

## Sections Congress Issues for Region 3 A report by Charles Lord and Dick Riddle

(background: after helping facilitate the early stages of this process, we have been charged with briefing you on the process so far and where we are going with this)

The third weekend in October, you the leaders of the IEEE will have the opportunity to assure the future of not only the IEEE but our members and the profession. Sections Congress 2005, the triennial meeting of representatives of all IEEE Sections, will be the culmination of not just three years of event planning, but also over a year of planning, discussions, brainstorming, collaboration, research, and retreats – all to identify the strategic direction of IEEE Region 3 and how we can foster change and improvements within the IEEE to help steer us in that strategic direction. The project, called “SP05/SC05” for Strategic Plan 2005 / Sections Congress 2005, has been involving IEEE leaders and volunteers at all levels within our region to reflect upon our current direction, where our long-term strategy should lead us, and what we need to do to get there. And, more importantly, all of this effort forms a new beginning, as the project will take the needs that are identified and help chart the changes needed (again, at all levels) to help maintain our strategic direction to best serve our members, the profession, and the industry in our geographic region.

Beginning with our Fall 2004 meetings in Atlanta, we began to ask the all-important questions of “why are we here”, “who do we serve” and “how best can we serve” - the answers centered around the three areas that we identified as served by the IEEE: our members, the profession (where our members work), and the industry (who hires our members). Given that audience, we began to identify how best we could serve each of these segments, including a gap analysis of what we are now doing, what we could do better, and what we need to begin doing. And, the discussion didn’t stop there: we have been holding on-line discussions on our Region 3 Virtual Community at <http://www.ieeecommunities.org/region3>; many of you have joined this community and added your ideas and discussion to these important issues. These discussions will continue with a meeting to be held on-line this Wednesday and will culminate with the Region 3 meeting in Tampa, the day before the beginning of Sections Congress 2005. At that time, we will gather all of the discussion and determine what issues that we need to carry forward to all of the IEEE for action at Sections Congress. Those issues that can be best addressed by our own volunteers within Region 3 will be carried forth for implementation within our own region’s goals and objectives over the next year by Director-Elect McClure and his successors.

There are some common issues and some observations that we have made on the issues, ideas, and suggestions that have been made so far:

1. All of the issues, observations, questions, etc that people have brought forth are basically valid. Like most “motherhood and apple pie” platitudes, however, if they are simply addressed individually and at “face value” the impact / results will

be minimal. We have to step outside of where we have been (think outside the box, upset the apple cart, etc – insert your favorite cliché here)

2. The actions required seem to focus on the following areas...
  - “If you build it they will come” is a myth. History has proven this.
  - One of the “root issues” centers on the expectations of the member, expectations of the volunteer, expectations of the Institute... what are the expectations. ***What should be the expectations? What do you expect from the IEEE – and what should the IEEE expect of you?***
  - Communications is an integral component of any solution to any of the issues but one cannot simply state as “better communications are needed”. This platitude has been a rally point of every Sections Congress since the first one. We need fresh ideas!
  - The focus today is on products and services that IEEE needs to supply to the members. Generally these are tools, courses, websites, ... revenue streams? How do we best serve the members yet provide enough funds for the IEEE to exist and serve our members – without charging \$\$\$ for dues?
  - Act as if we can “Transform and grow leaders and members”. We believe it and live it we will accomplish it.

...so we need a vision to grow from...

What should the vision include?

- “IEEE.Net”...Connect everybody to everybody and every bit of knowledge.
- Change the focus from “what can we do for you?” to “what can we do for each other?” How to enable as opposed to how to provide. We preach that IEEE is the “network” – let’s prove it.
- IEEE is the member and the member is IEEE. So how do we contribute ?
- Share knowledge, share experiences, share ideas, share solutions from wherever we are to wherever it is needed.
- IEEE is on the leading edge of change not trailing behind the power curve.

Action required in these areas: (“candidate resolutions”)

1. Packaged technical and non technical training courses that can be delivered electronically or at the section level by volunteers. The IEEE holds the expertise of the world; in some cases (publications and conferences) it is our marketed “value”, but how can we pass that value to our members?
2. Develop collaborative work methodologies and transform the culture to match. R3 has set the bar for the world, but there is more we can do.
3. Make IEEE.Net the first place anyone goes for answers.
4. Create a Knowledge Management methodology. We re-invent the wheel daily; how can we capture, communicate, and train our collective experience?

5. Transform the delivery model of goods and services from a benevolent provider to an enabler. Again, the vision of a proactive, engaged, active member.
6. Transform the member into a “contributor”. (sweat equity) “Being a member” should be an **active verb**. How do we foster that?
7. Put IEEE in a position to lead the technology development as opposed to running to catch up.
8. Resolve the “Dilemma of Outsourcing”; how can the IEEE help our region’s engineers and future engineers take a more proactive and lifelong role in their lifelong career? If small business or consulting are the future of our profession, then why is so little of IEEE’s resources and effort in these areas?
9. Bring IEEE into the role of Technology’s Guide and Conscience. Right now the guide is Best Buy, Circuit City, Radio Shack, Comp USA, etc and the media. Our standards are the backbone of the industry; how can we establish the flesh and blood of technology?
10. IEEE should lead by example and ensure that it uses open standards wherever possible.

So, what now? Wednesday evening at 9 PM EDT, we will meet on-line on the irc.ieee.org server (see the meeting notice from Dave Green) and begin the process of discussing these “action items” and working to come up with no more than four action items to take forward to the delegates on behalf of Region 3. The final vote of which items we present will be at the R3 caucus at Tampa the evening of October 14, but we can get a long ways towards that point this Wednesday, so please come and contribute!

We owe an enormous debt to the tireless efforts of many people who have acted to get us this far. We give a particular thanks to Dave Green and Bill Ratcliff, who have been instrumental in helping us wade through this process and compile the results.

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