

About the time that I became Editor for JMD, I also chose to become more involved in project-based engineering education, and found myself humbled both by the effort involved and the dedication and commitment of the organizations that support these activities. As you may know, Spring is student engineering competition season. While the engineering societies that sponsor these events give them official sounding titles, to students they are the Cargo plane, DBF, Mini-Baja, HPV and Formula car competitions, and there are others as well.

My decision to become involved came after two industry-based projects where I saw the thrill of having a product that includes your engineering effort find success in the marketplace. I believe the response was something like "I can't believe someone actually paid money for that thing." This external validation of engineering performance erases all memory of the disappointment of failed tests, software glitches and seemingly endless after-hours and weekend effort. They say it is fun, but I find it amazing.

Engineering students come in the door of the university among

the most accomplished high school students. They did not get there by allowing their group projects to fail; if work needed to be done they did it. So, I reasoned, a team of such individuals should be able to do great things. After several years, I am much more aware of the distinction between a collection of individuals and a team. I am beginning to believe that it is more difficult to get engineering students to work as a team, than it is to actually engineer the project.

Dedicated volunteers from ASME, AIAA and SAE and other organizations seem bemused by this insight, as they say again and again it is the experience of this engineering competition, not the success or failure of the design, that is important. I agree, it is fun, and effective teams are amazing.

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