

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 Andrew Schoultz from Aurecon as this week's Emerging Talent Member in Focus. In addition to his role at Aurecon, Andrew is also Deputy Chair of the ET Wellington Committee.



ANDREW SCHOULTZ
CONSULTANT, INFRASTRUCTURE
ADVISORY



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

I work at Aurecon on the Infrastructure Advisory Team. The team works on a wide range of projects, though I tend to focus on research and analytical type roles, such as risk management and modelling, financial reporting and modelling, economic analysis, and future trend research. My day-to-day activities will usually depend on what project is on the go, and the tempo can vary quite a bit. Despite the variety I am at heart a creature of habit and, like many others, rarely pass on a 9am coffee.

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

The work I do is primarily desktop based with meetings mixed in, so apart from meetings going digital nothing has changed dramatically so far. Office banter has mostly gone the way of the dodo, apart from what little can be squeezed into online meetings, which is generally not much. Our team does have a daily online catchup for 10 minutes which is mostly social and does bring in some banter, but it's just not the same and it's awkward when you say something incredibly witty and hilarious but multiple people start talking at the same time and no one is able to appreciate your wild sense of humour and natural charisma.

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.)

Video conferencing has been a challenge. When I'm on a call, any system notification temporarily disables my audio. It's not always an issue, but is a bit awkward when on a client call and the audio cuts out, returning just in time to hear "did you get all that down?" Particularly annoying when the notification that caused it is the system update request I've been clicking "postpone" on for ages. It has made me appreciate the value of face to face communication. Another challenge is that it is considerably more difficult to ambush people when you need info from them and they haven't been replying to your emails, texts, skype messages, and calls, though that is very much a two-way street.

4. How is your sector of the infrastructure industry going and what are your sector's biggest needs right now? It would be close to the peak of unoriginal to say there is a slowdown going on, but I guess that's what it is. By the looks of it, moving to level 3 will at least allow construction sites to open back up again so hopefully that will get things going. Depending on the gap between now and any additional Government projects coming online, that should hopefully be enough to sustain us for the time being. Most firms in Professional Services (and, by the sounds of it, many construction firms) are capital-

lite, meaning they are dependent on cashflows to keep going. With little collateral to borrow against, a reduction in cashflow might cause serious issues even over a relatively short period of time, though there are many firms across the economy in the same boat.

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

It's hard to say exactly at this point, though it does seem clear that the end of the lockdown will not mean a return to the office. Social distancing rules seem likely to persist for some time, and with the Advisory team less in need of an office setup than our Engineer colleagues it seems likely I will be stuck at the dining table for some time yet. I do think that, technical hitches aside, this has made the value of digital meetings versus expensive travel-to-meet-in-person meetings more apparent, so I suspect that will endure. One thing I hope will stick around is an increased focus on resilience. Pandemics are not the only potential threat which could pose a serious disruption to the normal goings-on, especially in Wellington (whose fault line is it anyway?), and our infrastructure and economy remain remarkably non-resilient to major disruptions (at least in the short-medium term).

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

My top tip would be to obtain a comfy chair because you're going to be sitting down a lot. Though do make sure to get up and move around and get some exercise too. Crucially, a steady supply of chocolate, preferably Whittaker's as it is objectively superior, is key to not only surviving, but thriving. Finally, always keep your eye on the prize, which for me and many other Wellingtonians, is a return to barista made coffee. I'm somewhat of a traditionalist so it's a flat white with blue top, no sugar because I'm trying to stay "healthy".

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

LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN

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](#).

Monday 20 April 2020 | [Aotearoa Town Hall Part 1 - Shaping the Recovery](#) (Recording Only)
Friday 24 April 2020, 11:00AM | [Engineering NZ - How to Talk About Urban Mobility & Transport Shift, Research Launch](#)
Friday 24 April 2020, 11:00AM | [EMA COVID-19 Series - Minister Shane Jones](#)
Friday 24 April 2020, 12:00PM | [FLINT CxObytes with Dr Angela Lim, Founder & CEO of Clearhead](#)
Tuesday 28 April 2020, 5:30PM | [PMI - Are Project Managers Extinct in a DevOps World?](#)

