## Network News

# Become Part of the AICN

IEEE-USA is excited to announce a new service for consultants! We are now offering IEEE members a chance to be a part of the Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks (AICN). Yes, consultants can now be a part of the AICN by joining IEEE-USA's Consultants Database. Being able to become a part of the AICN is part of IEEE-USA's continuing effort to improve services for IEEE members who are consultants, or are considering becoming consultants.

### Does it cost to become a part of the AICN?

For $99 a year, you will be able to post your professional consulting profile in the IEEE-USA Consultants Database; get access to a free annual IEEE-USA e-book on consulting issues; and receive an annual invitation to an exclusive consultant webinar (or access to the webinar recording). As a bonus, we'll send you our free, quarterly AICN Newsletter that reports on timely consultant topics. And again you will be listed in IEEE-USA's Consultant Database--showing your customers that you are affiliated with the world's premiere technical organization.

We believe this offer is a great value for IEEE members, and we are committed to continuing to improve and market the database to make it even more valuable

as a business development tool. As many of you know, last year we completed a major upgrade to your online listing. A highlight of this upgrade was making your online listing reachable by search engines, such as Google and Yahoo. In addition, we've added to your profile links, so you can review how many times possible clients have been to your profile page.

### Why become a part of the AICN?

There are many other business-oriented networks, so why become a part of the AICN under IEEE-USA? Project managers have told us that they are more likely to engage IEEE member consultants over other engineers. For more than 20 years, IEEE members have asked to have their names listed in our IEEE-USA Consultants Directory. Today, that directory is online and searchable, via our database. IEEE members have reported to us that an AICN listing provides additional credibility to their skills, experience and background--while enhancing their business development efforts.

### What a great deal!

If becoming a part of the AICN gets you even one engagement in the next 10 years, it will have paid for itself many times over! For $99 a year, you give

yourself the opportunity for potential employers and clients to find you and provide you with greater opportunity to network with other IEEE consultants. Just one job engagement will more than cover the annual fee, while increasing your marketability, reputation, networking and continuing education. You can't afford not to be a part of the AICN.

### How do I sign up?

Go to: http://www.ieeeusa.org/business/consultants/, and sign up today.

### I have more questions, who can I contact?

E-mail Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org, or call him at +1 202 530-8337.

# Get IEEE-USA's Quarterly Consultants Newsletter Sent to You Directly

Yes, you're employed but you have visions of one day working for yourself as an independent engineering consultant. Although you're not ready to take that huge leap into the ocean of self employment, you do want to keep up with what's going on in the consulting world. Now IEEE-USA has the perfect offer where you can just stick your toe in the water while still maintaining your full-time position.

Sign up to receive IEEE-USA's Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks (AICN) Newsletter. This service is FREE! The AICN Newsletter keeps IEEE members abreast of the latest news happening in the engineer

consulting sector.

So, express your interest in consulting to us and keep your finger on the pulse of new services and opportunities from IEEE-USA for consultants. If you register, we will send you our IEEE-USA quarterly AICN Newsletter via email for free. We may also from time to time share interesting information that will benefit those IEEE members who are considering becoming independent consultants. To register, please visit: http://www.ieeeusa.org/business/consultants_email.asp

# 2011 Legislative Summary

## Patent Law Overhaul Bill Passed

After a year-long effort in congressional offices and committee rooms, Congress cleared, and the president signed, bipartisan legislation in September to overhaul federal patent law. The *America Invents Act* changed the procedures for issuing patents, and for challenging the validity of patents, once they have been issued in hopes of making the U.S. patent system faster and more efficient.

Bill sponsors, Representative Lamar Smith, R-Texas, and Senator Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., dropped some contentious language that had stalled the bill in previous congresses, such as provisions on calculating damage awards in patent infringement lawsuits. They compromised on other aspects of the bill, such as creating a new process for reviewing patents. The new law also alters the basis for awarding patents from a *first-to-invent* principle to a *first-inventor-to file* system. In another major change, it allows the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) to set its own fees as a way of giving it the resources to clear out a mounting backlog of patent applications. However, the legislation does not give the USPTO direct access to all the fees it collects, leaving appropriators with the power to decide how much revenue the office could keep. Instead, the money is put into a specially created account, from which Congress can appropriate all or a portion of the collected fees. The Senate-passed version of the bill would have allowed the USPTO to directly keep and spend all fees collected from patent applicants, an issue which put the two chambers at odds over the bill. In the end, the House-passed version of the bill prevailed, and the money now goes into the "limbo" account.

## IEEE-USA Coordinates with Federal Officials to Promote Small High-Tech Businesses

In December, IEEE-USA representatives met with federal officials to discuss ways U.S. IEEE members can take better advantage of programs that promote small high-tech businesses. Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, ranking member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee, secured the committee hearing room for the discussion, and helped identify federal speakers. Representatives from the Commerce Department Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Export-Import Bank, and the United States Trade Representative attended. Jim Jefferies, 2011 IEEE-USA vice president for government relations, and Terry Wong, 2012 chair of the IEEE-USA Entrepreneurial Activities Committee, led the contingent of IEEE-USA entrepreneurs.
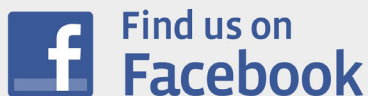
Jefferies pointed out that a start-up technology-based business is different than a traditional business. "A high-tech company has intellectual property and may not have a fully developed product or firm customer commitments," Jefferies said. "It has a different risk profile."

Participants agreed to five major action items:

- IEEE-USA would disseminate information on government resources available to high-tech entrepreneurs
- Federal officials will conduct some webinars through IEEE-USA
- Federal officials will investigate about the possibility of having IEEE members serve on federal advisory councils
- IEEE-USA will share information on local Export-Import Bank programs with IEEE members
- IEEE-USA and the Export-Import Bank have agreed to work together to improve access to the bank's resources

Follow this link to find out more about IEEE-USA and federal resources for high-tech entrepreneurs.

## Network News

### AICN Welcomes a New Network in Galveston Bay

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates **Zafar Taqvi** and the IEEE Galveston Bay Section Consultants Network on forming an Affinity Group.

This newest Consultants Network became official on 5 December 2011. Check the IEEE-USA Web Site for contact information for the Galveston Bay Section Consultants Network. If other groups are interested in forming one, the IEEE-USA Web site contains step by-step instructions about how to become a formal network.

We encourage new consultants networks to register as *Affinity Groups*. After groups form a network, they can take advantage of IEEE's branding and resources, and also qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates.

If IEEE members belong to Consultants Networks, but you don't see any contact information for that network on the IEEE-USA Web Site, contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org.

### Send in Your Recommendation for an IEEE-USA Award

The 2012 Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) is encouraging Consultants Networks and Consultants Network members to think about who may be deserving of one of IEEE-USA's many awards. IEEE-USA Awards are given to recognize professionalism, technical achievement, entrepreneurism and literary contributions that increase public awareness and understanding of the engineering profession in the United States. IEEE-USA gives awards and recognition to recognize excellence, outstanding service, and contributions furthering its objectives.

IEEE-USA's Awards and Recognition Committee administers the awards program, and announce award recipients each year at a special Awards Ceremony, held in conjunction with IEEE-USA's

Annual Professional Activities Conference. The 2012 AICNCC wants to promote Consultants Networks — and nominate members who have added value to the consulting profession; who have helped build and maintain active networks; and who have made significant technical and literary contributions to increase public awareness and understanding of the engineering profession in the United States. 31 July 2012 is the deadline for submitting awards nominations.

For more information about IEEE-USA's Awards and Recognitions, visit: www.ieeeusa.org/volunteers/awards/

## Consulting Tips

# Tips for a More Successful Year

We all have our own resolutions for 2012, to make sure this year will be better than last year. However, consultants can always do some basic things to make every year successful:

- Follow-up on outstanding invoices
- Send thank you notes to your favorite client(s), after completing an assignment
- Do your homework on new companies that could offer you work
- File your annual or quarterly taxes on time
- Maintain contact with your local IEEE Consultant Network, and attend monthly meetings
- Review all insurance coverage (personal and private) to make sure the levels are appropriate
- Invest in your practice! Improve your online profile by learning more about how to use social media to market your practice. Consider signing up for the new AICN membership, where you will be able place an online profile; and have free access to an exclusive webinar training, and a downloadable IEEE-USA e-book on consulting

## Consulting: Join Your Local Network

**By Gary L. Blank, Ph.D., IEEE-USA Vice-President, Career and Member Services**

In recent years, the engineering profession's employment landscape has been dramatically reshaped as a result of growing job dissatisfaction, downsizing, outsourcing, layoffs, and early retirements, to name but a few of the contributing factors. Many engineers have moved from salaried positions to independent consulting practices. Some engineers prefer working at home or on-site as self-employed independent contractors, full-time or part-time.

Consulting engineers quickly recognized the need to network with other consultants. IEEE-USA responded by promoting and facilitating the creation of consultants networks. The first such network was started in Long Island, N.Y., more than 20 years ago. Today, there are more than 30 consultants networks in the United States and more than half a dozen overseas in Regions 7 through 10.

IEEE-USA also created the Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks (AICN) to bring all of those consultants networks under one umbrella. A committee, made up of practicing consultants from various networks, serves as the AICN Coordinating Committee (AICNCC). The AICNCC welcomes volunteers, and the committee membership changes frequently. It is estimated that the AICN and its networks include some 3,000 consultants.

A consultants network (CN) is a group of members who are interested in getting together with consultants to share ideas, contacts, leads, and to network. They learn from each other about consulting and consulting opportunities. CNs have regular meetings throughout the year. A typical meeting will include an optional dinner, time for networking and mentoring (a very important part of the meeting) and usually an invited speaker (often the best speakers are members of the network who can speak about their areas of expertise).

Most of the CNs are in metropolitan areas from coast-to-coast, and a few are in locations where a handful of consultants live. Some CNs have more than 200 members, while others have fewer than 20.

Networks are parented by an IEEE Section. Most networks are started by a group of three or four members, not necessarily practicing consultants, who want to start a network. There is virtually no cost to a network or to the Section to start a network. Sometimes a speaker may be invited to come and do a workshop to enhance the launch of a network. Rapid growth in network membership usually occurs when members of the Section learn that a network exists in that Section. IEEE members who have been inactive for many years are returning to the IEEE because of their interest in the consultants networks.

The AICN Coordinating Committee works with IEEE-USA staff to support local networks and their members. The committee also sponsors an annual fee survey of IEEE consultants, and provides the results free of charge to survey participants through an IEEE eBook offering. Non-participants can purchase that same eBook for small fee. Among the additional resource materials is a sample consulting agreement which many local network members find helpful. In some instances, AICN and staff have referred clients to local networks.

Almost all of the networks have applied for and have been granted IEEE Affinity Group status. This results in income to the parent Section. Members of the AICN Coordinating Committee and IEEE-USA staff are available to help with starting new networks, and with mentoring existing networks when requested.