

## **What is the ROI for IEEE Membership?**

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Region 6 has seen a steady decline in IEEE membership at least since the turn of the century. That is not a good trend for our organization. Over the same time IEEE membership fees have increased considerably while over the last 10 years average incomes in the US have declined and are now at values last seen in 1995. While this may not directly reflect the trends in engineering and technical incomes it nevertheless will result in some economic pressure on IEEE members and former members. More than ever before we need to look at the Rate of Return (ROI) for an IEEE membership, because our members will be looking at what they get for their money.

So the question is, what creates a value to IEEE members? The answer to this question depends upon the member. Some join to get discounted life and other types of insurance that can make up in savings for much of the membership cost. Others join to participate in societies and standards groups where they find value in the technical involvement and perhaps in technical recognition. Many members seek some sort of social involvement with other IEEE members and technical professionals at conferences or local IEEE chapter meetings. A few also see the IEEE as a way to volunteer and lead local IEEE organizations and engineering activities. However, since Region 6 IEEE membership is falling, the value of IEEE membership must be seen by many as less than the membership cost.

What can we do to make IEEE membership more attractive? Well, one thing that we should look at is the cost for IEEE membership. As mentioned before, in the current economic climate in many areas in Region 6 and for at least some former members, they can't afford the higher membership fee. Instead they need to spend the money they might otherwise spend on membership to support their family or other important activities. Are there cost reductions possible in IEEE operations that could allow lowering membership fees and thus retaining and perhaps gaining more members? If so we should implement these cost reductions.

Many former members, not located in large technical hubs may also feel that they don't get a value from socializing with other technical professionals. They may also not be able to participate in local chapter meetings and local conferences and thus these valuable activities are not available to them. Is there a way to help IEEE members in remote areas or even in areas where there may not be an active chapter

of some society or other to participate in chapter meetings? I think that we can use the Internet to make this possible.

What is proposed is that we should develop a methodology and perhaps list of recommended gear and software to stream local chapter meetings over the web. We should make access to these streamed meetings available to IEEE members not located in the chapter area (and perhaps credit for these remote members attending an on-line event could be split by some equitable formula between the chapter supporting the presentation and the remote participate chapter or section). We could use eventbrite or some other readily available registration service to allow IEEE members to enter their IEEE member numbers to sign up in advance for a video stream of a chapter meeting. They would then receive an email giving them the link and sign in information to join the event.

The actual stream would just be Power point presentation content and audio from a microphone that the presenter is using. Streaming over the Internet could be done using one of many available web meeting programs including Webex, Go To Meeting and many other programs, running on the presenting laptop. Since many of the locations where local meetings are given have some local Internet access we could offer free access of the streaming presentation to the employees of the hosting location (in addition to the IEEE members) in exchange for letting us use their internet link for the streaming presentation. In places where there is no available Internet access we may have to consider other possibilities such as through a wireless phone network. We should create some simple form for the presenter to sign, saying that it is OK to do this streaming.

On-line presentation from chapter meetings are a fairly simple thing to do and some chapters in Region 6 have been doing this. Among these groups are the SCV section Computer Society and the Consultants Network of Silicon Valley. Region 6 should create some guidelines for software and hardware that could be used to do this working with chapters and sections that have some prior experience with this approach. Region 6 should also help publicize the on-line streamed programs so members in other areas in region 6 can participate. If resources are available we could also post the presentations on-line after the event—this is already done by many chapters. A more ambitious plan would be to record and post the web cast for later viewing or including videos of the audience. A simple enhancement is to provide a means for remote questions to come in through email either through the web cast software or through someone's email account.

Providing a way for IEEE members throughout Region 6 to participate in the rich technical dialog going on in our Region would be a fairly simple way to enhance the value of IEEE membership. There are other ideas that we should consider but this one is possible now and at relatively little cost to get going. If we did this it should be possible to provide 100's of presentation video streams of local meetings within a year or two from many of our larger sections either for local remote viewing (and thus increase our local attendance) as well as adding remote attendance. In this

way we can provide world class content to any of our members in Region 6 at very little cost and thus enhance the value of IEEE membership to Region 6 members and hopefully increase the ROI for IEEE membership.