

My Journey: CIBSE ASHRAE Graduate of the Year Award

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The thought of applying for the CIBSE ASHRAE Graduate of the Year Award came into mind shortly after joining HPF in September 2015. It was two years later I was ready to make my submission, using this time at HPF to build a foundation in understanding the principles of building services and how energy and sustainability fits into the broader picture. In my view, there could have been no better approach as my first two years in the business had given me the necessary tools for when I eventually decided to submit my entry last August.

The application required the support of my nominator, Paul Scriven (Associate Director, Energy and Sustainability) and we submitted shortly before the deadline, a few weeks later we were excited to discover that I had been selected as one of 8 finalists from over 50 entries. The next task – present to an audience of building services professionals at the IMechE headquarters on the topic ‘Is engineering an art and should building services professionals be more creative in the way they approach projects?’

I had 3 weeks of preparation time and a lot of time and effort was invested, from not only myself, but everyone in my team who supported with their ideas and gave honest feedback in areas needing improvement. The final presentation delivered to the audience on the night was a collective body of work with the sole purpose of bringing the award home. The nerve wrecking 5 minute presentation passed and at the end of the evening after the Judges had deliberated, I was awarded the ‘CIBSE ASHRAE Graduate of the Year 2017’ title. The winning prize – an all expenses paid trip to the ‘ASHRAE Winter Conference 2018’ hosted in Chicago between the 20th – 24th January 2018.

“An amazing experience” is the simplest way I describe my time out there. As I explain every time I get asked, one cannot understand the magnitude of the conference until you actually get there to see it first hand. The conference consisted of several session types – conference papers, technical papers, workshops, seminars and a mammoth of an exhibition – each providing a different setting to topics discussed and audience

engagement. The social events were a great part of the experience where we all came out – young, and old(er) to mingle with one another at dinners, nights’ out and other social gatherings.

“An amazing experience”

I particularly found sessions on energy, sustainability, and the effects of climate change on the built environment interesting therefore, tailored my schedule to attend as many such sessions as I could. Conference and technical paper sessions provided great opportunities to listen to industry professionals and research students from around the globe on these topics. It was very interesting to observe how the audience in said sessions engaged with speakers through the creation of thought-provoking questions, which encouraged further conversation. Workshops and seminars were similar although these sessions were more discussion-influenced and relied on participation from both speakers and panels covering a topic. As an Energy and Sustainability Consultant, an area of interest was driven by Architects’ discussing how their designs from conceptual stages could influence reduced energy demand in buildings for the future.

The thermal dynamic modelling process was also discussed in a few sessions at length and how we, as energy modellers, provide detailed dynamic models to inform better building design. Technical



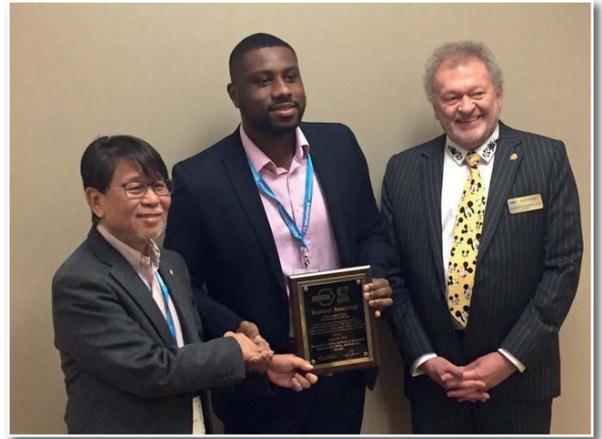
committee meetings were also attended where several small groups met to discuss their area of expertise and contribute to developing ASHRAE handbooks. As part of the CIBSE delegation, I sat in with the heads of both CIBSE and ASHRAE during discussions on how both associations plan to collaborate with the aim of pushing the building services industry forward.

When asked, "oh so Raphael, what have you taken away from the conference?" I must be honest and say it is difficult to explain all I have learnt in a single sitting. I shared a few 'trends' during my speech at The Rumford Club earlier in the month and thought this would aptly summarise as key things I took away from the experience:

1. **You get out of experiences, whatever you put in** – the more energy and willingness to learn that you put in, the more you will receive in return.
2. **Readiness to engage** – as mentioned, there were several opportunities to engage on technical topics through sessions and; socially through other events that took place during the conference.
I have learnt that there is a lot of knowledge to acquire and this comes in many forms than one can imagine.
3. **Providing better building design through improving the energy performance of our buildings and; sustainability for the future have taken leading roles in the building services industry.**
Whilst we can see how far the built environment has come in meeting global targets for climate change, we still have some way to go.
4. **Never shy away from taking a lead role** – more often, we wait for someone else to take the steering wheel to enjoy the comfort of being a passenger. As I observed from the conference, it felt like everyone played a significant role in delivering on topics of interest.
5. **Chicago is a beautiful city, cold, but beautiful.**

What I hope the award will give me for the future

The experience of attending the ASHRAE Winter conference will live long in my memory. It has been an out of world experience since winning the award by virtue of networking and gaining access to places I never would have thought being present in. As a young professional, with just over 2 years' experience I could not have asked for a better start to what I hope will be a long and fruitful career. To all other young professionals like myself reading this, thinking this is above their capability – **I ask that you step out and challenge yourself to be the best you can.**



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