

Enabling Active Sections Blogs

Blog 1

What is an active section?

IEEE sections exist to provide services and support for IEEE members living or working in that section. These may include putting on local meetings on professional or technology topics (often put on my local section chapters). The section may also have events to help its members become senior members and support local IEEE student branches. Some sections have social events or support STEM or humanitarian activities.

The number of things an IEEE section can do is affected by the size of the section and the number of volunteer available, the interests of the local members, the technical activities in the region where the section is located and local cultural practices. Some sections are centered on a local university, some around a company or industry and some have a broader member base. Larger sections may have more volunteers, interested in more things, and thus doing more things. Participation in section events are the main way that many members and non-members interact with the IEEE. Stronger active sections can increase interest in being a member of the IEEE.

Whatever size the section is, it is volunteers that make it work and volunteers who organize events and activities. IEEE helps its section volunteers by providing tools to help with various activities and also by allowing sections to carry on good technical or organization activities that meet the needs of its members. vTools provides many on-line tools for publicizing and getting registration for events as well as reserving webex meetings. There are tools available for posting locally created content, such as recorded section chapter technical meetings) to an IEEE.tv channel for volunteer created content. IEEE also provides financial services for its sections and chapters.

IEEE also provides various training tools for its section and chapter officers, such as the Center for Leadership Excellence, <https://iee-elearning.org/CLE/>, where members can find volunteer job descriptions for various IEEE roles, including those at the section and chapter level. It also includes information about the VoLT program for additional training about the broader IEEE for already established IEEE leaders. Many regions and sections have their own training programs that they carry out to let new volunteers learn how to do things in their local IEEE section.

Despite these aids to sections, many sections struggle to find volunteers to fill key roles and to provide candidates to run for various offices. Some sections are also losing members, reducing the number of people who could be officers in IEEE groups. Some chapters go dormant or are eliminated if they do not meet for a long enough period of time. What can we do to help revitalize sections that need help? What can we do to increase industry interest and participation in local IEEE events? How can we help sections meet their particular needs and interests better? I want to start a dialog on this and also invite IEEE members to register for a town hall meeting on July 13 to discuss topics about how to create vibrant and active IEEE

sections. You can find out more and register for this town hall at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9f_-L7KPRMK1VrgV6KMAYQ

Blog 2

New Local Groups in IEEE Sections

Let's explore some concepts that can help IEEE sections remain active and engage their members, while attracting new members.

There is an initiative underway to enable the easy formation of ad hoc local groups in IEEE sections. These groups would have access to many of the features of vTools, such as posting meetings. These groups need approval from the local section chair but they could be formed by only a few members (rather than the 12 members required to form a new society or council chapter) and they can include non-members. These groups can also be disbanded quickly, once they have served their purpose.

These groups won't have any definite connection to existing societies or councils in IEEE Technical Activities. This approach might be used for creating local groups on an emerging technology, e.g. blockchain, or serve as a local IEEE group in a company or government facility. The idea is to enable the rapid formation of groups at the local section who can meet the needs of section members and thus increase engagement with the IEEE at the local level.

There are currently pilot programs underway in several sections to prove the usefulness of this concept. Note that some sections, including the Santa Clara Valley section, where I live, have created special groups focusing on topics such as Sustainability, Entrepreneurship and Local Technology History, showing the kinds of things this approach enables.

There are things that the bigger IEEE can do to make more active sections that meet the needs of their members, but there are also things that local section leaders and volunteers can do to make their sections stronger and to meet the needs and interests of their members.

I am organizing an online town hall meeting on July 13 to discuss topics about how to create vibrant and active IEEE sections. You can find out more and register for this town hall at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9f_-L7KPRMK1VrgV6KMAYQ

Blog 3

More Ways To Help IEEE Sections

Let's explore another concept that might provide tools that can help IEEE sections remain active and engage their members, and recover lost members.

When I was director of IEEE Region 6, I worked with IEEE Membership to get volunteers at IEEE sections in Region 6 to find volunteers to call/email a list of 10 people who didn't renew their membership. This list of 10 non-renewing members from the section was accompanied by a script to talk with these non-renewed members to find out why they didn't renew and what we

could have done different to have kept them as a member and a link to a google document where they could leave notes on what they found out during their contact.

I went through two of these lists for my section and about 40% of the people who I spoke with said that they forgot or thought someone else had renewed for them. What we found is that many of the folks we contacted renewed and overall, we had about a 2% increase in renewals in Region 6 as a result. Having someone from your local section contact you to talk about why you didn't renew your membership, I think, makes an impression on people and demonstrates that we are a community that cares about its members. Finding ways to connect with your local members helps create a greater sense of community.

We need to focus on helping our sections be more active and to meet the needs of our local members, both technically and in terms of being a community that connects with, develops and honors its members.

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