

## Article 5: 'Soft' skills development

# Communication, teamwork and problem-solving

In addition to technical skills, soft skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving are critical to execute projects successfully. As construction becomes more complex and collaborative, project team members need to work effectively with others so they can navigate challenging situations they face. Importantly, they must be adaptable and flexible, willing to learn new skills, take on new challenges, and embrace new technologies and processes as they emerge. Paul McCormack, Belfast Met Innovation Manager and ARISE Programme Manager, explains.

**T**he shortage of skills in the construction industry is not solely a skills problem, but also a skills delivery problem. There are a number of mitigating factors that contribute to this situation, including historic low innovation, a lack of investment in people development, a shortage of qualified trainers and assessors, and a lack of coordination between industry, education providers and government.

Addressing the skills delivery problem will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders. By working together and investing in the right programs and initiatives, it is more than possible to close the skills gap and create a more sustainable industry.

This will also help resolve the differences between the predicted energy performance of a building and its

actual energy performance in use, the so-called "design-built" energy performance gap. Project teams that can work cohesively and optimise technology will reduce this gap and ensure that buildings are designed, built and operated in a way that minimises energy consumption and reduces environmental impact.

So, in addition to knowledge of, and experience in, BIM, energy modelling software, smart controls, etc, members of project teams also need to be taught communication skills so they can then best utilise these tools in the context of a productive, problem-solving team environment. ■

• *The concluding article in this series will appear in the July/August edition.*

soft skills

