

Chair's Corner by Dr. Gary Blank

Welcoming New Local Networks

We have new Networks joining us! In February, I was invited to talk to the Florida West Coast Section (Tampa/St. Petersburg). My talk focused on why the Section needed a Consultants Network. Two days later, I did an additional 6-hour, how-to seminar for Section members on consulting and its benefits. This seminar was well attended. At the end of this seminar, I issued my call — calling the attendees and the Section leaders to work with me to launch the Florida West Coast IEEE Consultants Network — right there on the spot, before everyone left the seminar. We had some very enthusiastic participants and the rest is history. On 17 March, the Florida West Coast Consultants Network was approved as a new IEEE Affinity Group. This method of doing the Section meeting, followed by the “how to do it consulting seminar” has been working very well for re-invigorating existing networks — and especially well for starting new ones.

I have been invited, and I will soon be going, to Charleston, W. Va., to participate in the same activity. Then, I'm on to Lincoln, Neb., to start a new network there. I have also been invited to go to Kansas City, Mo., in July to re-invigorate their network. We are going to use the same method — as if we are starting from scratch — in Kansas City. I will be speaking at a Section meeting, and then also doing my 6-hour, how-to seminar two days later.

There is more good news! I did not go to Houston in person, but I have been communicating with them and working with their leaders to start a Consultants Network. I am pleased to announce that on 27 April 2009, IEEE received application materials from the Houston Section to establish a new network and Affinity Group.

Networks outside the United States

There is also a new network in Colombia, South America. If you want to see a full list of networks inside and outside the United States, please check out our local networks page at the IEEE-USA Web site.

Upcoming Webinar

I will be doing an IEEE-USA webinar on 9 June, entitled “Consulting 101.” For details, please see the “Webinar: Consultants 101” in this newsletter. Also, keep a look-out for future webinars in the fall by checking <http://www.ieeeusa.org/careers/webinars/>.

Please remember: our theme and mission this year is to keep asking and answering the question: What can we (AICN) do to help our fellow IEEE members in these challenging times? So, if you need us, please don't hesitate to call.



Webinar: Consulting 101

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) is holding the first in a series of webinars on 9 June 2009 at 2:00 pm EDT. This webinar will be most informative, addressing issues consultants deal with every day. In addition, if you sign up and participate in this webinar, you'll receive free access to IEEE-USA E-Book: *The Best of Today's Engineer: On Consulting*.

Consulting 101

If you are concerned about losing your job in this slowing economic climate, and are considering making the transition from a full-time corporate position to a full-time independent consultant, then this webinar is for you. Additionally, if you are already consulting and looking for ways to increase your assignments and client base, you will find this webinar very informative and helpful. Issues explored will include:

- Introduction to modern consulting and the consulting marketplace
- Myths about consulting — some are true, some are false
- Reasons to become a consultant — How do these reasons influence your success as a consultant?
- Critical details and important concerns about Getting Started — What are the steps?
- Simple Record Keeping procedures that many consultants use

This webinar is a free presentation. You can register for this event at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/careers/webinars/>. Access to the free E-Book only goes to actual webinar participants. We look forward to seeing you — log on!

AICN at the Annual Meeting

Your AICN was on display at the IEEE-USA Annual Meeting from 26 February to 1 March in Salt Lake City, Utah. We had a prime location for our booth, and a full set of flyers and handouts detailing our current services. We also had copies of How to Start a Local Consultants Network on display. To top it all off, we had an internet connection for live demonstrations on how to navigate through our IEEE-USA Consultants Directory, and other AICN Internet resources. The booth was staffed during all the breaks, giving us a chance to learn more about IEEE consultants' needs.

We realize that with the present economy, more U.S. IEEE members will be considering consulting. Our display was aimed at helping all consultants, as well as Section and PACE Chairs, organize local consultants networks, and to assist them in offering help to their local members. If you were not fortunate enough to get to Salt Lake City, you can see a listing of all the Consultants Networks, IEEE-USA E-Books and the Consultants' Database at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/business/>. Remember: Annual Meetings are a great place to network, so come see us next year from 4-7 March 2010 in Nashville, Tenn.

Award

Also, congratulations go to Martin Izaak, a 2008 recipient of the IEEE-USA Professional Achievement Award. At the 2009 IEEE-USA Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Mr. Izaak was honored for his efforts in establishing and chairing the Consultants Network in the IEEE New York Section. The Professional Achievement Award for Individuals goes to recognize significant specific contributions, achievements and individual efforts in the development and implementation of professional activities in the United States.

For questions, comments or submissions
please contact Daryll Griffin at +1 202 530 8337
or d.r.griffin@ieee.org.

www.ieeeusa.org/business

Unemployment Rate for U.S. Engineering and Computer Occupations Jumps Significantly in First Quarter

The unemployment rate for U.S. engineering and computer occupations is increasing more rapidly than for professional occupations in general, according to data released Friday by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

"Engineers create jobs, so these data are very discouraging," IEEE-USA President Gordon Day said. "Engineers strengthen companies and start new ones, leveraging the economy upwards. The fundamental need is for capital to support engineering activity. That's why the government's investments in technology and its efforts to restore the banking system are so important."

The unemployment rate for all engineers jumped from 2.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 3.9 percent in the first quarter of 2009. For all computer occupations, the rate went from 3.3 percent to 5.4 percent. In comparison, the quarter-to-quarter rate for all professional workers increased from 3 percent to 3.7 percent.

For electrical and electronics engineers the jobless rate rose from 2.4 percent to 4.1 percent, quarter to quarter. For mechanical engineers, it went from 2.1 percent to 4.2 percent. Aerospace engineers suffered less, with an increase from 1.1 percent to 1.4 percent.

In computer occupations, the rate for software engineers went from 1.9 percent to 4.2 percent. For computer scientists and systems analysts the change was from 3 percent to 5.7 percent.

High-tech managers also experienced unemployment increases. For computer and information systems managers, the rate rose from 2.7 percent to 4 percent. For engineering managers it went from 1 percent to 1.8 percent.

"We at IEEE-USA are concerned about how rapidly engineering and computer-related unemployment is trending upwards," Day said. "In 2007 the overall engineering unemployment rate was only 1.2 percent."

IEEE members can find career enhancement resources at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/careers/>. Help for unemployed and at-risk members is available at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/careers/help/>.

Watch for the 2009 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey

As a consultant is preparing a proposal or negotiating a contract, one of the primary concerns is deciding how much to charge. To establish a fixed price, or a fee that is both competitive and fair, the consultant needs to know what other consultants working in similar fields charge. In response to this need, the Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks (AICN) conducts national fee surveys of its members.

The annual Consultants Fee Survey used to be conducted in late fall; however, beginning this year, it will be conducted in the spring to provide more timely data. All IEEE Members who indicate in their membership profiles that they are consultants will be e-mailed an invitation to take the survey, unless they have opted not to receive e-mail from IEEE.

To have free access to the survey report, you only need to complete the Fee Survey yourself. So please participate in 2009 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey. We're sure that you and your fellow consultants will benefit greatly from it.

IEEE-USA Web Resources for Consultants

For those of you who may be considering, or just starting out in, the world of engineering consulting, or are already long-time consultants, we have developed this brief summary of IEEE-USA services that consultants can access at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/business>. In our winter issue, many of our story authors referred to some aspect of services that can be found on the Consultants Services Web page. We want to provide you with a brief summary of services, so you are aware them:

WEB SERVICES

IEEE-USA Consultants Database — An exclusive online database that is available to U.S. IEEE member independent consultants. Prospective clients search this database for consultants with relevant qualifications, as well as post assignments on its Assignment Board. In March, the Database logged more than 40,000 visits. The annual fee for a listing is only \$79 for IEEE members.

E-Book: 2009 Profile of IEEE Consultants — This report on the IEEE-USA 2009 Consultants Fee Survey provides the profile of self-employed technical consultants, including their education, experience, business practices, median earnings and hourly fees. The 2009 Survey will be conducted this spring and the e-book report published this summer.

The Best of Today's Engineer: On Consulting — A compendium of the best content from *IEEE-USA Today's Engineer* magazine on consulting, this IEEE-USA e-book puts 65 pages of useful information right at your fingertips. It includes information on how to start a local consultants network; how to make sure you get paid for your work; and how to make the transition from marketing to paid consulting. IEEE Member Price: \$4.95; Non-member Price: \$14.95.

Local Networks Listing — A directory of Web sites and principal contacts, where available, for each of the local IEEE Consultants' Networks in the United States and abroad.

Consultants Workshops — Lists workshops from some of the more than 30 local consultants networks throughout the United States. Consultants can go to this Web page to find local workshop information. Many Consultants Networks use this reference to find out about and borrow workshop ideas from other Consultants Networks.

Web Resources — Provides links to more than 30 Web sites where consultants can go to access information about venture capitalists to tax experts.

These resources are just a sample of what awaits engineering consultants at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/business>. Check them out! Contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org with questions, or for further assistance.

Reports:

Kauffman Foundation: Entrepreneurship Still on the Rise

The latest **Kauffman Foundation Index of Entrepreneurial Activity** shows that the level of entrepreneurial activity in the U.S. increased slightly from 2007 to 2008; approximately 530,000 new businesses started up each month in 2008, representing a .02 percent increase over 2007. Check out the report online at: http://www.kauffman.org/uploadedFiles/kiea_042709.pdf.