



Interpreting the Environment &
Pioneering Change

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ENGINEERS

Forum

CONSULTING ENGINEERS – WE SHAPE YOUR WORLD

The South African Association of Consulting Engineers' (SAACE) newly elected President, Felix Fongoqa, presented his presidential message and theme for the year at a function recently held in Johannesburg. The President's theme for 2008/9 is "Consulting Engineers, We Shape Your World". Fongoqa believes that Consulting Engineers should be seen as a national asset responsible for underpinning the economy, for without Consulting Engineers nothing happens! Without infrastructure development including stadiums, transport systems, roads, harbours and airports there would be no 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Fongoqa stated emphatically: "It is our intention to go beyond communicating with only ourselves, other built environment professionals, contractors, and client bodies. We intend to push the boundaries and communicate with the society we serve, the opinion



SAACE newly elected
President, Felix Fongoqa

leaders, the legislators as well as the policy makers. Not only will this help us to claim back our rightful place in society, but this will ensure that the vast majority of intelligent youngsters will aspire to be engineers and that the majority of those who choose to join this profession will be drawn into the consulting engineering industry."

2010: an engineering showcase

Fongoqa continued: "To us, 2010 is a big engineering showcase in which society gets the benefit of enjoying themselves with the world's best soccer players." He wants to challenge the opinion makers, policy makers and legislators to engage with this industry positively and ensure that as a country we nurture it and move away from policies that can so easily destroy it.

He believes that Consulting Engineers are living in exciting times with their industry at the forefront of an expanding economy, but cautions that we are all well aware sustainable growth is not without its challenges. The skills shortage is the single biggest issue facing the industry that may lead to a crisis affecting our ability to refurbish, maintain and develop infrastructure. He noted that the shortage of professional skills is an international problem.

Support for Government initiatives

SAACE fully supports the Government's AS-GISA and JIPSA initiatives and will continue to pursue them with the relevant authorities to ensure that the activities of members are informed by and comply with their strategy. The Association also continues to believe that, apart from specialist skills, that South Africa has the human capital required and that its citizens must be allowed to derive the benefit of increased job opportunities.

Fongoqa further stated that our rapidly expanding economy has placed young engineers under incredible pressure. As an Association, through its Young Professionals Forum, it has created a platform to facilitate the mentoring of young professionals as well as to put processes in place to attract young people into the profession.

During 2007 members of the YPF made presentations to over 2 000 learners at the Sci-Bono Centre in Newtown as well as had the opportunity to present to one hundred of the top learners in the country. The YPF also promoted Job Shadow Day as well as a number of other initiatives within the Consulting Engineering Industry and had a presentation slot at the International Federation of Consulting Engineers Conference in Singapore.

Management Information Survey

SAACE member firms continue to strive to build skills as can be seen in the results of the bi-annual SAACE Management Information Survey. The results of the most recent survey indicate that significant investment in bursaries and training has continued with more emphasis on bursaries to ensure

longterm growth in capacity. Annualized contributions to bursaries and training from member firms amounted to an annualized spend of some R96 million as a collective response from our 470 member firms.

SAACE member firms are having to focus considerable attention on the supply side in obtaining the necessary skills and have experienced difficulties in sourcing skills in all categories including engineers, technologists and technicians, in all categories. The SAACE School of Consulting Engineering has undergone a radical restructuring process during the past year and the 2008 CPD accredited Training Programme will provide cost-effective training designed to build a resource of holistic engineers and consulting engineers. SAACE is in constant contact with the CETA Construction Industry SETA (CETA) in order to ensure that Built Environment Professions (BEP) funding is more effectively used to grow professional learnerships, bursaries and subvention for continual professional development.

Other initiatives

Another initiative in the pipeline from the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) is the creation of a national Register of Professional Service Providers including consulting engineers. In addition to this, the CIDB has created a standardized approach to procurement systems and documentation.

Despite the significant increase in workload, competition in tendering remains keen with many firms resorting to discounting of fees to obtain work which is damaging to long term business sustainability.

In conclusion, Fongoqa stated that the Association, through its member firms continues to build a strong and sustainable Consulting Engineering industry serving the interests and needs of society in an expanding economy.

Contact details:
Graham Pirie
CEO SAACE
Tel: 011 463 2022
Email: gspirie@saace.co.za