CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REFLECTIVE PRACTICE.

What is Reflective Practice and how do I do it?

Reflective Practice/Critical Reflection can be considered as the process of answering the following sequence of questions:

- Did I benefit from the activity through increased knowledge and/or understanding? Consider strengths and weaknesses of the activity.
- How did I benefit?
- How could I have benefited more?
- How will I be able to use this experience constructively and further build on its effect in the future by application or further learning?

What is Reflection?

Reflection on a particular activity is personal and should demonstrate critical analysis skills, with the aim of self-improvement based on the learning experience. Not only should you reflect on past learning but It also sets the direction for your next Goals, helping you decide which areas you want to develop next.

There are four commonly referred to criteria for reflective practice. These are –

1. Candidate merely describes the activity undertaken with no critical analysis.
2. Candidate demonstrates critical analysis of why the CPD activity was undertaken but does not show any application of the learning in their current role.
3. Candidate demonstrated critical analysis of why the CPD activity was undertaken and attempts to show application of the learning in their current role.
4. Candidate demonstrated critical analysis of CPD activity and application of learning in current role.

Set Goals
Assess yourself and identify realistic goals for long and short term

Benchmark
Conduct a skills gap analysis against set competency targets

Review
Reflect and critically review your CPD outcomes

Plan
Create an Action Plan, and use SWOT analysis to identify targets

Record
Create a record of your learning activities and outcomes

The Review stage of the process asks for you as an independent and self-critical learner to reflect on your own and other's functioning in order to improve practice. This is continuous improvement in learning and relies on personal space and effort to review the learning activities undertaken and see how the met they objectives that were originally established and what could be done differently to improve for next time. Personal reflection at the necessary depth does not come naturally to many engineers but as with any new skill, practicing is the best way of improving.

In many cases, the original goal that is established at the begining of the year may well not be relevant at the end of the year, as projects change and work requirements develop. For many people, the real 'added value' of a structured programme of continuous professional development (CPD) comes from this reflection after a number of events. To take it a step further, it will also include how you have implemented the learning in your day-to-day activities, so the new skills become ingrained as new habits.

So when you enter your CPD records in Career Developer, it is perfectly possible to just enter the event that took place and record what you actually did in your CPD Log Book. However you will get more from the process if you review and reflect on what you have learned as you enter each activity, under the 'activity reports' section. There are two specific boxes associated with each activity labelled 'Learning Outcome' and 'Benefits Gained'. Here you can enter what you actually learned (Learning outcome) and more widely reflect on what benefits it has given you – personally, professionally or in your current job role (Benefits Gained).