

Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.” I believe that this is exactly what I’ve gained from practical training. I have not only been taught content, but I have learnt skills that I can carry with me throughout my career in my field of study and for general experience.

I have spent my second year completing my first-year practical training due to the impact covid had on job opportunities in my first year. Fortunately, I got the opportunity to intern for an engineering company from my hometown- NEP Group. And although I did not realize how beneficial gaining a year of content would be I eventually did. During my first days of the year 2022 I spent my days interning at one of their many ongoing projects in Gauteng- Impumlelo Extension 4. This project was a mixed housing development subsidy with a total expected yield of 518 housing opportunities which will be broken into RDP’s, FLISP Rapid Land Release and Bonded Houses. This project employed a total of 178 locals.

During my experience I learnt integral lessons about the construction working industry. I learnt about the importance of good communication and a healthy and sound relationship. Construction is an industry that is very cutthroat- anyone can be replaced- so it is rather essential to know your work very well and to know how to convey it assertively but respectfully. I have also learnt that time is costly. Therefore, any delays or mistakes cost the clients time and money. It is however impossible to work with no mistakes, but it should be at least challenged.

Regarding my day-to-day basis, I learnt the importance of consistent checks and meetings. It is important to ensure that everyone is on the same page with the schedule of the week and the day. Not all personnel are available everyday on site or even in the office, hence its importance. In addition, I learnt the basics of compiling a Bill of Quantity. I can assure that it was my first time witnessing a BOQ, let alone a large one. I learnt that BOQs are compiled from precedent projects and different methods of estimating. In this project, NEP Group quantity surveyor used a similar BOQ to reference the rates. My duty was to ensure that the rates corresponded. In addition, I roughly got the basics of measuring the quantities. The principals of measuring I had learnt in MDA I, however measuring the quantities of items is where it got complicated. Through this I learnt the importance of understanding the drawing. This is essential for all professionals and workers on site to avoid any

mistakes. I encountered this issue myself when on site when I witnessed all that I had been measuring. Due to my confusion, I got assistance and quickly learnt how to read an architectural drawing with the assistance of the principal agent. While I learnt more about BOQs, I also got to witness the tender adjudication process. This was for the Obed Nkosi Extension 2&3 Bulk upgrade. I assessed and assisted the compilation of the tender. There I learnt about the required documents when applying for a tender namely- CIDB, tax compliance, address, COIDA, BBBEEE and more.

On site I assessed how the construction manager would check the work and remeasure it. Furthermore, I assessed and assisted the process of excavation. Which includes, firstly surveying the ground. To do that you test the ground. They then drew boundary lines with the pegs that have already been placed. An excavator would excavate within the lines drawn. Moreover, I learnt about the importance about health and safety by an induction by the Health and Safety Officer. I surveyed the site, and they told me the importance about health and safety like hoarding, security and lights for night work.

My first-time experience was of course frightening. It was rather challenging to enter the working space at a young age. The environment is not very accepting of young, educated students that have zero to little experience, however NEP Group made my stay very pleasant. I did realize that the construction industry lacks females and being one of the few in the crowd can feel uncomfortable at first but with due time you acclimatise.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience with NEP Group, and I look forward to my next practical training.