

## Enhancing the Value of IEEE Membership Blogs

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### Blog 1

#### Helping make Senior Member Elevation Easier

IEEE members contribute a lot to the organization. Membership provides volunteers who help IEEE generate revenue and member value through the contribution of their specific skills and labor (editors, authors, conference organizers, governance, speakers, event/activity planners, mentors, etc.). The public visibility, prestige and achievements of our members reflects on IEEE and enhances our brand by association. Also, the greater the number of members, the larger the perceived importance of the organization.

But our members must find value in being part of the organization. Our various surveys show that people are members of the IEEE for various reasons. These reasons may change over time as our member's life situations and needs change. Studies of IEEE membership show that members who are recognized for their accomplishments (for instance being elevated to a senior member), tend to stay. Also, members who engage with IEEE activities in some way, such as being a volunteer in various activities, also tend to stay members. Recognition and involvement give these members a sense of belonging to a community that values their contributions, and that has value!

Many people who would qualify for senior membership, never achieve that recognition. This is often because they cannot find senior members or fellows who endorse their senior member application. This is particularly hard for many members in industry. Not elevating these deserving members is a lost opportunity for the IEEE, and as a consequence, many of these people lose interest in the IEEE and they are more likely to let their membership lapse.

We need to make it easier for qualified IEEE senior membership candidates to find endorsers so we can recognize their accomplishments and keep them engaged in the IEEE. This could be done by asking senior members to volunteer to help others advance and keeping contact information for those volunteers in a database that a senior member candidate can access and connect with. We might also consider lowering the requirement for endorsements for senior members from the current three, to two or even one.

I am planning to have a series of town meetings to discuss issues around IEEE membership and other topics. If you are interested in participating and talking with me about these topics and getting other information related to the campaign, please enter your name and email in the Subscribe form on my IEEE campaign page at <http://electtomcoughlin.com>

### Blog 2

Field Code Changed

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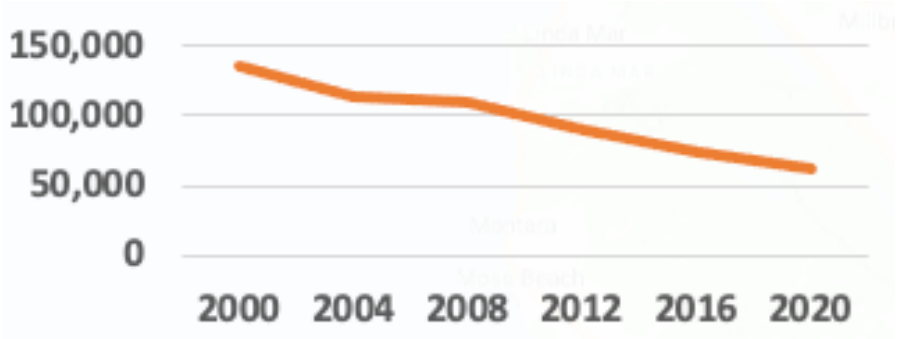
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End of blog 1

### **Blog 3**

Higher grade IEEE membership has declined significantly in the six US IEEE regions, and much of this membership loss is from members working in industry. The four non-US regions have been increasing in higher grade IEEE membership, but the majority of these members are academic rather than from industry. Overall IEEE higher level private industry membership has fallen 53% since 2000, as shown in the figure below.



Source: IEEE Research

IEEE is suffering from the loss of industry members. These are people involved in the practical application of technology to create wealth and satisfy human needs. We need them as well as our academic and other members for IEEE to truly reflect and represent the technologists who make the world work, create the future and in order to make the greatest impact on human civilization.

We need to look how we can bring industry members back into the IEEE. We should identify services and offerings that we currently have that are of interest to industry and engage with high level technology industry executives to find out what IEEE could offer them that would have real value and persuade companies to encourage and fund their employees membership in the IEEE.

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End of Blog 2

**Blog 3**

**Some examples of how IEEE membership provides value to me**

IEEE membership can provide many benefits and the organization has many things to offer its members. However, different members get value from different things in the IEEE and these can vary depending upon what else is going on in your life. Also, I have observed that the greatest value from being part of an organization like the IEEE, the more you engage in it and with the people in the IEEE community. Let me give you few examples showing how IEEE has benefited me and helped me develop myself over my career.

I joined the IEEE initially as a graduate student. I had a BS in Physics and I had joined the IEEE in order to get a discount to attend an IEEE conference (an InterMag conference in Boston). I continued my membership after I graduated and participated in IEEE conferences and in local IEEE events, first in the Minneapolis area, and after moving to Boston to work on a magnetic recording system for a digital camera at Polaroid in 1985, I participated in some local Boston section as well as society activity. I moved to the Silicon Valley area in 1987. In 1992 I was elected chair of my local society chapter. After that I helped with local chapter events while working at local companies.

In 2000 I decided to start my own company after getting laid off at a failing Silicon Valley company and I have run that company ever since. I found that IEEE's group health care plan (not available anymore) was much less expensive than the COBRA from my last job and the savings more than paid for my IEEE membership. Later, as our boys went to school, my wife went back to work and we had health coverage through her work. In 2002 I was elected chair of my local society chapter again and the leaders of the Santa Clara Valley (SCV) section asked if I would like to run for an office in the section.

In 2004 I was appointed the SCV Section PACE chair and then was elected as Treasurer and Vice Chair in 2005 and 2006. In 2007 I was elected SCV section chair and I was also the San Francisco Bay Area Council chair that year. I promoted doing the 2011 IEEE Sections Congress in San Francisco, and when it was approved, I became general chair of the 2011 Sections Congress. Being chair of the Sections Congress gave me a good excuse to contact people such as Vint Cerf from Google and Grant Imahara (Myth Busters) to see if they could give keynotes at the Sections Congress. This demonstrates another one of the values to me of my IEEE membership, it let me develop leadership skills as a volunteer and in those roles it gave me an incentive to meet new and influential people and to enlarge my contact network.

As Region 6 director we made an effort to find and elevate IEEE members who held executive positions at companies, but who weren't yet senior members and elevate them to senior members. This was another opportunity to connect with important people in our region. We also gave several awards to companies in the region for various things, giving us another opportunity to connect with people at various companies. Being an IEEE volunteer leader enabled me to refine my networking skills. It has allowed me to create a number of long-time relationships with people I have met in the IEEE. Some of these relationships have led to interesting projects on new technology and some have led to paying work for me. All of them have enriched my life.

If you ask different long time IEEE members (I have been a member for 42 years) you will probably find different stories about why they have remained a member. To me, IEEE is a community of technological professionals, who can help each other stay current, develop leadership skills, help each other when we need it and work together to make this a better world today and for our descendants.

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Field Code Changed

End of Blog 3

#### Blog 4

##### **Investing in membership is investing in the future of the IEEE**

The average age of IEEE memberships has been increasing. This is because we have very high attrition of younger members, in particular student and particularly young professional (YP) members. In the US regions, IEEE student membership (including graduate students) has declined by over 20% since its peak in 2003. At the same time, using US government statistics, IEEE student membership is only about 4.3% of the potential total market of electrical, computer engineering and computer science college students<sup>1</sup>.

IEEE young professional membership retention is very poor. This is likely due to the rapid increase in the price of membership going from a student to a full member but is also due to less familiarity with the value of being a member. IEEE research has shown that the longer a person is a higher-grade IEEE member, the more likely they are to stay a member. If we can recruit more IEEE student members and retain YP members longer and then engage with these new members in a way that encourages them to participate, we can keep more of them as members and reverse the aging membership trends in the IEEE.

Based upon recommendations from the Membership Price IEEE Board of Directors Ad hoc committee (which I chaired in 2019), IEEE Members and Geographical Activities (MGA) has been doing some pilot studies of more gradual increases in YP membership dues and has seen improved IEEE membership retention as a result. In 2020, during the COVID pandemic and with most colleges doing remote learning, IEEE student membership tumbled. The IEEE Board of Directors decided to offer IEEE student memberships for a 50% discount for the 2021 membership year and this resulted in a significant recovery in our student membership this year.

I think we should keep the price of student membership low to increase our pool of potential higher-grade members down the road and also increase YP dues gradually over a 3 to 4-year period. But this is not enough to keep these members. We also need to fund efforts to show our student members that IEEE is more than a student club and welcome YPs to their local section and engage with them, offering them interesting volunteer opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 Membership Pricing Ad Hoc Report, IEEE Membership Price Ad Hoc Committee Final Report, November 2019

This requires community efforts at the local level and the creation of new tools for member engagement, and it requires making investments in our membership. This will be required to fund the lower student dues and a more gradual increase in YP dues. IEEE has significant financial resources, some of these resources should be invested to ensure our future by helping us attract, retain and engage with our members.

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