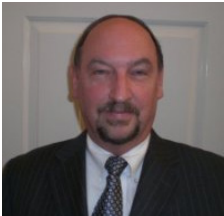## Bill Grist Takes Over as Chair of the IEEE-USA Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC)

Bill Grist, of Region 6, (the Foothill Section of the greater Los Angeles area), is the new 2015 Chair of the IEEE-USA Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC). Grist has more than forty years' experience in consulting, software technology, system engineering, project management, business development, and business management. He gained the majority of his experience at Hewlett-Packard (HP Consulting & Integration; plus HP Professional Services), and at General Dynamics Missile Systems (as a U.S. Navy contractor).

Grist also serves as the IEEE Foothill Section Computer Society Chair; as the Co-Chair of the Foothill Employment Network; and is a member of the LAACN/OCCN Consultant Network covering the Los Angeles area. He is excited to be leading the AICNCC this year, as they address issues such as how to increase subscribership in the IEEE-USA Consultant Database; partnering with more local consultants networks to hold consultant workshops throughout the United States; and how the committee will increase services to new and long-time consultants.

Grist brings a combination of consulting experience into this chair position; including as a computer systems and business management consultant; a hands-on project manager; as a systems engineer; in several global positions for HP; and as a P&L business financial manager for HP. He has worked across a broad spectrum of the consulting profession, including as an internal Consultant within a global corporation (HP); a contract consultant working as a project manager for software and data implementations; a technical marketing project consultant; and as an independent jack-of-all-trades small business technology consultant. During the Dot Com era, Grist worked as an HP Alliance Manager to several New Age digital consultancy companies partnering with HP, as well as other large corporate consulting organizations within Oracle and SAP. His first paid consulting gig was only two years after college—working after-hours for Sunkist Research (with the approval of his current employer).

Grist earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Kansas; followed by numerous engineering and business post-graduate courses; and professional / HP business training. He also managed a Cisco Network Academy, where he held a Cisco CCNA1 Instructor Certification. Grist has forged strong IEEE relationships with local members and student members (on 3D Printing), leading to his involvement in two provisional patents/prototypes with other IEEE members.

War Stories #6: Independent Consultants Should Never Burn Bridges

BY LARRY G. NELSON, SR.

A company has downsized, or has just completed a fast growth spurt. Perhaps some key people just left for other situations. Maybe they don't have the specialized equipment, or room in their facilities to expand. Sometimes everyone is simply overworked and burned out. Whatever the cause, the company is lacking one or more of the critical resources to complete certain projects on schedule—or at all.

One of my clients in the medical equipment area had just designed a line of new products. The company continued supporting all of its existing product lines, including obsolete products. Customers still wanted the old style systems, in some cases. The company made enough money on the outdated systems, so it would build them as needed, on demand. But components were becoming impossible to buy, and the company needed alternatives. The company handicapped itself by having too many irons in the fire, and being a small manufacturing group—its engineers were fast approaching burnout.

I was hired to relieve some of the pressure. The plan was to clean up the pile of open issues, free up the employees to learn the new systems, and smoothly transition to production. After several rocky starts, we cleaned up the bulk of the existing problems, and put some procedures in place to facilitate the resolution of future problems.

Time to let all the consultants go. Things kept running well. Six months later management restructured the group. In other words, they downsized. Consequently, three months further down the line, I was back on contract to rectify other issues.

Always keep in touch with your clients, and never burn any bridges. It is amazing how often a company that no longer needs your services will keep bringing you back—if you are easy to work with, and if you are regularly visible to them, whenever they need you.

Larry G. Nelson, Sr. can be contacted at L.Nelson@ieee.org; or at Nelson Research at http://www.mchipguru.com/.

Sign Up for the IEEE-USA Consultants Database at a Reduced Rate

For a limited time, independent consultants who are IEEE members can subscribe to the IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium — which includes allowing members to place their profile in the IEEE-USA Consultants Database — for half the regular cost.

The IEEE-USA Consultants Database allows national companies to find consultants wherever they are. With an annual listing fee of only US$99 (now half-priced at $49.50), a single referral will pay for the listing. Along with your database listing, the Premium subscription includes a free subscription to the IEEE-USA Consultants Newsletter, a free IEEE-USA eBook on consulting and access to a free exclusive training webinar.

+ Subscribe today and take advantage of this half-price offer!

More Proof Why You Can't Ignore Your Online Self

What's social proof? Daniel Lay describes it in Social Proof Is the New Currency on the *Social Media Today* blog:

> *Whether you like Mark Zuckerberg's mug or not, the social web is here to stay, and businesses that can integrate social proof into their marketing efforts seamlessly will join this new "socially rich" class. We mean richness in fans and followers, not number of zeroes in your bank account. Social proof is the new currency of credibility.*

And that's not just businesses. That's also you and me. You aren't credible for marketing purposes of any kind without a web footprint. That's what turns up when somebody searches your name on the web. It's a combination of websites, articles, and your profile on at least one or more of Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or Google+. Employers will look. Prospective clients and partners will look. A normal response to an interesting business-related email from a stranger is to look for the footprint.

Of course there are exceptions, like some very local businesses,

some highly skilled professionals, lots of middle managers, finance professionals, and so forth. Still, the general rule applies.

And then there's the time problem. Your social proof, or lack of it, is related to how long you've been there. Even a few months are way better than just starting yesterday.

Conclusion: An old African proverb says the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The second best time is today. That same logic applies: the best time to start your online presence is 10 years ago. The second best time is today.

Source: Tim Berry, founder of Palo Alto Software.

Hello, Cleveland! AICN Welcomes a New Network

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates Benjamin Rosolowski and the IEEE Cleveland Section Consultants Network Affinity Group on the formation of their network.

This newest Consultants Network became official on 29 January 2015. If fellow consultants would like to

give a personal welcome to this new network, please check the IEEE-USA Web site for their contact information. If other IEEE members would like to form a consultants network, the IEEE-USA Web site also contains step-by-step instructions about how to start a formal network. We encourage new consultants networks to register as Affinity Groups. After

a group forms a network, it can take advantage of IEEE's branding and resources, and also qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates.

If you don't see your consultants network's contact information listed on our Web site, please contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org.
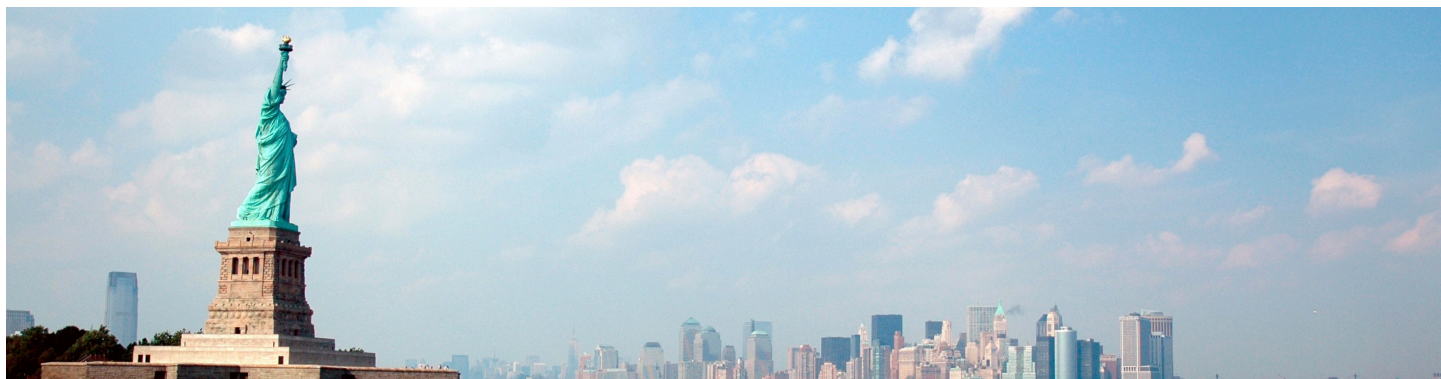
IEEE-USA Applauds Final Rules on H-1B Spouses; Green Cards Would Work Better

IEEE-USA applauds the final rules for spouses of H-1B temporary workers recently released by the Department of Homeland Security—but thinks green cards would be a better solution.

"It's good that certain spouses of H-1B employees will now be able to work legally in the United States," IEEE-USA President Jim Jefferies said. "But it would be better if we delivered actual green cards promptly, since that would allow spouses to work without all this extra red tape."

Announced by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director León Rodríguez, the H-4 visa rules allows the spouses of H-1B workers sponsored for a green card to hold a job.

"This is a useful reform that will improve the lives of thousands of H-1B families, and recognizes that green cards are the goal," Jefferies said. "But it is important to remember that most H-1B workers are never sponsored for green cards, particularly if they work for outsourcing companies."

"Discharging Americans and replacing them with H-1B workers employed by outsourcing companies is the true face of the H-1B program," Jefferies added. "More than half of H-1Bs go to outsourcing companies, whose business model is to replace American employees with easily exploited foreign workers."

The H-1B program also has a discriminatory impact on women in engineering, computing, science, technology and math fields, because men use an estimated 70 to 85 percent of all H-1B visas.

The H-4 visa holder has to apply for work authorization, which takes months to process. But when a married person gets an employment-based green card, the spouse also gets legal permanent residency, including work authorization.

"We applaud this half step by the Obama Administration," Jefferies said. "But clearly, green cards, not guest worker visas, is the way to go."

The new rules go into effect 26 May 2015. See the USCIS news release.

IEEE-USA serves the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 200,000 engineering, computing and technology professionals who are U.S. members of IEEE.

Why Would Any Business Ever Hire a Consultant?

True story: Charles Steinmetz. They called him: The Wizard of Schenectady. I'm quoting *Smithsonian Magazine* here:

> *Before long, the greatest scientific minds of the time were traveling to Schenectady to meet with the prolific "little giant"; anecdotal tales of these meetings are still told in engineering classes today. One appeared on the letters page of Life magazine in 1965, after the magazine had printed a story on Steinmetz. Jack B. Scott wrote in to tell of his father's encounter with the Wizard of Schenectady at Henry Ford's River Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan.*

> *Henry Ford was thrilled until he got an invoice from General Electric in the amount of $10,000. Ford acknowledged Steinmetz's success, but balked at the figure. He asked for an itemized bill. Ford, whose electrical engineers couldn't solve some problems they were having with a gigantic generator, called Steinmetz in to the plant. Upon arriving, Steinmetz rejected all assistance, asking only for a notebook, pencil and cot. According to Scott, Steinmetz listened to the generator and scribbled computations on the notepad for two straight days and nights. On the second night, he asked for a ladder, climbed up the generator, and made a chalk mark on its side. Then, he told Ford's*

> *skeptical engineers to remove a plate at the mark, and replace sixteen windings from the field coil.*

> *They did, and the generator performed to perfection.*

> *Steinmetz, Scott wrote, responded personally to Ford's request with [the invoice shown here]: $1 for making chalk mark, and $9,999 for knowing where to make the mark.*

> *Ford paid the bill.*

Why do I retell this story? Three reasons:

The best consulting is providing pinpointed knowledge and experience to solve specific problems. For example, don't have a consultant write your business plan— have a consultant read and critique your business plan, recommend financing strategies, and point you in the right direction.

Make a distinction between outsourcing and consulting. Outsourcing is having somebody else do the actual work. Consulting, in theory at least, is buying targeted know-how and experience.

Not exactly directly related to this story, but just a reminder: turn to consulting carefully. Search for the expertise you really need, and always check references and talk to past clients.

Source: [Tim Berry](), founder of Palo Alto Software.

IEEE-USA Launches New Flagship Publication, *IEEE-USA InSight*

IEEE-USA has launched a new flagship publication, *IEEE-USA InSight*. This modern, online magazine will be continually refreshed with original stories on technology careers, public policy and trends, engineering history and skills, such as teamwork and effective communication. http://insight.ieeeusa.org/

IEEE-USA InSight features stories on the portrayal of engineering and technology in pop culture, the rise and fall of the fax machine, and why IEEE-USA President Jim Jefferies thinks this is a great time to be a U.S. IEEE member.

"Technical professionals in all of our fields of interest will lead the way on the innovation path, and it is our business at IEEE-USA to support that path from precollege education to retirement," Jefferies writes in his first President's column. "I urge you to look for and access the career and policy information that fits you, and comes with your membership."

http://insight.ieeeusa.org/insight/content/ieeeusa/77241

The publication launch coincides with the debut of IEEE-USA's new Shop site, where IEEE-USA E-Books are discoverable and available for purchase. IEEE members will find it easy to use their IEEE Web accounts to add products to their Xplore shopping cart. http://shop.ieeeusa.org/

In addition to timely content, *IEEE-USA InSight* offers readers the ability to comment online, rate stories, respond to short polls, and take advantage of a vastly improved search engines when looking for specific content. Plus, it is optimized for desktop computers, tablets and mobile phones.

"*IEEE-USA InSight* will continue to bring engineers, technologists and others timely stories and career advice," said Murty Polavarapu, IEEE-USA vice president, communications & public awareness. "It is a forward-looking publication featuring the latest technology and interactivity

today's professional has come to expect."

IEEE-USA InSight replaces the award-winning *Today's Engineer* and *IEEE-USA In Action*. Today's Engineer began as a quarterly print publication in 1998, and continued in that format for 12 issues, until the fourth quarter of 2000. It then moved online until its final edition in December 2014.

IEEE-USA in Action was a highly interactive publication that appeared quarterly from April of 2010 until the spring of 2013. Its content and that of *Today's Engineer* are archived online.

IEEE-USA serves the public good and promotes the careers and public policy interests of more than 200,000 engineering, computing and technology professionals who are U.S. members of IEEE.

IEEE Spectrum Infographic: Defining Net Neutrality Without the Politics

At IEEE-USA, we're in the business of public policy. But for those of who aren't interested in beltway politics, *IEEE Spectrum* has a great infographic on net neutrality that tries to define the complex issue without getting mired in partisan arguments. Check it out here.

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IEEE-USA Annual Meeting - Advance Registration Deadline Extended to Friday, 17 April

The 2015 IEEE-USA Annual Meeting will be held 14-17 May 2015 in conjunction with the 36th IEEE Great Lakes Biomedical Conference which will be held 14-15 May.

Conference Dates: 14-17 May 2015

Location: Milwaukee Hilton City Center (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

Web: http://sites.ieee.org/glbc

Sponsored by IEEE-USA and hosted by the IEEE Milwaukee Section and IEEE Region 4, the Annual Meeting continues a strong tradition of offering the latest in tools, policies, procedures, and other assets designed for IEEE members and IEEE-USA's volunteer network. Learn how to maximize your membership and your role in strengthening your IEEE community. IEEE members, student members as well as Region, area, Section, and Chapter leaders are encouraged to attend. IEEE members interested in how to best deploy IEEE-USA's products and services should take advantage of this event as well.

For those of you in the biomedical field, benefit from the expertise and knowledge offered at the 36th Great Lakes Biomedical Conference. The Great Lakes Biomedical Conference is a respected regional event that gathers industry, academic and student leaders from the biomedical professions.

IEEE-USA Awards - Nominations Now Being Accepted

IEEE-USA Awards, recognizing excellence, outstanding service, and contributions to professional activities.

Deadline for nominations: 31 July 2015

You can help recognize the efforts of outstanding volunteers by nominating individuals for one of the prestigious IEEE-USA Awards and Recognition. IEEE-USA Awards are given to recognize professionalism, technical achievement, and literary contributions to public awareness and understanding of the engineering profession in the United States.

If you know someone who is deserving of an IEEE-USA technical, professional or literary award consider nominating them for our prestigious awards.

Please visit the IEEE-USA Awards and Recognition website (http://ieeeusa.org/volunteers/awards/) for more details

The deadline for nominations is 31 July 2015 (for completed nomination form and two letters of endorsement).

AICNCC Partnering with the South Eastern Michigan (SEM) Consultants Affinity Group for Fall Workshop

For the past two years, the IEEE-USA Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee has partnered with various local consultants networks across the United States, to provide quality, one-day consultants' workshops. Our next stop will be in south eastern Michigan this fall, where we hope many consultants, new and old, will come learn about this great career option.

The workshop will take place on 3 October at Lawrence Technological University, in Southfield, Mich. IEEE-USA

Past President Gary Blank will be a highlight of this workshop, and he will share his vast knowledge about how to be a successful consultant. We invite all of you to come to Michigan to partake in this exciting workshop. The cost is $20.00 for IEEE member. Register Today!

If any other local networks are interested in partnering with the AICNCC to conduct a full-day workshop in 2016, contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org.

Sign Up for the IEEE-USA Consultants Database at a Reduced Rate

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The IEEE-USA Consultants Database allows national companies to find consultants wherever they are. With an annual listing fee of only US$99 (now half-

priced at $49.50), a single referral will pay for the listing. Along with your database listing, the Premium subscription includes a free subscription to the IEEE-USA Consultants Newsletter, a free IEEE-USA eBook on consulting and access to a free exclusive training webinar.

+ Subscribe today and take advantage of this half-price offer!

War Stories #7: Client Failings and Disasters (Part THREE)

The "Political Hot Potato"

BY LARRY G. NELSON, SR.

The "Political Hot Potato" is always a great justification for an employer to hire a consultant. The job is critical, but it can make or break an employee's career. Sometimes they already have the answer — but it will be an unpopular solution. By hiring a consultant, employees can avoid the heat directly. No one wants responsibility for a politically hot problem, because they like their jobs. Using a consultant is simply a protective maneuver. If you fail, they can blame you. If you succeed, they can take the credit for hiring you, and guiding you to the winning solution.

I was brought in to solve a solder-ability problem on some hybrid circuits being manufactured for a government contract. Military standards do not allow you to scrape the component leads to clean them, as the process would damage the plating on the pins.

It should have been an easy task. All I needed to do was locate the source of the problem and fix it. If there was contamination, I had to either find a way to eliminate it at the source, or remove it afterwards. A vendor problem would necessitate trying to resolve with the current supplier, or find an alternate source.

New packages in stock soldered fine. I followed the parts through the entire production process. They were transported from station to station within the company stuck into Styrofoam blocks. One step used a potent solvent to clean the package. As it turned out, the solvent melted the Styrofoam, changing its chemical properties, and made a coating on the leads that was almost impossible to remove without

scraping. I tried to clean the leads with various powerful solvents, but none worked due to chemical hazards during production

But I found the solution — transport via metal trays. I located a surplus of useable trays in the area, from Company B. I informed my client of the component's availability, its close proximity, and the cost savings. The owner did not want to buy the trays, or change his process. He wanted a miracle solution that would clean the parts just prior to soldering. Aware of the owner's way of thinking, others brought me in from the outside to independently find this solution — and convince their boss of its validity. My invoice was grudgingly paid, and the boss was still looking for the answer he wanted after I left. His end customer eventually forced him to use the solution we found to fulfill the contract he had agreed to.

Sometimes, you cannot win by design. Unfortunately, you will not know the scenario going in, and all you can do is make the best of a bad situation. Even when everyone pulls together, we sometimes find ourselves at odds with each other. Everyone has their own agenda, and consultants are the most successful when they can control the diverse directions, and solve the common problems. Remember to drain the lake and sell the crocodiles — before it's too late…

Larry G. Nelson, Sr. can be contacted at L.Nelson@ieee.org; or at Nelson Research at http://www.mchipguru.com/.

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How to Land Interim Consulting Work During Your Job Search

BY BRUCE KATCHER, PH.D., FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT CONSULTING

1. Promote Your Consulting Services — Judiciously

I typically advise new consultants to send an announcement to everyone they know. If, however, you really are planning on finding another job, then sending an announcement about your consulting could be counterproductive. Tell only your closest and most trusted contacts that you are still looking for a job, but offer to help them, or people they know, on a consulting basis, if they need assistance.

2. Don't Become a Commuter

Avoid a consulting assignment where you are required to be on site full time, or even several days a week. You need to maintain the flexibility of your schedule, so that you can make job search-related activities (i.e., telephone calls, emails, and attending networking meetings and job interviews) your major priority.

3. Don't Sell Your Time

Don't put yourself in the position of having to decide, *"Should I work for another hour, so that I can charge my client a little more today, or attend that networking meeting?"*

Try to avoid charging by the hour or the day. You still want to own your time. If you charge for your time, you will be looking at your watch, your clients will be looking at their watches, and your valuable time will be used primarily to service your client — rather than searching for your next job.

4. Sell Deliverables or Results

Instead of charging for your time, charge for deliverables (e.g., a report summarizing your findings), or results (e.g., increased revenue). That way, you will be held accountable for what your client needs, rather than the amount of time you spend providing it.

5. Consider the Retainer Model

Another way to maintain control of your schedule is to work for your client on a retainer basis. For example, labor attorneys often charge a fixed monthly fee for a minimum of 6-12 months, to be available to offer their advice when needed on complex legal issues. They don't tie their fee to the time they spend. (That would be charging for their time.) They make it clear what services are within and outside of the scope of the retainer relationship, so that they are protected from having all of their time monopolized by one client. Often, they price their retainer fee for less than their hourly rate, to make it more enticing for their client.

6. Consider Subcontracting

Generally, serving as a subcontractor to other consultants who need help on projects is not a great practice for independent consultants, because the client is not yours, and you can't charge what you would get if they were your client.

However, for those who are really seeking a job, subcontracting is a great way to land business quickly. Just make certain that you are not commuting daily, or selling your time in ways that make it difficult for you to search for your job.

Think about reaching out to those consultants you hired while you were employed at your last job. They might need your assistance. Also, it is probably very important to them to maintain a good relationship with you, because when you land your next job, they will be anxious for you to hire them again.

7. Consider Consulting that Can Lead to Full-Time Work

Another good possibility, of course, is for you to take on a consulting assignment that has the potential to lead to a full-time position. You might even be willing to commute and sell your time, if you think that there is a strong possibility that the consulting assignment could turn into a full-time job. But make it clear to your client that you will need time off periodically to continue your job search. Then, it is your challenge to impress them — to the point where they just feel they have to hire you full time.

Conclusion

You **can** have your cake (i.e., earning consulting income) and eat it too (still actively search for the job you desire). You just need to take the proper precautions to make certain that your consulting does not interfere with your job search.

Bruce Katcher, Ph.D., mentors consultants and can be reached at 508-349-0477 or BKatcher@ CenterforIndependentConsulting.com

Source: *The Consultants' Corner,* The Center for Independent Consulting, 2013.

AICNCC Welcomes a New Network Lahore Section

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates Ghalib Shah and the Lahore Section Consultants Network Affinity Group on the formation of their network.

This newest Consultants Network became official on 5 June 2015. If fellow consultants would like to give a personal welcome to this new network, check the IEEE-USA Web site for the contact information. If other IEEE members would like to form a consultants network, the IEEE-USA Web site also contains step-by-step instructions about how to start a formal network.

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Independent Contractor or Employee — Which One Are You?

For federal tax purposes, this distinction is important. Worker classification affects how you pay your federal income tax, social security and Medicare taxes, and how you file your tax return. Classification affects your eligibility for Social Security and Medicare benefits, employer-provided benefits, and your tax responsibilities. If you aren't sure of your work status, you should find out now.

The courts have considered many facts in deciding whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee. These relevant facts fall into three main categories: behavioral control, financial control, and relationship of the parties. In each case, it is very important to consider all the facts — no single fact provides the answer. Carefully review the following definitions:

Behavioral Control

These facts show whether there is a right to direct or control how the worker does the work. A worker is an employee, when the business has the right to direct and control the worker. The business does not have to actually direct or control the way the work is done — as long as the employer has the right to direct and control the work. For example:

Instructions — If you receive extensive instructions on how work is to be done, this suggests that you are an employee. Instructions can cover a wide range of topics, for example:

- How, when, or where to do the work
- What tools or equipment to use
- What assistants to hire to help with the work
- Where to purchase supplies and services

If you receive less extensive instructions about what should be done, but not how it should be done, you may be an independent contractor. For instance, instructions about time and place may be less important than directions on how the work is performed.

Training — If the business provides you with training about required procedures and methods, it indicates that the business wants the work done in a certain way, and suggests that you may be an employee.

Financial Control

These facts show whether there is a right to direct or control the business part of the work. For example:

Significant Investment — If you have a significant investment in your work, you may be an independent contractor. While there is no precise dollar test, the investment must have substance. However, a significant investment is not necessary to be an independent contractor.

Continued from previous page

Expenses — If you are not reimbursed for some or all business expenses, then you may be an independent contractor, especially if your unreimbursed business expenses are high.

Opportunity for Profit or Loss — If you can realize a profit or incur a loss, it suggests that you are in business for yourself and that you may be an independent contractor.

Relationship of the Parties

These are facts that illustrate how the business and the worker perceive their relationship. For example:

Employee Benefits — If you receive benefits, such as insurance, pension, or paid leave, it would indicate that you may be an employee. If you do not receive benefits; however, you could be either an employee, or an independent contractor.

Written Contracts — A written contract may show what both you and the business intend. This contract may be very significant if it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to determine status based on other facts.

When You Are an Employee...

Your employer must withhold income tax, as well as your portion of Social Security and Medicare taxes. Also, your employer is responsible for paying Social Security, Medicare, and Unemployment (FUTA) taxes on your wages.

Your employer must give you a Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, showing the amount of taxes withheld from your pay.

You may deduct unreimbursed employee business expenses on Schedule A of your income tax return, but only if you itemize deductions, and the deductions total more than two percent of your adjusted gross income.

When You Are an Independent Contractor...

The business may be required to give you Form 1099-MISC, Miscellaneous Income, to report what it has paid to you.

You are responsible for paying your own income tax and self-employment tax (Self-Employment Contributions Act – SECA). The business does not withhold taxes from your pay. You may need to make estimated tax payments during the year to cover your tax liabilities.

You may deduct business expenses on Schedule C of your income tax return.

Source: Publication 1779 (Rev. 3-2012) Catalog Number 16134L, Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, www.irs.gov

IEEE Collabratec Is Here

IEEE Collabratec™ is an integrated, online community—where IEEE members, and other technology professionals can network, collaborate and create—all in one central hub. This new online community offers a suite of productivity tools that helps:

- Connect with global technology professionals in Collabratec Communities by location, interests and career pursuits
- Access robust networking, collaboration and authoring tools dedicated to technology professionals
- Establish a professional identity to showcase key accomplishments

One of those Collabratec Communities will be dedicated to IEEE independent consultants. The IEEE Collabratec Consultants Exchange will be open to all IEEE Consultants Network subscribers. (Reminder: The IEEE Consultants Network is free to all IEEE members.) The community will be a haven for all IEEE members willing and wanting to discuss all things consulting.

IEEE hopes that this new community will provide IEEE consultants with an additional vehicle that allows all consultants from across the IEEE spectrum to network and collaborate on many different projects and topics.

In addition to the "Consultants Exchange" community, here are six additional things you should know about IEEE Collabratec:

1. Anyone can access it. IEEE members have exclusive privileges.
2. IEEE Collabratec brings together IEEE and non-IEEE individuals (authors, researchers, IEEE members, or other technical professionals who have similar interests) through an integrated online community.
3. It facilitates collaboration and connectivity.
4. It helps users:
   - Connect with global technology professionals by location and technical interests—and soon—by career pursuits
   - Access research and collaborative authoring tools
   - Establish a professional identity to showcase key accomplishments
5. In one centralized hub, IEEE Collabratec offers these major features:
   - Online communities
   - Author and researcher tools
   - Career development networking opportunities
6. Researchers and authors enjoy easy collaboration and co-authoring from virtually anywhere, with documents that are stored in the cloud.

"With IEEE Collabratec, we will be delivering the value of pulling together all of IEEE into one place and becoming 'the' network for technology professionals," said Jamie Moesch, senior director, Member Experience, Member & Geographic Activities. It is much more than just a social network, like Facebook or LinkedIn.

"In survey after survey, people say they come to IEEE for professional networking, to remain current with technology, and because they trust us," Moesch said. "IEEE Collabratec will facilitate community for them in a much more engaging way, giving them the chance to find and connect with one another."

2015 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report

IEEE-USA has conducted surveys of the compensation of IEEE's U.S. members since 1972. Separate surveys focusing on the compensation of consultants were implemented in 2002, and with the exception of 2003, have been conducted annually ever since. All findings in this report represent only those participants who were identified as self-employed consultants—defined as the 632 individuals who indicated that 50% or more of their consulting hours came from working independently, with partners, or incorporated. This report provides the profile of typical, self-employed and independent technical consultants, including their education, experience, business practices, median earnings and hourly fee. The fee data this report provides will help you set an hourly rate that is competitive with your peers. The report is available at: shop.ieeeusa.org/.

Member Price: $29.95 | **Non-member Price:** $49.95

By Executive Order: President Barack Obama Establishes Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors

On 7 September 2015, President Barack Obama signed an executive order giving paid sick leave to federal contractors, starting in 2017. The order states that employees who perform contract work for the federal government can now earn seven days, or more, of paid sick leave annually, including:

- Paid leave allowing for family care
- Paid sick leave earned for an absence resulting from: physical or mental illness, injury, or medical condition
- Paid leave when obtaining a diagnosis, care, or preventive care from a health care provider
- Paid leave when caring for a child, parent, spouse, or domestic partner

Don't Forget about IEEE-USA's Archived Webinars for Consultants

For the past five years, IEEE-USA has run a robust, free webinar program for all IEEE members. A major portion of these webinars has focused on career planning and career management. In addition, these webinars address such issues as networking, entrepreneurship, government relations and consulting. Consulting issues have always been a top attraction in the webinar program. If you missed them, following is a brief rundown of topics that have been covered.

2014 IEEE-USA President Gary Blank kicked off our consultant webinars with Consulting 101 and 102. Consulting 101 focused on how he got started in consulting; things people should consider before becoming a consultant; and what people will need to become a full-time consultant. The Consultant 102 webinar addressed the most important challenge facing consultants: *How To Find Clients*. Blank also conducted a webinar on Setting Up Your Consultants Database Profile. This webinar focused on how consultants could best set up a profile in the IEEE-USA Consultants Database that could help them attract clients to view their profiles.

Other webinars of interest to consultants are the many presentations done exploring LinkedIn. Author Wayne Breitbarth gave a presentation on The Power Formula for LinkedIn Success. Kim Brown and Don Herres offered two webinars on Building Your Online Resume Using LinkedIn and Finding the Right People Using LinkedIn. Each of these webinars give different perspectives on how best to use LinkedIn to your advantage.

Christine Silver presented Functioning as a Professional Consultant. Silver covered 10 qualities a professional consultant should possess. She focused on providing tips and tools on how to communicate better verbally, and in writing. She believes that communicating—especially under difficult circumstances—is one of the hardest things we do, and consultants can always benefit from training in these soft skill areas.

In our most recent webinar, The IEEE Professional Liability Insurance Program—Introducing Our New Program Option and Why Good Business Contracts Benefit You! Jeff Ambrose, Mercer Consumer's A&E Professional Liability program manager, gave a great overview on Professional Liability insurance. He also offered great tips on what to include and what to watch out for when constructing a consultant contract.

Take a moment to check out IEEE-USA's rich library of webinars—you may find some that interest you.

Median Income of Electrotechnology, IT Professionals Raises to $130,000 for Largest Gain in Past Five Years, IEEE-USA Salary Survey Reveal

The median income for electrotechnology and information technology professionals jumped by more than four percent in 2014, the largest increase in the past five years, according to the *2015 IEEE-USA Salary & Benefits Survey*.

Further, median incomes from primary sources—salary, commissions, bonuses and net self-employment income—for U.S. IEEE members working full-time in their primary area of technical competence (job specialty)—rose from $124,700 in the 2013 tax year to $130,000 in 2014.

The 4.25 percent increase comes a year after median income rose by its small percentage over the past five years, at .56 percent.

The results are based on survey responses from 10,215 people. Purchase today!
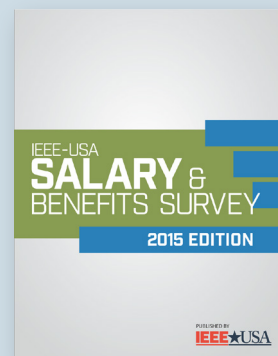
IEEE-USA's Free eBooks for Members in November and December
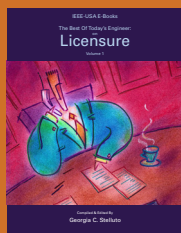
In November, IEEE-USA eBooks will offer *The Best of Today's Engineer: On Licensure - Vol. 1* free to IEEE members. This compilation includes articles on why licensure is important; the licensure process; exam development; and how to effectively study for and pass the licensure exams.

Many of the articles are written by IEEE-USA Licensure and Registration Committee members who have been active for many years and who feel strongly that all engineers should pursue licensure for a variety of reasons explored in this eBook.

From 1 November to 15 December, you can get your free eBook to download by going to http://shop.ieeeusa.org/usashop/product/careers/76535. Log in with your IEEE account, add the book to your cart and use promo code NOVFREE at checkout.

In December, IEEE-USA will offer *Leading and Managing Engineering & Technology—Book 3: Building a Culture that Develops Leaders and Managers*, by Gerard H. (Gus) Gaynor, who writes about such topics as: "The Basic Organizational Culture," "Building a Leadership Culture," and even a "Case Study: IBM's Silverlake Project."

Labor Department Issues Rule on Pay Secrecy Policies

The U.S. Department of Labor says federal contractors are prohibited from punishing employees who inquire about company pay rates. "It is a basic tenet of workplace justice that people be able to exchange information, share concerns, and stand up together for their rights," Labor Secretary Thomas Perez says.

Sources: *The Examiner*, Washington, D.C., 9/10/15. *IEEE-USA Smart Brief*, 9/17/2015.

You Still Have Time to Renew Your IEEE-USA Consultants Database Subscription

IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium (i.e. IEEE-USA Consultants Database) subscribers still have time to renew their subscriptions for this valuable asset. In 2015, you were able to have the exclusive privilege of participating in the webinar: *Cyber Security/Privacy Issues for Consultants*. In addition, in September you received a copy of the *2015 Consultants Fee Survey Report*. And of course you had an annual subscription to the IEEE-USA Consultants Database. Last but not least, you are now able to join in the "Consultants Exchange" in IEEE Collobratec.

Like your IEEE membership, your subscription has been extended for a few weeks, allowing you time to renew your subscription. We believe all the services this subscription provides is well worth the $99 subscription fee. The database itself lets IEEE members anywhere in the world create a profile listing detailing their fields of expertise, skills and availability. Employers can search the database for consultants that meet such criteria as expertise, location, certification type and spoken languages. Employers can also list their needs on the database, and have consultants contact them.

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC), an IEEE-USA committee established to provide policy guidance on consultants' matters, advises that the database should be included in every consultant's marketing strategy.

If you haven't done so already, please consider renewing your IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium subscription today!

For those new to consulting, consider subscribing to the IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium. If you subscribe, you will receive all the features previously mentioned. Of course, the main feature of the subscription is being able to list your profile in the IEEE-USA Consultants Database. The database is a central location, where consultants from across the country can place profiles containing their expertise and contact information, and where business employers can come to find independent electrotechnology consultants.

To join, go to the Special Interest Groups section of the Memberships and Subscriptions Catalog, and select IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium. This step will allow you to enroll in the database, as well as pay the $99 subscription fee.

After you subscribe, you can use your IEEE Account username and password to log-in to the IEEE-USA Consultants Database, and create your profile. Take the time to make your profile stand out, by adding your specialties and keywords, so clients searching the database can find you.

Remember business clients/employers searching for electrotechnology consultants will easily be able to find the consultants they need in the database, due to many unique search features. Having a profile in the IEEE-USA Consultants Database allows national companies to find consultants wherever they are; and with the annual subscription fee of only $99, just one referral will pay for the subscription.

Flipboard & IEEE Collabratec: Two Social Media Outlets For Accessing More Consultant News

We've talked about the IEEE-USA Career and Employment Issues Flipboard Magazine before in this newsletter. What is Flipboard? It is another entry point into the world of social media.

Flipboard is a very useful piece of social media that IEEE-USA is now using to post the latest articles on employment, career and consultant issues. Over the past two years, IEEE members and staff have been populating this magazine with articles on career management, employment issues, leadership, networking and consulting.

Most of you will find this app already on your smart phone. This software app allows users to "flip" through a social-networking feed (news feeds from other websites), to find articles of interest to them. In IEEE-USA's case, you'll be flipping through articles on different career topics. You can click this link to find the *IEEE-USA Career and Employment Issues Flipboard Magazine*.

Some articles that may interest you are:

- How To Become a Home-Based Freelance Consultant

- Negotiating for Higher Fees
- Power of In-Person Networking

IEEE Collabratec

As discussed in *The Institute* "IEEE Collabratec Can Help You Find a Job," IEEE has started a new "Consultants Exchange" community in IEEE Collabratec. The "Consultants Exchange" community is dedicated to addressing the interests of independent IEEE consultants. All IEEE Consultants Network and IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium subscribers are eligible to join the "Consultants Exchange" IEEE Collabratec community. Please note: Any IEEE member is eligible to join the IEEE Consultants Network.

In the community, members can network with other consultants from anywhere, exchange ideas on any consulting topic; seek and get advice; and access news and information that we may not be able to publish in this newsletter. Currently, more than 3,000 IEEE members subscribe to the IEEE Consultants Network. Let's set a goal by the end of 2016 to have every IEEE Consultants Network subscriber become part of the "Consultants Exchange" community in IEEE Collabratec.

IEEE-USA Webinar: Collabratec

We've mentioned the new "Consultants Exchange" community in IEEE Collabratec, in this issue. If you are still unsure about how best to make IEEE Collabratec work for you, then join us at 2:00 p.m. EST on 14 January for a webinar addressing that very issue. Justine Spack is IEEE's online community specialist, working on IEEE's new online networking and collaboration platform, IEEE Collabratec. IEEE Collabratec is IEEE's new integrated online community, where technology professionals can network, collaborate and create--all in one central hub.

During the webinar, Spack will provide a demonstration of the many functions available within IEEE Collabratec. She will walk you through everything--from setting up your profile to showcasing the variety of sub-communities within IEEE Collabratec. If you haven't joined IEEE Collabratec yet, this presentation is for you! You can register today for this upcoming IEEE-USA Webinar.

War Stories #8: Advertising and the Consultant

BY LARRY G. NELSON, SR.

You can promote your business in many ways, but newspaper ads and the Yellow Pages are *not* how to get consulting clients. Print ads can be expensive over time. Newspapers and the Yellow Pages are good, if you have a restaurant or auto repair shop--but these advertising methods don't work for most technical consultants. Targeted publications, available at trade shows and in special mailings, would also seem an approach that would be the way to go--but these also give no measurable results.

That said, you do need to advertise—put yourself out in front of your potential clients. Most importantly, you should be in front of them when they are looking, or it does minimal good. Your advertising needs to be long-term and consistent, to keep you in front of your desired audience. Continuity conveys you are in it for the long haul, not just trying consulting out only to quit and return to a traditional job--often leaving short-term clients high and dry.

Here are some low cost methods that work, and are sustainable:

Business Cards

Business cards are low cost. So, always have plenty of business cards with you--and distribute them to all you come in contact with. Think of these "small advertisements" as "business seeds." Spread them far and wide to increase the probability of growing new business. Cards convey your contact information clearly to prospective clients. Consequently, make sure you include the obvious: name, business address, business phone number and/or cell number, email address, and your company website address. I use plain black ink, but you can use color, if you prefer. Staples prints my cards, and they are better quality than you will get from your ink jet printer on card stock. And yes, that matters.

Web Site

A web site with your own URL is a good way to show you are in business. Don't use one of the free sites, like those your cable provider gives you. Look around for an unused URL, and pay to get it registered. You can use any one of a number of services to register and host your site. *Go Daddy* can do it for you at a good price, but I use RCN professional web hosting. I pay a bit more, but have no issues with keeping it online. For example: RCN immediately contacted me directly, when someone tried to hijack my site by having it moved to a different server. They blocked this attempt for me, and it saved me a lot of aggravation.

Professional Association Membership

I belong to the IEEE, AICN, Boston Consultants Network, Worcester County Section Consultants Network, and the New Hampshire IEEE Consultant Network. I get listed on their web sites as part of my membership. I also belong to the NSPE and MSPE as a Professional Engineer. I act as a guest speaker for many of these groups, and often get referrals this way, since people get to know me. Belonging is not enough. Attend meetings, volunteer, be involved!

Word of Mouth

Help others. People will come to know you as a problem-solver and it will yield you some referrals. You can help that along by asking those you network with, if they know anyone that may benefit from your expertise.

Partner Programs

If you work with specific hardware or software, the manufacturer often has some type of partner program. I am a certified consultant with Microchip and Parallax. I get referrals from their customers that need my expertise. I also am listed on their web sites as an approved consultant for their products. These listings give me free advertising, a credibility boost, and even a discount on their development tools and products. Many companies have similar programs, including Apple, Microsoft and National Instruments. Seek and you shall find.

Blog Post from Jim Todd, Consulting Physicist:
Have You Thought about Using LinkedIn Group?

I reviewed my notes recently on the subject of LinkedIn. My first use of LinkedIn dates back to 4 February 2008. That was the day that I decided to check out what this social networking application was all about. [Editor: Blog text converted for use at an IEEE meeting in September 2015, and for the 4th Quarter edition of the AICN Newsletter.]

The first efforts consisted of not much more than getting an account set up, and the bare-bones minimal information of who I am, and where I was working. As an aside, a friend from Massachusetts and I were having a casual conversation about LinkedIn. He discovered that I had this original account that I had forgotten about on LinkedIn. On 30 August 2009, I closed that abandoned account. Along the way, I had inadvertently opened a second account, where I realized growth in using this application.

I was glad that I did invest the time to build a credible profile. It took time, effort and a learning curve to do it. But, success struck! This posting documents what I have learned about LinkedIn groups and sub-groups. I thought it might be of interest to those who want to learn a bit more about it.

First, I learned that you may join 50 groups – that's the limit! It might seem like a large number, but I have discovered getting to 50 isn't that hard. Now, my "problem" is managing what groups I really want to belong to. Also, a group may have sub-groups. Sub-groups don't count against the 50-group limit. I haven't discerned if there is a sub-group limit.

Next, what groups to join? I've summarized my take on it below:

- **Academic affiliations:** Could be anything from high school, college, graduate school, alumni associations and continuing education
- **Special interest groups**: If you are like me, self-identifying terms such as "systems engineering" will get you started. Search for those key-words to find like-minded groups.
- **Professional Associations**: What professional associates do you belong to? A group from that association probably exists.
- **Business Associations**: Where do you work? Where did you used to work? I have found groups that organized around, for example: alumni of "Name the firm."
- **Groups that your contacts are members of**: When I get a new contact, I check out the groups that they belong to. As I personally work with search firms, joining the groups that my contacts belong to has been productive.
- **Support Groups**: They come in all sizes and types. I ask around. I have been quite surprised about what is out there.

Well, let's see, that gives us six categories of groups. If you join one or two in each category, that will get you going to about a dozen! So, get your group on!

Writing

Another avenue is writing. You can write articles, or even a book. You will not get rich writing--and it can take a lot of effort--but the written word sticks around for a long time, and you can often reuse your writing for different groups.

Presentations

If you are inclined, try your hand at teaching a class. Give a seminar. Volunteer to be a speaker for a month, for one of your professional organizations. The point is to put yourself out there. Become known. Be accessible to prospective clients.

IEEE★USA

IEEE-USA Commends Sens. Grassley, Durbin for Introducing H-1B, L-1 Visa Reform Legislation

On 11 November 2015, IEEE-USA President Jim Jefferies commended Sens. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) for introducing legislation aimed at reforming the H-1B and L-1 temporary visa programs.

"As the largest organization of America's high-tech workers, IEEE-USA strongly endorses this bipartisan legislation," Jefferies said. "Given the very public recent examples of U.S. employees being replaced by H-1B workers, it is clear that something needs to be done to reform these visa programs."

"The H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act" explicitly prohibits the replacement of employed American workers by H-1B and L-1 visa holders. Employees at Disney, Southern California Edison and Cargill, among others, have lost their jobs and been forced to train their replacements.

"No one should be in favor of replacing middle-class Americans workers with foreign employees," Jefferies said. "There should also be no objection to banning support for outsourcers who use the H-1B program as a job-exporting machine."

The legislation, cosponsored by Sens. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), would increase enforcement, modify wage requirements and provide protection for American and international workers.

Grassley, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement, "The abuse of the system is real, and media reports are validating what we have argued against for years, including the fact that Americans are training their replacements." http://1.usa.gov/1ljoCCQ

IEEE-USA supports increasing the number of employment-based EB visas for high-skill workers.

"IEEE-USA represents not only America's electrical and computing engineers, but also many foreign students in STEM fields who wish to become new Americans to create jobs in the United States," Jefferies said. "We look forward to working with high-tech employers to enact and implement these reforms."

Top 10 Programming Languages of 2015:

top 10

New languages enter the scene, and big data makes its mark...

In July 2015, *IEEE Spectrum* published its annual list of top ten programming languages. In case you missed it, we want to share it with you. Check it out here!