



INCOSE Spotlight on Olivier Dessoude

Interviewed by Sandy Young, info@incose.org

Name: Olivier Dessoude

Title: Senior Expert, “Systems Engineering”

Organization: AREVA NP

Place of Birth: Valognes, France

Current Residence: Cherbourg, France

Domain: Civil nuclear

Studied in college: Mathematics, physics, systems analysis, computer science

Year joined INCOSE: 2011

Role in INCOSE: First class, INCOSE Leadership Institute

Years in systems engineering: 20

1. Who do you admire in the systems engineering community? Why?

Henri Poincaré may have been the last man in history to master all the scientific disciplines of his time. He paved the way for relativity theory. Poincaré is usually viewed more as a scientist than a systems engineer, but an interdisciplinary approach and curiosity are qualities for which I have the utmost respect and which are required from systems engineers.

2. Have you found that systems engineering practices are different in France than in other countries? Why or why not?

There are some differences due to history and culture. For instance, France has a history of aeronautics and defense program management and engineering standards, some of which have evolved into European standards. There is also an old school of functional analysis (taught to seventh grade students!).

Whereas Anglo-Saxons have used Function Flow Block Diagram (FFBD) or Integration DEFinition (IDEF) diagrams for decades, French engineers are more familiar with “horned beasts” and “octopi” diagrams. Local practices and vocabulary require extra communications efforts, although the underlying concepts are not really different. Differences between industries within the same country are often bigger than differences from one country to another.

3. Why did you apply for INCOSE’s Leadership Institute? What have you learned so far?

My mission is to bring expertise for the progressive implementation of systems engineering in my company, and to provide support to nuclear new build projects. We need to grow our systems engineering leaders to international standards as defined by INCOSE, and to pursue the adaptation, with our peers, to a fast changing world. INCOSE’s Technical Leadership Institute is a perfect environment to learn and share experience.

I have already broadened my horizons and knowledge about technical leadership, due to the contributions of the coaches and all my fellow systems engineering leaders from various industries and cultures.

4. What advice do you have for young engineers?

I would like to encourage young engineers to embrace a career in our industry. We spend most of our time in a material world, don’t we? There is no limit to human imagination, and a lot to be done to make this world a safer, cleaner, more beautiful place for all.

5. If you weren’t a systems engineer, what would you do?

I might be a biologist or a doctor. I find living systems quite complex and fascinating. And, I find curing things as exciting as engineering them!