

The Ripple Effect Conference

In late June, I had the pleasure of attending the Ripple Effect Conference in Coventry. Organised by Yewande Akinola, the conference brings together speakers from engineering, public speaking and leadership to inspire and support women in engineering through a two-day programme of keynote talks, panel discussions and networking opportunities. The conference has an emphasis on leadership, communication, collaboration and professional development.

Looking back through nearly half a notebook of reflections, I am struck by how much I learned over just two days. Every page contains ideas that continue to influence my thinking about leadership, communication and career development. Condensing the experience into a 1,000-word report is challenging, but several themes have stayed with me and continue to shape my professional development.

A few weeks before the conference, Yewande Akinola invited me to participate in a panel discussion. As someone who had never spoken on a conference panel before, this was well outside my comfort zone. In the spirit of the conference, I accepted the opportunity, encouraged by one of Penny Triantafilou's key messages: *"Feel the fear and do it anyway."* Participating in the panel gave me the opportunity to develop my confidence as a public speaker while contributing to discussions with fellow engineers.

The panel explored the theme of purpose and how it influences our day-to-day work. During the discussion, I reflected on my own motivation as an engineer. My current role focuses on medical devices for breast cancer surgical applications, and my purpose is to contribute towards improving women's healthcare. Knowing that even small engineering advances can improve patient outcomes provides the motivation behind my work and reminds me why engineering research has such an important role to play in society.



One of the greatest strengths of the conference was the opportunity to network with engineers from a wide range of industries and career stages. The welcoming atmosphere encouraged open conversations between speakers and delegates, making it easy to exchange experiences, discuss career paths and seek advice. It was particularly valuable to hear from professionals whose careers have taken very different directions while remaining connected through a shared passion for engineering and supporting others.

Reflecting on the conference afterwards, there are several pieces of advice that have remained with me.

Bolaji Sofoluwe encouraged us to identify the "golden thread" running through our careers to guide intentional decision-making. Her suggestion to imagine our 80-year-old selves looking back on today's choices was a powerful reminder to focus on long-term purpose rather than short-term opportunities. She also emphasised the importance of maintaining a lifelong learning mindset and viewing feedback as the ladder to future growth.

Viv Groskop delivered a masterclass in confident communication and public speaking. She described challenging herself to complete 100 comedy performances in 100 days, demonstrating that confidence is built through repeated practice rather than waiting to feel ready. Her advice to "fail fast in a low-stakes environments" reinforced the value of embracing new opportunities, even when they feel uncomfortable.

Hayaatun Sillem spoke about the importance of collaboration, sharing the principle of "collaboration first" throughout her career. Her advice to "build ladders and hold them up for each other" particularly resonated with me, highlighting the importance of supporting colleagues and creating opportunities for others. She also suggested establishing peer coaching partnerships every four to six weeks to maintain accountability and continue progressing towards personal and professional goals.

Jennifer Udeh introduced gratitude as a leadership practice and explained how intentionally practising gratitude can reduce stress and improve wellbeing. She shared three simple gratitude questions to reflect on regularly, and this is a practice that I have continued since returning from the conference. Taking a few moments each week to reflect has become a valuable reminder to slow down, appreciate progress and maintain perspective.

Overall, the Ripple Effect Conference was one of the most supportive and inspiring professional events I have attended. It challenged me to step outside my comfort zone, reinforced the importance of purpose and collaboration in engineering, and provided practical tools that I continue to apply in my own work. I am sincerely grateful to the IET for enabling me to attend.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the speakers who contributed to such an inspiring event. Although it has not been possible to include lessons from every presentation, each speaker provided valuable insights that I have recorded in my notes and will continue to reflect upon. My thanks go to Yewande Akinola, Anne-Marie Imafidon, Aisha Daley-Nevers, Bolaji Sofoluwe, Gurdip Matharu, Viv Groskop, Simon Hart, Hayaatun Sillem, Abi Okoya, Ama Frimpong, Juma Malik, Nike Folayan, Jennifer Udeh, Penny Triantafillou and Dawn Bonfield.