

letters

Continuing Education

I found Steve Kurtz's article "Learning by Doing" (April, p. 66) extremely interesting. We train the structural Ironworkers of New York in a 24,000-sq.-ft training school that houses nine classrooms and a 12,000-sq.-ft, 50-ft-high indoor work area. The work area includes a five-ton overhead crane, a structural steel frame, 12 burning stations for oxy-acetylene, and 33 welding booths for a variety of welding procedures (stick, automatic, pipe, and stainless).

We would be more than happy to have engineering students visit our school at any time to further showcase the complexities of structural steel erection that our students learn during their three years of training. I can be reached at director@nycironworkers.org.

**Bryan Brady II, Director of Training
Ironworkers Locals 40 & 361, New York**

Do they Really?

I found Anne Scarlett's article "Engineers Can—and do—Communicate Well" (April, p. 51) quite interesting, but I do not fully agree with her reasoning and her conclusion.

During their university training, engineering students write many term papers and other reports for their professors, who are senior specialist in the subject. When these students enter the industry, they continue to communicate with the assumption that the readers or listeners are also experts in their field. They fail to recognize that engineers have to communicate with other people such as workers, money managers, governmental officials, and the general public, and not only with specialists in their field. It is just as important to recognize to whom one communicates as what is communicated.

To be successful communicators, engineers must evaluate their target audience

and tailor their presentations to the specific target audience.

**Harry W. Ebert, P.E.
Madison, N.J.**

Anne Scarlett responds:

Excellent points! It was definitely an oversight on my part to not include that factor in the article (by all means, when I'm coaching folks, we do an audience analysis first and foremost). Mainly, I wanted to be clear that engineers self-proclaiming that they are rotten communicators (and/or engineers who are just tossed aside with preconceived notions that they are ineffective at communicating) are both displaying cop-out attitudes. Rather, they can (and do) have the skill sets in them. But they need to work at it, and they need to have much confidence. (Confidence is half the battle; knowing your audience and your main message is the other half, yes?)