

Professional Networks Offer Support to SPE Members

Erica Shillings, *JPT* Assistant Features Editor

The best people to answer questions regarding the oil and gas industry are people who work within the field. Professional Networks (PNs) are interactive outlets that give SPE members a way to communicate with each other through posting questions, discussions, listing of conference dates, and other information.

For several years, SPE has offered members the opportunity to participate in Technical Interest Groups (TIGs), which connect those who are interested in common technical topics. After SPE members expressed interest in similar groups for E&P professionals with common nontechnical interests, the SPE Board of Directors in 2004 established a nontechnical counterpart to TIGs—PNs.

PNs are groups of SPE members aligned by common professional interests who communicate with each other in an electronic community to share information and ideas, discuss topics of interest, and answer questions posed by other SPE members. Like TIGs, participation in PNs is available to SPE members who support the network's mission, vision, and objectives.

Since the establishment of PNs, four networks have been created: Human Resource (HR) Network, Petroleum Engineering Educators Network, Women's Network, and Young Professionals (YP) Network.

Human Resource Network

The HR Network is an open podium for SPE members to discuss any issue related to the main asset of the industry, its people. The forum addresses pressing staff-related issues with an objective of raising transparency and fairness values in the industry, said Gopi Nalla, reservoir engineer for Chevron and modera-

tor of the HR Network. Hussein Ali and Ali Salem from Saudi Aramco also serve as co-moderators for the network.

The network raises HR awareness among members; promotes professionalism, ethics, and values of common human practices; provides the industry with indices that measure the level of satisfaction about people and the work environment; and enriches SPE members with industry experiences, best practices, and lessons learned, Nalla said.

This network is available to SPE members who are interested in the HR discipline and want to post topics, ask questions, make comments, and exchange thoughts and ideas related to the people side of the industry. Generally, the network gives E&P professionals an opportunity to openly share their opinions and concerns regarding the existing framework of corporate HR.

Some items that recently have been discussed include whether the oil industry is attractive to new generations worldwide, what should and can the oil industry do to improve its image to become more attractive for the young generation, and how to improve leadership abilities.

Nalla hopes to make the network more active, expand the network membership, raise additional pressing HR issues, and make a real difference to the industry. Nalla also would like to get comments from chief executive officers and industry leaders on their plans for addressing the concerns raised by the PN's participants.

Petroleum Engineering Educators Network

The Petroleum Engineering Educators Network's objective is to develop a better understanding of the industry's

training needs and determine how academia, in partnership with industry, the service sector, and government, can help fill those needs. Discussion topics focus on the evolving roles of these groups and SPE in education. One of the goals of this PN is to strengthen industry/education/government partnerships to develop the people and technology the industry will need in the 21st century.

The network offers discussions among educators on how to improve classes and seminars, what type of interaction is needed with companies and universities, and how they can work together more closely to prepare students better for the tasks when starting to work. It could be used for younger engineers to provide feedback on areas where more education is needed from their point of view, and for experienced engineers to offer their help through mentoring or even teaching their specialties. In essence, all sides—universities, companies, teachers, and individuals—could benefit from better communication and improved education if the network would be used more frequently, said Erwin Kroemer, Senior Joint Interest/Reservoir Engineering Adviser for ExxonMobil Production Norway and moderator of the Petroleum Engineering Educators Network.

"All members who have thoughts or questions regarding education, mentoring, training, and alike should be on the initiating/posting side while educators from companies, mentors, teachers, and university professors should be on the side of debating the issues, following up and discussing how improvements can be made feasible, of course they could also raise their questions to be discussed among themselves or to be asked to the audience," Kroemer said.

Kroemer hopes that more members join the network and use it to exchange thoughts, ideas, and requests for help, and document how the network has helped initiate or improve individual areas of education for a broader audience. A wider variety of members from different parts of the world would furthermore strengthen the objective of the network to identify critical topics as well as issues and places where more education is needed. Another important aspect would be to improve communication among educators about these topics and how they can solve or align these problems. "It is my vision, that each member who is in need of help or has thoughts and ideas of improvements in the educational area can find a vehicle to voice his view and to get help from the best available resources, by using the network," Kroemer said.

Women's Network

The goal of the Women's Network is to encourage networking among women members who could benefit from sharing experiences and insights on gender-related career issues. The network eventually may create a referral system to enable members to contact other members who are willing to provide individual advice on various topics.

Although many women are fortunate to work in companies that offer equal opportunities, some women experience a noncollaborative, lonely, and, in some cases, hostile, work environment. Because women in the petroleum industry may have few female colleagues at their work location, the network is a good way to bring women together to share solutions on how they have overcome challenges, said Eve Sprunt, University Partnership and Recruitment Manager for Chevron and moderator of the Women's Network.

The most activity in the network so far has centered around arranging conferences. "I hope that more women will be willing to post links to useful information as well as conference notices. I recognize that many of the issues women wish to discuss are very sensitive. The network is moderated, so if someone wants to ask a sensitive question (or answer one) they can at the top of their note request that the note not be accepted, which would reveal the iden-

tity of the person posting, but rather ask the moderator to post the questions and/or responses. In a moderated network, nothing is posted until the moderator has approved it," Sprunt said.

Young Professionals Network

The YP Network aims to be a knowledge center for young professional members. It includes a place to post best practices, presentations, images, and other documents; a discussions forum to ask anything a YP might want to ask; and links for eMentoring, YP awards, local YP programs, the ambassador lecturer program, technical skills development, and a YPN blog.

"The network platform has stimulated the discussion boards into refreshed activity," said SPE North Sea Regional Director John Donachie, Associate, Industry and Technology Team, Simmons and Company. "We

now see that the YP Network cements the bond between young members and our student members. Active student members post questions to which our enthusiastic young members reply in a mentoring capacity and offer opinion and comment on a broad variety of topics such as career choices, dissertation topics, networking opportunities, and the job market."

The materials on the YP Network allow young members to understand how to build activities in their area that are of interest and allows young members to take what they can from the global repository and implement it in their local sections, said Donachie.

Donachie encourages active and enthusiastic members to build on the YP Network. "SPE is fueled by the energy and ideas of its members and we actively solicit fresh approaches in how we might do things better," said Donachie. **JPT**



worldwideworker.com
world experts in energy jobs





The website Worldwideworker.com is global leader in energy jobs with millions of page views per month. Its design allows for jobseekers to easily search for jobs, and for recruiters to quickly post jobs and brand their company towards suitable candidates. In addition to this web portal, Worldwideworker offers a wide range of people services, such as Recruitment, Manpower, Executive Search and Recruitment events.

For more information please contact:	
Houston	tel: +1 713 780 4890
Amsterdam	tel: +31 20 75 08 330
London	tel: +44 1892 515 312
Moscow	tel: +7 495 617 0465
Dubai	tel: +971 43 900 414



www.worldwideworker.com