



# The Open Channel

Newsletter for the Hampton Roads Section

The Institute of Electrical  
and Electronics Engineers, Inc.

May 2001

## May Meeting

**Speaker:** William Edmonson, Vice Chair,  
IEEE Hampton Roads  
**Topic:** Facilitated discussion on a discussion on the future  
goals of the chapter.

**Date:** Thursday, May 17, 2001

**Location:** Sammy & Nicks  
2718 Mercury Blvd  
Hampton, Virginia

**Schedule:** 6:00 p.m. - Administrative Meeting  
6:30 p.m. - Social  
7:00 p.m. - Dinner  
7:30 p.m. - Speaker

**Price:** Member - \$15.00  
Student - \$7.50  
Guest - \$15.00

**Directions:** Take I-64 to Mercury Blvd. (from the south side,  
go through the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel), Exit  
westbound on to Mercury Blvd., and travel approximately 1.5  
miles. Sammy and Nick's is on the right.

## IEEE Offers Retirement Savings Option

With the average engineer changing jobs several times during his career, it is important to remember saving for retirement. The IEEE Financial Advantage Program offers a portable mutual fund program to help you plan for your future. From conservative to aggressive investments, JP Morgan offers over 30 stock, bond and money market funds to help you work toward your goals. With mutual funds like these, you get the benefit of investing while leaving the day-to-day decisions to the experts.

Members in the US and Canada can read more at:  
[http://www.ieee.org/services/financial/fap/programs/financial\\_services/mutualfunds.html](http://www.ieee.org/services/financial/fap/programs/financial_services/mutualfunds.html)



**TODAY'S ENGINEER WEBZINE** IEEE-USA TODAY'S ENGINEER, in "webzine" format, includes feature articles and short blurbs, many of global interest, with career guidance, tips, strategies and solutions for all sectors of the profession. It encompasses the latest career enhancement products and services.

<http://www.todaysengineer.org/careerfocus>

Avoid missing a single update: sign up now for monthly reminders of the webzines' publication. See for yourself how IEEE-USA's new webzines by reading the article enclosed with this newsletter. *Let it inspire you to attend and participate with the Hampton Roads Chapter IEEE.* It will help you identify the skills and issues that will have the greatest impact on your career, as well as relate your career to the many technology and public-policy issues being discussed at the local, state and national levels.

## Educational Activities Board

For complete access to IEEE educational products and programs, log onto [www.ieee.org/eab](http://www.ieee.org/eab). The site offers the online education reading room, video on-demand, the NewsWire, contests and prizes, and much more.

**INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES** Are you looking for internship opportunities? Visit IEEE-USA's Student Services page at <http://www.ieeeusa.org/careers/student.menu.html> for a list of great opportunities in the government, industry and education sectors and at the IEEE. This page also has valuable information on: - IEEE Student's Activities - Engineering Contests - Career Guidance - Professional Awareness - Careers & Education.

## Opportunities to Volunteer

**Part time volunteers are needed to help administer the Electricity and Electronics Merit Badges at the 2001 National Scout Jamboree.** The National Boy Scout Jamboree is a ten day encampment held every four years where Scouts from all over the USA and several foreign countries meet.

One of the biggest and most prestigious events of the Jamboree is the group of more than 50 Merit Badges. Hampton Roads and Richmond have traditionally been the principle supporters of merit badges in IEEE. The jamboree will occur on July 23 through August 1 at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, located just to the east of I 95 near Fredericksburg.

**Volunteers must sign up by June 1.** If you would like to learn more about our Jamboree project, go to the web site: <http://www.emeritbadges.com>. If you have any questions, please send them to [emeritbadges.volunteers@ieee.org](mailto:emeritbadges.volunteers@ieee.org).

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**The IEEE CONFERENCE DATABASE search functions** includes all meetings run by, or in association with, the IEEE. Sponsors include Technical Societies, geographic Regions, and specialized Boards/Committees. The conference database search will identify a specific meeting or group of meetings. The returned list will be chronological and include all meetings that meet your search criteria. To access this search function, please log-on to <http://www.ieee.org/conferencesearch/>

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## IEEE Receives Grants

During the first Quarter of 2001, the IEEE received over US \$800,000 in grants. Here are just a few items from the list of grantees and grants:

**NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION** - The 2001 IEEE International Symposium on Information Theory was awarded US\$20,000 to be used to defray the travel expenses of young scientist and engineers from the United States and researchers from Russia and Eastern Europe.

**IEEE FOUNDATION** - IEEE Educational Activities was awarded a US\$10,000 grant for a project entitled "Engineers Promoting Technological Literacy through In-Service Programs."

**WHITAKER FOUNDATION** - The symposium entitled "Medical Rehabilitation on the Move: Spotlight on Bioengineering" was awarded US\$6,000 to provide travel funds for students and post-doctorates in engineering training programs from biomedical, rehabilitation and other related engineering disciplines.

If you have any questions or wish to pursue grant opportunities for an IEEE conference or project, please contact Karen Galuchie, IEEE Development Operations Manager, for assistance at +1 732 562 3860 or email to [k.galuchie@ieee.org](mailto:k.galuchie@ieee.org).

**The Engineer Girl website is part of the National Academy of Engineers's Celebration of Women in Engineering project.** This project tries to bring national attention to the opportunity that engineering represents to all people at any age, but particularly to women and girls. The Celebration is the first of several projects focusing on gender and diversity in the engineering workforce. This informative site contains the following:

- Gallery of Women Engineers
- Engineering Careers
- Education Information
- Why be an engineer
- Fun facts
- Ask an Engineer
- Great Achievements

Please log-on to <http://www.engineergirl.org/nae/cwe/> for more information.

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## 2001 Section Officers

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## Region 3 Addresses

R3 Web Site: <http://sandbox.ieee.org/r03/>  
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## Plot Your Career Path

**A clear job description, judgment criteria, a mentor, and skills beyond the basics will help you get from point A to point B.**



Illustration: StockArt.com/Phil Bliss

by John Hoschette

**E**nsuring you have mastered the basics for career advancement is essential to career growth and success. These basics include developing a thorough job description, gaining and using knowledge of the formal and informal criteria by which you are judged, and understanding your company's structure.

Achieving excellence requires going beyond the basics. Engineers climbing the career ladder must add other skills — such as making presentations, communicating and networking — as well as other less obvious career-enhancing tools to their repertoire.

### Job Description — A Critical Progress Gauge

A clear and complete job description is the first and most basic step for career advancement. You should have a written description of your job responsibilities and the performance criteria you're expected to meet. Surprisingly, many engineers don't have formal job descriptions. If you're one of them, schedule a meeting with your supervisor immediately and work together to develop a short description of your job functions, including your tasks for the coming year and the goals you're expected to meet. Without this tool, you have no way to measure whether you're outperforming — or even underperforming — the expectations of the job.

### Formal and Informal Criteria — Know and Understand Both

By studying the job definitions, you should be able to determine the

### Find a Mentor

Mentors can provide invaluable career development advice and assistance, helping to steer you

formal criteria by which you are judged. The criteria include such elements as technical capability, technical judgment, problem solving, and team participation.

Supervisors often fail to communicate their expectations with staff, instead they assume that employees know what's expected of them. If the criteria are unclear, discuss them with your supervisor to ensure a common understanding. Many operational problems get solved quickly when employees and supervisors simply review job descriptions and expectations together.

Schedule a career discussion with your supervisor to discuss your career plans and job criteria. Look into the future and discuss your career path within the company. Be open to suggestions on how to achieve your career goals. Sell yourself to your supervisor on how the company's investment in you and your career development will benefit both of you.

As you review and discuss the formal criteria, watch for your supervisor's informal criteria or personal interpretation of the formal criteria. For example, the supervisor may feel technical capability is the most important aspect of the job. Or, the supervisor may place more value on cost and schedule rates. Informal criteria involve the personal interpretation of the formal criteria and will vary from supervisor to supervisor.

### **Planning Beyond the Basics**

Once you master the basics, you'll realize you may have some deficiencies or development areas that need improvement before you can expect to advance. Make these improvement areas your top objectives and base your goals on them. Write down each goal, an action to reach the goal, and a completion date. Post this list of goals and actions where it is always visible and refer to it frequently.

A number of skills stand out as being beyond-the-basics:

toward the right path. Older, more senior engineers at your company may be willing to take you under their wings. Look for someone with whom you share similar views and beliefs.

Naturally, people don't walk around wearing badges that identify them as mentors, so be alert. The more experienced colleagues who go beyond the call of duty to assist you generally make the best mentors. Seek them out and call on their wisdom; they will contribute greatly to your career.

- **Making Presentations** — One of the key skills necessary for engineers to advance and become future team leaders and managers involves presentations. In fact, one of the unwritten rules of engineering is that the quality of an engineer's work is often judged by the quality of his or her presentations. A high-quality presentation builds the perception that you are a high-quality engineer. Rarely taught in engineering schools, this skill is usually learned on the job. If your presentation skills need improvement, take a class and volunteer to make a presentation at every opportunity.
- **Communicating** — The ability to communicate effectively, whether in small groups or at large gatherings, often plays a significant role in an engineer's career advancement. Career progress, in part, depends upon your ability to sell your ideas — and yourself.
- **Learning** — With the rapid pace of technology development, continuing life-long education is absolutely necessary for career advancement and survival. If you've been out of school for more than 10 years, it's time to return for an update. If you have a bachelor's degree in engineering, consider pursuing a master's degree or a management degree.
- **Networking** — One of the least-taught skills in engineering, networking is one of the most essential skills in the business world. Through technical and social networking sessions, you'll learn about technological breakthroughs, job openings, and other opportunities.

### **Get on the Path to Success**

Ambitious, upwardly mobile engineers must have a career plan. Failing to plan is simply planning to fail. Review the basics to make sure you have a clear understanding of your job, the formal and informal criteria by which you are judged, and the company structure. Then, set a career plan with defined goals, actions to complete, and deadlines for completion.

*Editor's Note: Next month, we'll take a look at hints and tips that help engineers who want to get on the "fast track" to success.*

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*John A. Hoschette is a senior staff engineer with Lockheed Martin in Sunnyvale, Calif. He is the author of Career Advancement and Survival for Engineers, and co-owner of the CTS Group, which provides career and technical training for engineers. ([ctsgroup2@aol.com](mailto:ctsgroup2@aol.com))*

**IEEE-USA Today's Engineer**