

## Member profile

### Daniel Jenkins

*Daniel leads the research team at product design consultancy DCA Design International, which involves working on projects across four sections: medical, consumer, transport, and industrial/commercial. He is a Chartered Ergonomist and a Fellow of the CIEHF.*



#### **What sparked your interest in ergonomics and human factors and how did your career develop?**

I have always been passionate about design and engineering. Design Technology was my favourite subject at school and I went on to study this at university. I was fortunate enough to be sponsored through university by Ford Motor Company. This was my first real practical introduction to ergonomics.

When I got back to university, after a year out working at Ford, the topic for my major project was designing a lateral collision warning system for a car. After graduation I stuck with cars and went to work for Nissan. However, it wasn't too long before I went to work at Brunel to work on a large scale MoD project. This was a fantastic opportunity as it allowed me to study part-time for a PhD in human factors.

Next I turned my hand to freelance work and gained further experience in defence, automotive, nuclear, medical and product design. This led me to DCA, initially as a contractor but I enjoyed it so much I decided to stick around.

I have been incredibly fortunate through my career to have been surrounded by people with a real passion for design, engineering, ergonomics and human factors. The reduced focus of Design Technology in UK schools really concerns me for the future of our discipline.

#### **What advice do you have for aspiring ergonomists?**

I would say try a few things out and stick with what you love doing. Ergonomics and human factors is a really broad area and gives us the opportunity to work in so many industries. It is rarely done in isolation; it involves working with many disciplines. The more we can learn about, and from, these disciplines the better. I have always found my background in engineering and design really useful in forming a common language and bond. I would encourage people to bring their interests and hobbies into their role. If you are an artist or coder these things are a great skill to supplement the role.

#### **What has been your greatest achievement in EHF?**

I am really proud of many things in my career, as an academic I enjoyed publishing and sharing new advancement of methods and was fortunate to work with some great minds. However, for me I get really excited about design and shaping the products and services that surround us. For me the greatest

thing is to see people using the product I have worked on in the real world. I am really looking forward to taking my kids on the train I helped to design.

#### **What are the things you enjoy most about your current job?**

I love the variety and the pace. I tend to work on multiple projects at a time so a typical week may involve working on a consumer product, such as a toothbrush, a medical device and a train. I also really enjoy working with designer and engineers in a creative environment. Perhaps the best thing though is learning a little bit about a lot of things. It's great to spend time understanding what its like to be a train driver or a helicopter pilot and then work on designing things that improve the system that surrounds them.

#### **What issue concerning the discipline or profession interests you currently?**

In many ways, I am still an academic at heart and love pushing the methods we have to the limit to describe and measure system performance. I find this to be one of the most compelling cases for change. I love all aspects of the field but am naturally drawn to systems ergonomics as this gives us the best chance of improving the products we use.

#### **How can human factors have more impact?**

My personal view is that we need to be even more embedded in the design cycle and the decision making process. This means being involved at the earliest concept stage of design, inputting into specification documents and sticking with the project throughout. For this to be possible, human factors needs its fair share of the development budget and those with a background in the discipline need to ensure that they are given a seat at the decision-making table.

#### **What problems are yet to be addressed by research?**

I am a firm believer that a good proportion of research should be completely theoretical with no real application as this is sometimes where the greatest innovation comes from. However, at the same time, I feel that the research that is aimed at near-term application often falls short. Greater collaboration between research and practice is something we talk about a fair bit but at which we make painfully slow progress.

#### **How do you participate in the activities of the CIEHF and in what way has your participation benefited you?**

Most people that I encounter in a professional setting now have a fairly good idea of what ergonomics and human factors is. That said, there is still a lot of work to be done in spreading the word. I try to do my bit by publishing short articles explaining how human factors has had a positive impact on design. I also enjoy keeping up to date with the latest research at conferences and group events.