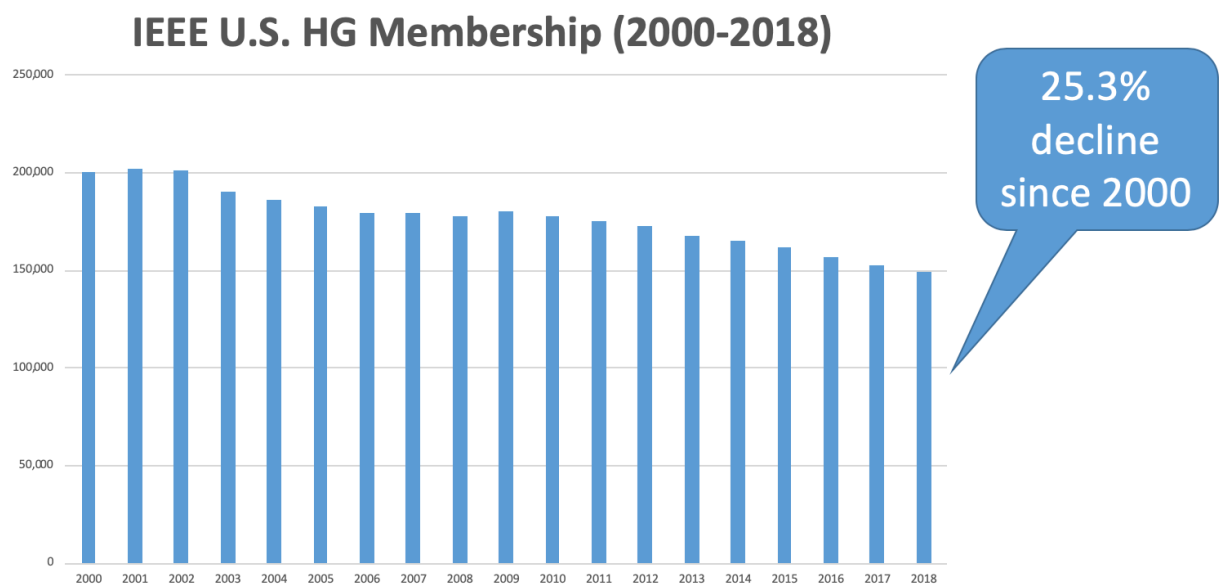


Bring them Back

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IEEE US Regions have been losing members for decades, generally by a percent of two each year. As the chart below indicates higher grade membership in the US has declined over 25% between 2000 and 2018. There has been almost a 10% decline in higher grade membership since 2014. The termination of non-renewing members from 2018 was completed in late February 2019. IEEE US higher grade membership has declined 2.0% from 2017 to 2018 (or just over 3,000 members).



There are numerous causes for the loss in higher grade IEEE membership in the US. Some of these causes are related to changes in the needs of younger professionals, decreases in corporate support for IEEE membership and lower growth in the traditional disciplines that supported many IEEE members in the past.

However, there is a great value in human networking and in a professional community that supports and informs its members and helps them stay up to date and employable. The needs of our technical community have changed, but the value of such as community has not. But how can we enhance and publicize the value of the IEEE technical community, that is relevant to modern young professionals?

I believe one of the best ways to do this is to create and collect existing materials that can be used to share and train our volunteer leaders in best practices for creating community-focused local IEEE sections, since after all, in the US many of our members get their greatest value from technical meetings and other events at their local section level. There is work going on that could lead to collecting such materials from our volunteers and staff and making them available on-line in an easy to find format.

There is one idea of a best practice that I want to encourage our sections to pursue now, since that IEEE is currently offering full year memberships for half price to new members (NEW applications received between 1 March and 15 August 2019 will automatically be processed for half-year membership ending 31 December 2019 at the half-year dues rates¹). This is also the best time to try and recover prior members who didn't renew in 2018. The best way to recover these members is by having members from their local IEEE community reach out to them.

In 2015, when I was director of IEEE Region 6 (the western US) we worked with Chris Wright from MGA membership to create a micro-volunteering project to have IEEE member volunteers living in local IEEE sections call (or email if they couldn't connect by phone) 10 people who had not renewed their membership in 2014. We provided a script for these calls that the volunteers could use to find out why they didn't renew, find out what their impressions of the IEEE are and get their input on what we can do better.

If the non-renewing member was interested in renewing their membership, they were offered options for renewing their membership. We provided a spreadsheet for volunteers to keep notes from their discussions and a google doc where they could upload this data and share it with the overall membership drive community. Here are some results from this 2015 membership recovery challenge:

Through the end of May 2015, Region 6 volunteers reached out to 285 non-renewing members. Of the calls made 31.6% connected and 42.5% had a message that was left via voicemail or followed up with an email. The effort paid off in that 19% of these contacts ultimately ended up renewing. The team was also able to glean valuable insights into why members did not renew.

Remarkably, 22% of the members that were contacted cited that they simply forgot to renew. 11% cited financial reason/expense as the major reason they did not renew. The remaining reasons ranged from changes in technical interests to the fact they were just too busy.

In 2019, if we can do such a micro-volunteering member-recovery project at the local section level, we can take an important step to eliminate our net loss of members this year. The time to start on this is now.

We are making some of our 2015 Region 6 member-recovery materials available for you to access, modify and use in a local section membership-recovery project, where local volunteers each contact a few non-renewing members, keep track of their findings and share them with their section, region and MGA. If you are interested in running this project in your Section, please contact Chris Wright (wright.c@ieee.org) of IEEE's Member and Geographic Activities staff for more details.

¹ <https://www.ieee.org/membership/join/dues.html>

Community matters, and we are all part of a local and larger community of technical professionals. Let your local community know that they are needed. If we show that we care, they may care as well. Let's go out and bring our non-renewing members back, or at least find out why they left.