

# FAQ Focus on the Member Paradigm

## **What is the difference between membership and member? Aren't they the same? Isn't it a rhetorical splitting of hairs?**

"membership" typically refers to all members as a total group; it is more of a statistical measure than looking at the individual member and the needs of that member. The distinction is one of perspective and with a focus on outcomes instead of processes.

## **Why do we need both?**

Putting a human face to the member, concentrating on the needs and participation of that member as the key element of the IEEE, will lead to the greatest and most stable growth of the IEEE and will encourage that person to become involved, participate, and help both the member and IEEE grow and excel. This is the thrust of member development and engagement. At the same time, we will always have the need for recruiting new members and recovering members who do not renew; the existing Membership Development efforts are well developed to provide this element.

## **What has changed except for the RAB to MGA Board name change?**

The key element is the first name of the board - Member. In emphasizing the recognition and engagement of the individual member, we look beyond the grouping of members in their regions, areas, sections, etc and at the member himself or herself.

## **What does the member get out of it?**

The member will move from the role of simply being a consumer of IEEE benefits and services to being a more integral part of IEEE. The change should be most pronounced at the local level which is closest to the member. This should align the member's view of IEEE with the volunteer's view of IEEE.

## **What does the leadership get out of it?**

You will see more members in your chapter / section / etc becoming actively involved in "making things happen" locally. Part of this will become a large new group of future volunteers, as a volunteer is simply a degree of engaged member. It actually requires leadership because there will other members to help with the work. It should also establish the basis for succession planning.

## **Membership Development has made good progress...why change?**

The recent strides made by Membership Development have done a good job of bringing new members into the IEEE, but the result of member engagement will bring much more to the IEEE: more members actively participating and producing rather than merely consuming IEEE products; more members automatically renewing each year (as

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an active volunteer, how much did you hesitate to send in your renewal?). IEEE wants to be the professional home for those who make careers in the areas related to electro-technology.

## **The Membership Development Committee has been concerned with providing what the members need ... haven't they?**

Current Membership Development efforts have been concentrated on selling the services and benefits of the IEEE but have not emphasized the involvement of the individual member. We need both.

## **If MGA is not complete then why shouldn't we wait until they are or we may have to change several times?**

The MGA Board along with the IEEE Board of Directors has made the decision to change direction. The activities associated with this change of direction are many and varied. Part of the change is more involvement by the member. The Region - supporting the Section which touches the member - should be engaged in determining the correct activities and approaches to this new direction. Region 3 has prided itself in being the "R&D Branch" of the IEEE - this is another opportunity. Let us change our future by being part of it.

## **What is different for the member?**

It depends on the member... The IEEE view of the member is changing from one of product and service supplier to one seeking an active participant for the benefit of the member and the IEEE. In some sense, the volunteer's relationship is an example of this greater engagement but there are other ways that engagement can and will occur. IEEE wants to be the member's professional home for those who make careers in the areas related to electro-technology.

## **Why not concentrate on new products and services that the members need now?**

It was not working because it did not meet the actual needs of all those who we wish to become and stay members of IEEE. The problem is not unique to IEEE -- it is observable in almost all associations with a products and services model as opposed to a member involvement model.

## **Why should the region change its operation simply because MGA is experimenting?**

The direction is set. How to travel in the set direction is what is adaptable. The Region should take steps it believes are appropriate to operating in view of the new direction. Region 3 has prided itself in being the experimental region of IEEE; this is another opportunity.

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## **How many other regions are changing their operation?**

The other regions are still working this out as well. The regions were not identical before the change in direction and they likely won't be identical after the change in direction although they will all seek to be in alignment with the new direction. Region 3 has decided to engage with the future.

## **Shouldn't we benchmark other Professional Societies for best practices?**

The book "Bowling Alone" relates how the problems are common to associations not just Professional Societies. All groups are making decisions on how to deal with this (or go out of existence) but it seems premature to think that benchmarking will be useful. IEEE has engaged two sets of skilled consultants in their efforts to define this direction. We should always keep an eye open for benchmarking our operations with others but guided by the core values and principles of IEEE.

## **Have we completed the design of the MELCC for Region 3?**

The architecture design for MELCC is complete. The low level design details and implementation are subjected to continued modification just like all other committees as the people involved decide what works and what does not.

## **The MELCC is so large hasn't it become a mini-ExCom?**

The focus on the member is the major emphasis. It will, where there are engaged members willing to participate, involve many people. There, however, other functions performed by the section that are outside the MELCC -- examples include service to the public (technical and humanitarian concerns) and support of pre-college education.

## **How do we engage the members? Train us on the process.**

There are actions underway. Sections Congress 2008 began the training. Region 3 has recently conducted some web-based training. MGA (with strong input from Region 3) is creating training materials that are becoming available on the web. There is more work to be done here -- the Region welcomes your participation in defining and creating the appropriate training.

## **We know how to perform the membership development activities. Why should we change?**

Many of the answers above really address this question but the short answer is the vision is broader than membership development. The membership development activity is not disappearing. Rather the member engagement activity is being added and is the prime direction for MGA and the underlying structure.