

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 Simon Fenton from WSP in Auckland as this week's Emerging Talent Member in Focus.



SIMON FENTON
SERVICE LINE LEADER -
PROJECT DELIVERY



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

I have been with WSP for just over 7 years and within this time I have undertaken a number of roles in New Zealand and the South Pacific including Bridge Designer, Civil Engineer, Design Coordinator, Contract Engineer and Project Manager. I recently took up the role as Service Line Leader for the Project Delivery team in September last year. My time is now split between management of the Project Delivery Service Line and undertaking Project and Contract Management roles on transportation projects. As the Service Line Leader for Project Delivery I help develop and deliver our company strategies through setting SMART goals and targets for the Project Delivery Team. I also play a part in developing and growing the Major Projects Business through finding new opportunities with our clients, ensuring delivering quality projects and recruitment for the team. This requires me to work closely with our key client relationship managers and Project Managers/Directors to ensure we understand our clients' needs and are delivering on their expectations. Part of my responsibility also involves assisting with bids either as a bid manager or providing input for Project Delivery aspects of the bid which includes contract management and MSQA.

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

There have been some significant changes to how the team is working within the last few weeks since lockdown but for the Project Delivery team, it is still business as usual and we have continued to deliver to our clients. The team has adapted well to working from home and have continued to support our clients who are also going through some significant changes to how their business is being run. My day to day has changed slightly with more time being invested in assisting the team with their new work situation and understanding how we can maintain efficiency. This has been done through maintaining close communication using regular video catch ups with my team leaders in each of the 4 major design offices across the country, and my colleagues in the Major Projects Group.

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.)

I have been very impressed by how the team has adapted to working from home and continue to maintain impressive

utilisation levels. We started the lockdown with daily morning catch up meetings to share issues, solutions and to support each other not only through the business changes but also on a personal level. This has reduced to 3 times a week now, but communication is still very close between all members. It was key to find a balance of good communication whilst still appreciating that the team are very busy and being conscious of not creating too many distractions. Across the business there has been some fantastic online events including Mindfulness & Meditation workshops, Friday Drinks and even the continuation of the daily afternoon 2min planking sessions. This has helped us keep the strong company culture and provide some positivity and fun to our colleagues who may be struggling during this period. If anything, I believe that my team have become closer and stronger throughout this time.

The biggest challenge has certainly been managing and absorbing the amount of information being shared via emails and Skype/Teams calls. As the time has progressed the amount of information being delivered has slowed and more efficient ways are being developed to keep everyone updated. Another challenge has been in the use of Skype and Teams for meeting with multiple people. As we undertake these more regularly, I believe video conference efficiency and etiquette will be understood better. During these first few weeks of working from home my team and I have been trying to develop our virtual communication skills by discussing issues and solutions for how we can stay efficient and productive.

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

The majority of the Project Delivery Service Line have continued to stay busy through the lockdown with only some issues in finding work for my site based members. Workload has actually increased as we have had the opportunity to deliver a number of economy-stimulating infrastructure work packages from some of our main clients including Waka Kotahi and Auckland Transport. This has put pressure on our team to scope and price these fast-tracked projects to help maintain a healthy forward workload, whilst still delivering our current projects. The Project Delivery team will continue to grow in numbers with roles still being advertised for across the country. To maintain cash flow to support the business, we have been working with our clients to maximise billing and ensure prompt payments are being made. We have also been closely communicating with our clients to understand how we can assist them through this time to ensure that they also come out of this period as healthy as possible. I personally believe that in the future our clients will be taking note of the consultancies and contractors that supported them through these times rather than making things even more difficult for them.

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

Given that the majority of the Project Delivery Service Line work can be undertaken remotely, the new model of being able to work from home is something that could be maintained. Remote working means that we can learn as a business how to run large multi-discipline projects from multiple locations. This will allow us to use our national and global resources to deliver local projects for our clients and really implement our 'Glocal Expertise' business model. Remote working would also allow our teams to ensure they have a healthier work/life balance by being flexible with their days and reducing time lost from travelling to and from the office. It is important that we learn as much about the model of working from home during this time and iron out any of the inefficiencies that are currently taking place. We want to be at the forefront of the industry in demonstrating to our clients how projects of all scales can be delivered from remote locations across New Zealand and the world.

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

My biggest tip would be to try and develop and maintain a daily routine that suits your current situation. We have team members who have young families and have to share parenting roles with their partner during the day. My advice is to work around your family life and spread your workload over the entire day. It is also important to maintain a healthy lifestyle, so ensure that you undertake regular exercise and eat fresh and healthy foods. I usually get up early, make a coffee and go out for a quick walk to start the day. I will then do some more physical exercise either at lunchtime or the end of the day depending on my schedule. I think my message here would be to be flexible and spread your activities over the entire day. We are no longer fixed to a standard 9 – 5pm and we should make the most of the additional hours gained due to commuting to and from the office.

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

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 15 April 2020 | [Infometrics Regions and Recovery Focus](#) (Recording Only)

Monday 27 April 2020 | [Aotearoa Town Hall Part 2 - From Recovery to Revolution](#) (Recording Only)

Thursday 30 April 2020, 4:00PM | [FLINT Negotiation Skills in These New Times](#)

Friday 1 May 2020, 12:00PM | [FLINT CxObytes with JB Rousselot, CEO, Chorus](#)

