IEEE Communications Society
North America Region
Regional Chapter Chairs Congress
December 3-4, 2016

Panel Discussion

For the RCCC panel discussion, Scott asked each chapter representative to complete two 3″x5″ cards as follows:

  Card #1: What is working well for your chapter?
  Card #2: What is not working well for your chapter?

The cards were turned in and reviewed. Not surprisingly, Card #1 for some was Card #2 for others, and vice versa. Panel members made opening remarks on each topic and then RCCC attendees joined in the conversation. The discussion topics fell within the following categories:

1. Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
2. Membership Development
3. Technical Meetings
4. Student/Young Professionals Participation
5. Distinguished Lecture Tours
6. Administrative Issues

The panel members were:

☐ Ali Abedi, Maine Chapter
☐ Wahab Almuhtadi, Ottawa Chapter
☐ Fawzi Behman, Austin Chapter
☐ Merrily Hartmann, Past NAR Director, Moderator

Each category of topics is listed below. The first section lists the comments that came directly from the cards (Card #2) completed by the attendees. The second section lists the comments, suggestions, and best practices presented by the panel members and resulting discussions with the RCCC attendees. Since the RCCC, other helpful information has been provided in this section as well.

1.	Volunteer Recruitment and Retention
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:**
	☐ Not enough new volunteers
	☐ Impossible to find volunteers/ExCom members really motivated (resumé-dressing)
	☐ Seems to be a growing apathy amongst the membership
	☐ Finding leaders willing to take responsibility
	☐ Succession planning
	☐ Retaining ComSoc volunteers at the chapter level

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

☐ Typically having a feedback survey would include an item about volunteering.

☐ At the introduction of your technical meetings, stress that volunteers are needed.

☐ Emphasize that this is a service opportunity to your professional community.

☐ Typical commitment is just 1 hour a week of contribution.

☐ Training can be done with a brief job description, coaching, and/or referencing the IEEE Center for Leadership Excellence (CLE) website for chapter training (https://ieee-elearning.org/CLE).

☐ Be receptive to not only filling a vacant position but also identifying the needs of the candidate to bring about greater satisfaction. Example, asking someone to fill out a treasurer position but meeting the individual's needs such as working on an outreach program (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math - STEM)

☐ Other approaches to get volunteers are during networking and personal interaction in meetings and events.

	2. Membership Development
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** ☐ Seems to be growing apathy amongst our membership ☐ Indifferent Section support ☐ Attracting new members ☐ Retaining members ☐ Marketing, publicity, and outreach to local companies who should have an interest in ComSoc ☐ Outreach to government and military organizations in communications ☐ Engaging industry members ☐ Coordination with other societies ☐ Need to host a big conference – how to do that? ☐ Elevating members to Senior Member grade, references ☐ IEEE Fellow application: despite that there are 4 categories ("Research Engineer/Scientist"; "Educator"; "Application Engineer/Practitioner"; "Technical Leader"), the NOMINATION application form is academically designed primarily for "Research Engineer/Scientist".

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

☐ Take advantage of the MDSG (Membership Development Support Grant) process (http://www.comsoc.org/about/MemberPrograms/MPSG)

☐ The Membership Development Programs also include the following that you can promote among your chapter members and take advantage for your chapter growth:
  - o Awards
  - o Chapter Awards
  - o Chapter Funding
  - o Distinguished Lecturers
  - o Past Distinguished Lecturers
  - o IEEE Fellows
  - o Student Competition
  - o Travel Grants

☐ Work with the Section Membership Director and attend the monthly Section Executive meetings.

☐ Work with the Region Membership Director.

☐ Work with the Section Chair to get his/her letter of support to enhance Senior Member upgrade activities.

☐ Work with Section PACE (Professional Activities Committees for Engineers) Chair and develop a membership drive event.

☐ For IEEE Fellow concerns. Industry inclusive application forms and process for Fellowship: tailor the application forms to the respective application category so true merit can be judged. The NAR Board Director, as a member of the ComSoc Board of Governors (BoG) may bring this issue to the ComSoc Board of Governors.

	3. Technical Meetings
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** ☐ Getting more members to attend meetings ☐ Increasing meeting attendance ☐ Promoting an upcoming meeting/talk ☐ Avoiding timeframe/content overlaps with local sections and chapters ☐ Difficult to find engaging speakers ☐ Finding a meeting location ☐ Need time to find good speakers ☐ Addressing the needs of a geographically-dispersed chapter ☐ Trends for convergence leads to overlapping of topics amongst societies ☐ What are typical expenses for a chapter meeting? ☐ Recognizing/thanking speakers – recommendations? ☐ Traditional lecture-style talks

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

☐ Promotion:
  o Promote your meeting on Vtools via e-notice
  o Promote your event via the Section Website – Calendar of Events
  o Promote via Section or chapter website/newsletter and or social media
  o Can also try Meetup (www.meetup.com) to attract new people
☐ Finding speakers:
  o Use previous years' lists as a starting point.
  o Plan for Distinguished Speakers and/or Distinguished Lecturer Tours to fill out 2-3 meetings for the year
  o Brainstorm with officer's leadership team for contacts
  o Seek individuals through company/university contacts.
☐ Use WebEx for some meetings to reach more members
☐ Meeting costs – typical costs are between $100 and $300 per meeting
☐ Recognizing speakers:
  o Prepare a plaque (e.g., purchase enough for the year at a 50% discount) with personalized details (using a color printer): name of speaker, topic, date, and logo of the chapter.
  o Mug with chapter logo has also been a typical appreciation gift to speakers.

4. Student/Young Professionals Participation	
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:**
	☐ Difficulty reaching students/YPs
	☐ Students/YPs in the area may not realize the existence of a local ComSoc chapter

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ☐ Visit IEEE Student chapter activities and establish a level of collaboration
- ☐ For events, reach out to a local university to allocate volunteers to help out. As an example, for GLOBECOM 2014, there were 100 students who volunteered for the event. Another example is WiSEE 2013-16 which usually has students actively involved in the organizing committee and running the event.
- ☐ Remember to recognize their efforts by paying for their lunch, parking and present a certificate of appreciation.

5. Distinguished Lecture Tours	
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:**
	☐ Traditional lecture-style talks not effective
	☐ Need more Distinguished Lecture Tours
	☐ Distinguished Lecturers/Distinguished Speakers tend to be too "academic." How do we get speakers with broader appeal and aligned with ComSoc's 5 initiatives?
	☐ Distinguished Lecturers are skipping my chapter, e.g., they go to big chapters only
	☐ Need more lead time when planning DLTs to obtain co-sponsors to share costs

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ☐ Use Global Communications Newsletter blog (see the online GCN at http://www.comsoc.org/blog/check-out-new-online-global-communications-newsletter) to coordinate across chapters
- ☐ Ask speakers at 5G Summits, for example, to also conduct a Distinguished Lecturer Tour or a Distinguished Speaker talk in the area
- ☐ Check the ComSoc website at http://www.comsoc.org/about/memberprograms/distinguished-lecturers for info about all speakers available
- ☐ Chapter chair has the option of reaching out to other societies to get a desired speaker and submit for approval as a Distinguished Speaker.

	6. Administrative Issues
Card #2 comments collected from RCCC attendees	**ISSUES AND CONCERNS:** ☐ Communication via email ☐ Need contact list of ComSoc members in a specific chapter ☐ No way of checking who is/isn't a member at lunch/dinner meetings ☐ Need list of people in the community who should be members ☐ When will chapters receive their rebate? ☐ Funding from chapter questionnaire process may result in receiving money later in the year, making it difficult to spend in the current year ☐ Chapter websites – go thru IEEE MGA or ComSoc? ☐ Recognition plaques – how to get them? ☐ Election process and transition ☐ Need more support from IEEE on the logistics to free up chapter chair work load

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

☐ Email communication with your chapter members: use IEEE Vtools (http://sites.ieee.org/vtools/) as well as social media.

☐ Email communication with IEEE ComSoc Admin: lead Staff member for chapters is Carol Cronin (c.cronin@comsoc.org). Other staff contact information is available at http://www.comsoc.org/staff.

☐ Contact lists: each ComSoc Chapter Chair has access to SAMIEEE (http://www.ieee.org/about/volunteers/samieee/index.html) where the contact list of members may be downloaded. From the chapter list in SAMIEEE, one can check who is/isn't an IEEE ComSoc member. For members from other IEEE Societies, a list may be requested from your Section Chair or Secretary.

☐ List of people in your community who could be potential members: this is an initiative that could be pursued by the local chapter to attract/encourage people to become IEEE and ComSoc members.

☐ Rebate: this refers to a portion of each member's dues which is returned to the Section. After dues are paid each fall, the IEEE determines how to allocate 12% of the total dues collected to MGA, Regions (IEEE), sections and chapters (see MGA Operations Manual, Section 9.0.E for details on rebates). The formula for active chapters is $200 plus $75 if the chapter has reported at least 6 technical meetings in the previous year. The funds are normally transferred to each chapter's parent section (which has the responsibility to make those funds available to each chapter). Of course, there are exceptions, for example, MGA may disburse the funds directly to a chapter, if that chapter has their own concentration banking account. All this info is contained in the MGA Operations Manual (see http://www.ieee.org/documents/mga_operations_manual.pdf particularly, sections 9.4.I.8 and 9.6.E).

☐ Funding: Chapter Questionnaires were sent out early this year (2017) hoping to get the funding requests out at a decent time. Normally, funding is provided after the ICC conference held in May or June. Staff realized that this is too late so they are trying to get everything done earlier this year. The goal is to get chapter questionnaires out even earlier next year with a shorter timeframe for returning them to Staff.

6. Administrative Issues (continued)

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Chapter Websites: ComSoc provides our chapters with the opportunity to create their own chapter website via IEEE's web hosting tool called EWH (Entity Web Hosting) WordPress. WordPress offers an easy to use interface with improved handling of images and multimedia. The following form is available for those wishing to set up a new website: http://www.comsoc.org/form/chapter-technical-committee-website-request-form. Questions should be directed to Natasha Simonovski (n.simonovski@comsoc.org)
- Chapter Information Updates: at this time, ComSoc chapters need to go through IEEE MGA as well as informing ComSoc Staff about any changes in their chapter information. Staff is trying to work on a better system for this but, for now, both MGA and ComSoc must be notified to be sure websites, email lists, and databases are updated properly.
- Recognition for chapter members: the North American Regional Exceptional Service Award. This award consists of a plaque and honorarium of $400. A maximum of 3 awards will be granted each year by the NAR Board. Once the selection is made the winners and citations are sent to ComSoc Staff for preparation of the plaques and contacting the awardees to fill out their W9 form for the honorarium.
- Elections process:
  - Election notice is sent to the chapter membership list each year around October
  - The process is conducted by an individual who is not an official officer and acts as a neutral agent in sending the election notice, requests for petition, tabulations of results, and communication to the current chair.
- Transition of chapter positions:
  - The chair prepares a transition process and gathers both the current leadership team and the new team and conducts a meeting to go over all of the details of the chapter process, operations, and job descriptions of each position.
  - The meeting described above can be followed by an appreciation dinner thanking the current team and welcoming the new leadership team