

# Future vision for engineering recruitment

*With more than 40 years' experience in engineering, including 20 as technical director for global drives leader Control Techniques, Bill Drury explains his model for successfully recruiting, developing and retaining talent.*

“Working as technical director at Control Techniques, my responsibilities covered all parts of engineering, from product development through to applications. Having the correct number of talented engineers within the organisation was core.

“We were growing quickly, our product portfolio was spreading into new technical areas, and we were situated in rural Wales, so getting hold of good engineers was perhaps the biggest challenge we faced.

“And we weren't alone – from previous experience at Siemens and Rolls Royce, I knew our competitors were facing the same problem. Getting good staff is challenging.”

## Best practice for recruiting engineers

“I spent at least 30% of my time at Control Techniques attracting, developing and retaining talent, as well as staff planning and appraisals.

“Acting on those appraisals is key to success in engineering. Matching individuals' aspirations to their daily work builds loyalty, respect, and increases staff retention.

“Staff planning was another big task – thinking ‘what will the business be doing in the next 5-10 years’ and taking action to put the right people in place in advance to facilitate sales and product development plans.

## Setting up the E3 Academy

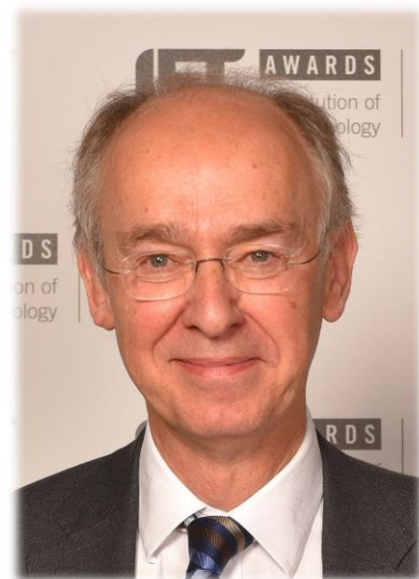
“Attracting good electrical engineering graduates was one area of particular difficulty across industry,” says Drury.

“This led to us having an open discussion with our competitors and the Universities to talk about how we could fix this issue. The [E3 Academy](#) was born out of those discussions in 2008.”

“Undergraduate sponsorship wasn't a new concept, but its use by engineering companies was piecemeal. The E3 Academy provides structure and a common framework for large and small employers while also making electrical engineering more attractive to prospective students – so it increases the talent pool and also secures good engineering talent.”

## Addressing misconceptions about undergraduate sponsorship

As Chairman of the Academy, Drury regularly encounters hesitancy from companies. However, this is often based on misconceptions.





“Companies often think they would have to recruit students from the E3 scheme every year to make it worthwhile, but that simply isn’t true,” says Drury. “We are scalable and can help with onboarding multiple students each year, or just one every few years.

“Some companies also need reassurance about the selection process. It’s always up to them to choose their own students, we just help them manage the process of selecting candidates from up to 200 applications.

“It’s easy to say ‘let’s not recruit anyone this year because it’s a bad year to spend any more money.’ But successful recruitment is all about momentum.”

### **Competition growing more intense**

“Recruitment of electrical engineering talent is just going to get tougher,” says Drury. “There are companies coming into this space all the time - it’s an explosion. For example, think about the tech required to meet the incoming demand for electric vehicles.

“People are aware of the problem, but they often don’t relate it to their future need for additional engineers. Electrical engineering will continue growing because it is getting more pervasive in everything we do, and with it we will need a whole load more electrical engineers than we currently have.

“In spite of this, I know from my experience as part of IET academic accreditation, that even the most eminent universities are struggling with student numbers on electrical engineering courses.

“Similarly for diversity in engineering - things are happening, but it isn’t enough. Only 21% of entrants into engineering and tech are women. E3 Academy scholars, on the other hand, are 40% female, showing how it is possible to develop a more diverse engineering workforce.

“The E3 Academy has made space to double the number of sponsor companies it works with and help to fight these recruitment challenges facing the industry.”

For more info about how to sign up as an E3 Academy partner company, get in touch with Paul Acarnley at [manager@e3academy.org](mailto:manager@e3academy.org)