finance Minister Grant Robertson said "the economy is more like an oven than a light switch. When you switch it off, it takes a while to warm back up again." Most know what the supply chain is made up of, but not many understand the complex and intertwined relationships between each party, that can quickly be impacted and bring an industry to its knees. I think acknowledging and supporting these areas through project teams will be critical in the mobilisation of our industry to deliver infrastructure during and post COVID-19.

My third perspective is taken with a societal lens. I've found myself reflecting on leadership and what I want to "grow up to be like." I think in these trying times I've really understood what effective leadership looks like for a 2020 business. No longer is it solely driven by the bottom line, but instead is hugely reliant on a people centric business model and maintaining authentic relationships with other industry participants.

3. What are the biggest successes/challenges with the new ways of working? (i.e., video conferencing, lack of events and in-person meetings, etc.)

Successes:

- Utilising contacts I've made through the Emerging Talent network has been extremely helpful to find out what other people are experiencing in the industry, what opportunities are coming up, and how best to contribute to my business strategy moving forward.
- Scoping out additional CPD events or free learning I usually wouldn't have time for.

Challenges:

- Lack of meaningful social interaction. The rule that all cameras must be on during calls was previously quite daunting to me but now has become really beneficial for connectivity and engagement.
- My posture. Chairs from Kmart look great but the ergonomics are not quite there yet.
- Lots of unnecessary snacking

4. How is your sector of the infrastructure industry going and what are your sector's biggest needs right now?

I think the two paramount needs are assurance of pipeline which flows through to the entire industry and keeping a future focused mentality. We need to work collaboratively through solutions to ensure no deficits in infrastructure are experienced in 2+ years' time when the outcomes were originally programmed to be delivered pre COVID-19.

5. What changes to your work or sector will endure after the lockdown is lifted?

I find questions like these difficult as I believe ideas don't exist, they emerge in a context. Given this context is rapidly changing, I have found it challenging to predict most outcomes. There are plenty of solutions other countries are implementing which New Zealand will likely follow suit in, such as the 24-hour site and bluetooth location trackers to ensure social distancing. From a consultant perspective, I think most agile organisations will adapt their business models and look for people within to help sculpt what this looks like to further capitalise on market opportunities. It's a great opportunity for members of the ET network to step up and display their adaptability, resilience and collaborative potential. Whatever capacity this is achieved through, it will help grow an understanding of a wider business and infrastructure context helping grow individuals and well-rounded professionals.

6. What are your top tips and tricks for surviving and thriving in the COVID-lockdown landscape?

Work smarter, not harder as you adapt and embrace this current environment. Also, remember to make an effort and reach out to people in your office and project circles you're not seeing as regularly as you would as they're probably feeling quite isolated and unmotivated too.

To learn more about opportunities for a career with TSA Management click [here](#) or you can connect with Gracen on [LinkedIn](#).

LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

In this period of change and uncertainty, we have an opportunity to invest in ourselves, learn, and prepare for the new normal. Each week we will round up the webinars and resources we've come across that will be of interest to our members. If you would like to recommend a webinar to be included in next week's profile, please contact [Tara](#).

Wednesday 8 April 2020 | [Infometrics Weekly Webinar - Māori Employment Crisis](#) (Recording Only)

Friday 17 April 2020, 12:00PM | [FLINT CxObytes with Craig Hudson, Managing Director, Xero](#)

Friday 17 April - Sunday 19 April 2020 | [Hack the Crisis New Zealand](#)

