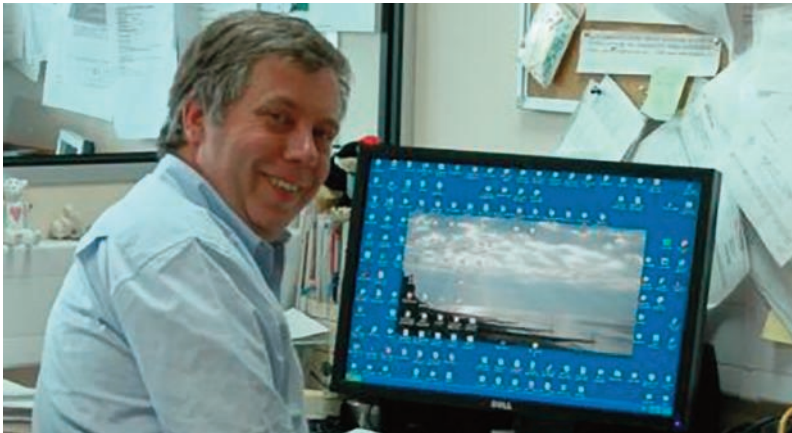


Animatronic achievements

Bringing innovation to bear whilst working to a tight budget



Any entry for a competition for a design engineer of the year which includes the phrase 'at the age of 14, Mike had already built his first jet engine and scorched the family lawn' is likely to have a favourable reception from a panel of engineers.

And so it was for Mike Franklin, a joint winner of this year's Design Engineer of the Year Award. But the ability to scorch a lawn is but one requirement. We were also looking for engineers who produced innovative designs within strict commercial limits and those who have also put something back into their profession.

Each project at Crawley Creatures requires a bespoke solution, allowing Mike to draw on his electromechanical, software and mechatronic knowledge.

He sees the objective clearly and excels in designing and manufacturing an end product that not only meets the client's needs, but also exceeds expectations in terms of cost, efficiency, durability and sustainability.

His expertise ranges from designing animatronic prehistoric creatures for the Natural History Museum to bespoke military test platforms.

Mike works on the whole project, rather than certain aspects. In this way, he can lead other team members more effectively. With an innovative approach to problem solving, he can evaluate and reevaluate throughout the design's life. As a fully qualified tool maker, Mike can also machine and assemble the components – he believes that being able to make components gives him a greater understanding of the whole manufacturing process and that a simple change to a component may greatly improve the ease of manufacture.

Mike is outward and enthusiastic in his approach to design engineering and

keen to share his knowledge base internationally, nationally and on a local level.

Funded by the BBC and NESTA, Mike spent three months working with secondary school children to design and build robots. Along with Professor Noel Sharkey and three design engineers, Mike travelled to Beijing on behalf of the British Council, looking to promote British innovation and design by teaching people in China how to build low cost robots. On a local level, Mike has held various 'Show and Tell' talks with Scouts and Youth Groups in Northamptonshire about robotics and design engineering.

Whilst designing is his work, it is also his hobby. In 2005, he claimed the World Record for the fastest walking robot with Scuttle, an eight legged device.

What the Judges said:

“Achieving deep innovation using creativity, originality and ingenuity – all while working with limited resources and to extremely tight deadlines.”

Sponsored by

