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Stakeholders in the world's railways are demanding ever increasing levels of performance and reliability from their networks. In the UK we have both customer pressure and regulatory targets driving our need to improve.

In the pages of our magazine, I frequently read about new and innovative systems and applications but I'm also struck by the assumption that it will all work perfectly.

As a profession, I see us paying too little regard to delivering a consistent and predictable service to the users of signalling technology.

Every day I deal with cases where the end-to-end product of signal engineering fails to deliver for our customers. Whether it is trackside equipment that is unable to withstand the Electro-Magnetic Interference (EMI) to which it is subjected or electro-mechanical components that fail when subject to vibration, we seem unable to deliver equipment that works first time out of the box and continues to work throughout its life.

I see examples where equipment is not installed properly, either because the installation assumptions of the equipment designers are not communicated to the installers or because the process is too complex to be delivered consistently on a cold rainy night or because the installers just ran out of time. I see examples where maintenance isn't delivering reliability because either the designer has not provided a maintenance specification for the equipment or because the maintenance specification doesn't match the failure modes.

When trying to resolve poor reliability following commissioning, I see behaviours more about trying to protect positions than in trying to improve performance.

In operational service, I hear people say "it's not the point machine, it's the track" instead of looking at how the point machine could be made to cope with the range of conditions in which it likely to be installed.

So my appeal to the profession is this: Everyone has a part to play in improving what we deliver. If the part of the railway you are involved with is not working as well as it should, rise above the short term view and take pride in what this profession can deliver if we all work for the common goal of providing reliable infrastructure to our customers.

**Barney Daley, Head of Infrastructure Reliability, Network Rail**

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