

Murray Ross: Driving Excellence in Project Management and Delivery

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A Journey of Resilience and Relentless Pursuit of Excellence

In the heart of the global built environment sector, one name resonates with unparalleled respect and admiration—Murray Ross. As an industry veteran, Murray is one of the key leaders helping to steer excellence in project management and delivery as well as talent development in these fields.

His journey from graduate civil engineer in Scotland to being a pivotal figure in the Middle East is a testament to his tenacity, focus, and innovative spirit. In our feature article, we ask Murray how he has so successfully navigated his career, across multiple continents and organisations. And how he has enabled career opportunities to position himself as an influential leader at such a young age.

From Humble Beginnings to Professional Heights

Born in Scotland – the traces of his accent are still evident as we speak, despite his extensive global travels and current residence in Dubai – Murray’s career is a rich tapestry of experiences.

He began his career in 2004 when he embarked on a Civil Engineering degree, studying at the University of Glasgow. “The initial phase was daunting,” Murray recalls, reminiscing about the rigors of a math and physics-heavy curriculum. However, these challenges forged a robust foundation, and he moved swiftly towards certification as a professional civil engineer through the prestigious Institute of Civil Engineers (ICE).

Landing a coveted place on Mott MacDonald's Graduate Scheme marked the first major milestone in Murray's career. Here, he was immersed in a structured pathway that provided not only technical civils expertise but was also to be his first exposure to project dynamics. It was during this period that Murray's affinity for the broader aspects of project management began to crystalize. Finding particular interest in the complex stakeholder relations, financials and commercials that were all critical aspects of successful project delivery. He states with fondness his opportunities to chair townhall meetings, even at that early stage of his career. And while daunting, it planted the seed for the career that he would later be pursuing.

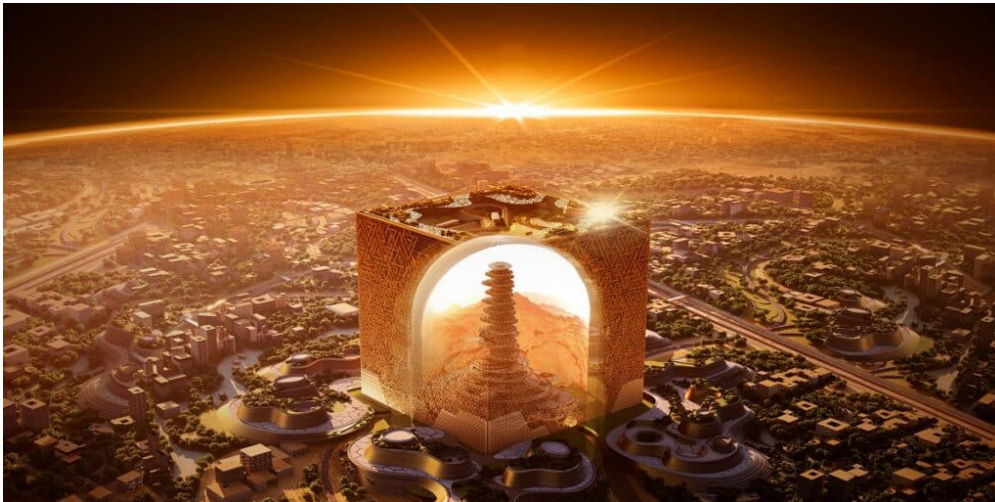
Embracing Broader Horizons: The Middle East Beckons

The opportunity to work abroad came as a serendipitous twist in Murray's career, as a then prerequisite for achieving his Civils Chartered Status. Transferring to Mott MacDonald's Dubai operations was initially perceived as a short-term stint but evolved into a transformative five-year tenure. "Dubai was recovering well from the global recession and the region's oil and gas sector was ripe with opportunities," Murray reflects. His increasing responsibilities culminated in a significant appointment as Regional Projects Manager leaving Motts for an opportunity with a major global client organization.

Returning to Roots and Expanding Horizons

After a significant period in the Middle East, Murray returned to the UK, rejoining Mott MacDonald. This phase was marked by his involvement in key national infrastructure programmes, from the UK railway network enhancements to infrastructure development in water and utility sectors. Additionally, assignments in the Far East and Asia further enriched his global perspective. "It was a time of both reflection and growth, enhancing my business leadership capabilities," Murray notes.

In pursuit of greater challenges, in 2023, Murray ultimately joined AtkinsRéalis, a world-leading professional services and project management company with a illustrious legacy and strong presence in the Middle East, as Regional Director of Project Delivery and Head of Technical Excellence. "AtkinsRéalis was the next natural step for my career. It was an organization that I had long had on my radar given their pioneering industry role. And their involvement in some of the world's most iconic projects," Murray explains. Recently appointed as Global Practice Leader for Project Management and Chair of the Project Management Global Technical Network, Murray collaborates with the Company's global network to oversee the career development of over 5,000 project professionals worldwide while driving excellence in project delivery through effective processes, innovative solutions and industry best practices across the organization.



Navigating the Future: Building Skills

Murray emphasizes the rapid pace of project management today, necessitating that project leaders have a blend of technical acumen and social intelligence. “Professionals must be adaptable, self-aware, and ready to embrace digital and technological innovations,” he asserts. He advocates for reforms in project management education to equip future leaders with a broad, adaptable skillset.

Excellence, for Murray, is an ever-evolving pursuit. “It’s about setting personal and organizational standards, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and enabling team members to learn and grow,” he explains. This philosophy is crucial in navigating current global challenges such as geopolitical instability, market volatility, rising material costs, labor shortages and environmental concerns.

Closing Reflections: Wisdom for the Future

As our conversation draws to a close, Murray imparts several tenants of wisdom for those setting out on their project management careers. “Stay humble, but nurture your self-belief and inner confidence, embrace your setbacks, and see them less as frustrations but as opportunities for growth, and remain open and adaptable to industry shifts,” he advises.

His own career, marked by resilience and adaptability, stands as a beacon for aspiring industry professionals to shape the future of project management and excellence in project delivery on a global scale.

Learn more about exciting career opportunities at AtkinsRéalis in the Middle East: [Middle East | Careers with AtkinsRéalis \(atkinsrealis.com\)](#)