

Reengineering The Engineer: Fostering Personal and Corporate 'Sustainability'

2021 Smart Engineering Special Issue

I am extremely disappointed with Douglas Fitzpatrick's column in the 2021 Smart Engineering Issue and by *Informed Infrastructure's* decision to publish it. At first, I was torn about whether or not to respond. The easiest thing might be to simply throw the magazine into the recycling bin and forget about it. Quietly cancelling my subscription seems like a reasonable action. And honestly, I had to resist the strong urge to quickly vent my anger as a post on social media.

I wish I could speak to the receptionist and tell her one thing: she deserves no blame for someone else's behavior that left her feeling uncomfortable. Her reactions and feelings are valid.

To Mr. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Danielson and Mr. Carmody, I'd ask: has a friendly woman ever commented on your looks while you were focused on your work? I'm willing to bet the answer is no.

I know exactly what it feels like when a man comments on my appearance while I'm doing my job. It's a distraction from my work, whether that was inspecting a water main installation on a construction site, designing a subdivision, or setting up new software at a client's office. What I remember is how uneasy and nervous I felt. I didn't know

how to respond to it and was afraid that if I did respond the way I wanted, I'd come off as snappish and rude, or making a big deal out of nothing. I worried about my ability to be effective at work as a result.

Unsolicited feedback is often rude, insensitive and inappropriate—all things that I'd call poor social skills. I agree with the receptionist, who said it succinctly: it's creepy.

The intention of the person who made her feel that way is irrelevant. Mr. Fitzpatrick blamed the wrong person when he "guessed she was too focused on the task at hand and forgot to act like it was fun to help clients."

Too focused!

Act like it's fun!

I'm willing to bet you'd never use that language when providing feedback to an engineer on your staff. The receptionist deserved better from you.

Sarah Cunningham, P.E., MBA

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Charlestown, Mass.



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THE LOW-COST, MAINTENANCE-FREE
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Dear Sarah,

I'm sorry the article I wrote for the Smart Engineering issue 2021 offended you, and I appreciate you voicing your opinion to me personally. The employee mentioned in the article was performing her duty on the day, and she's a colleague of my daughter. Neither of them work for me.

I was attempting to provide three anecdotal examples I had experienced or had knowledge of that highlighted the importance of the social side of our business, a skill that is often difficult for some engineers to relate to, let alone master. Obviously, I missed the mark with the third example. Thank you for bringing it to my attention so I can be more understanding and thoughtful with my examples in the future.

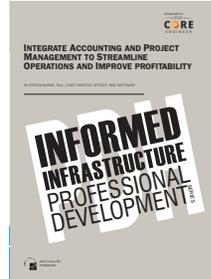
Douglas (Doug) G. Fitzpatrick, P.E.
Fitzpatrick Engineering Group, PLLC
Structural Engineers
Cornelius, N.C.

Continuing Education Credits

Thank you for the continuing education articles in the magazine. I have used those to meet most of my continuing education requirements for the last few years. I was audited last year, and our NC Board accepted all the articles I used from you without question. Our requirement is 15 hours per year, so if you could find three more months this year, I wouldn't have to look elsewhere for those last three PDHs!

Thanks again for all you do.

Robert Graham, P.E.
George Finch/Boney and Associates, PA
Raleigh, N.C.



Hi Robert,

Don't forget the webcasts, as they are all approved for learning as well. For the live webcasts no quiz is needed, as we have the ability for you to ask questions and participate in polling, kind of like if you were at a conference. For the archived webcasts, it is like the PDH program in the magazine, and you will need to pass a 10-question quiz. You can find the archived webcasts here: <https://v1-education.com/>.

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