

Enhancing the SPE Value Proposition in China

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President's Forum: www.spe.org



One of my last trips as President-Elect was to China. My visit was marked by two key events: the recent tragic earthquake in Sichuan and the excitement leading up to the Olympics. These topics were on every agenda, together with SPE and the oil industry, of course.

I went to China to talk to company leaders and representatives of four of the five active sections about how the industry might develop over the next 20 years and how SPE can help it to respond to a rapidly changing world. There must be millions of engineers in this country with a popu-

lation of over 1.3 billion people. But total SPE membership is just 1,740, with most members belonging to the Beijing, Daqing, Northern China International, and Southern China sections. My challenge in China was to communicate SPE's value proposition: SPE is not just about conferences and workshops but has a role as a relationship broker between engineers and the providers of knowledge. It provides a vehicle for individuals and companies to maximize business and networking opportunities through events, publications, and electronic media—a concept that the senior management of the Chinese NOCs finds difficult to understand. They view SPE membership as valuable at a corporate level, offering “a window on the external world.” The senior company executives have calculated exactly how many members they need to ensure an effective distribution across their organizations of *JPT* magazines, access to the eLibrary, and notice of upcoming workshops and conferences. They are very supportive of SPE's sister organization in China, the Chinese Petroleum Society, which publishes many Chinese technical papers and hosts events around the country.

Dues of members in the Beijing, Daqing and Southern China sections are paid by their companies. Membership numbers will increase only as a result of further added value rather than from lower dues. So, how do we boost membership in China?

Discussions during my meetings offered a few solutions. All sections requested that we set up a program of regional (meaning Chinese) Distinguished Lecturers and a Chinese-language professional network targeting those nationals who work outside China. However, Chinese translations of SPE papers was not seen as adding value, particularly in the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, where the objective is to encourage engineers to learn English.

I am one of SPE's main advocates of further globalization of the Society, so how do I match that objective with listening to local needs that call for a more insular approach, which is totally in keeping with the Chinese culture and which we must respect?

Chinese oil companies do have international aspirations. I had a very interesting meeting with Liu Zhenwu, the Deputy Chief Technology Officer at China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) who will be a keynote speaker at the International Petroleum Technology Conference in Kuala Lumpur this December. Mr. Liu stated that internationalization is crucial for CNPC, which employs 30,000 researchers in around 80 institutes. CNPC's overseas production is currently 60 million tons/year and as they prepare to compete on the international stage they view Petronas as a role model.

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Potential Technical Interest Group topics of interest in China are tight gas, EOR in high-watercut reservoirs, coalbed methane, oil shales, and shale gas and oil sands. Distinguished Lecturer themes proposed included high-temperature/high-pressure sour gas drilling and production engineering, complex geology, carbonates, imaging deep reservoirs, and drilling high horizontal wells.

I was struck by the numbers who came to listen to my presentation. Audiences of around 200 people were common, including a large percentage of young engineers and students. This reminded me of the meetings in the 1980s in what are now considered the mature oil regions of the world.

I was also reminded of these past times when I considered the seniority of the executives sitting on the board of directors of our sections in China. For example, Liu Baohe, Vice President PetroChina, who is the section chairman of the Beijing Section; Wang Yupu, President of Daqing Oilfield Company Ltd., who is the section chairman of the Daqing Section; and Li Yang, Director of Oil Fields for Sinopec, who is program chairman of the Southern China Section.

There are a number of expatriates living and working in China, especially in Beijing and Shekou, who remain active SPE members. In Beijing, some of them are committed to visiting students at local universities to talk about the industry and the career opportunities available.

I very much hope that we can attract more Chinese engineers to SPE events held in other parts of the world. They are already attending niche events, such as SPE's meeting on oilfield scale in Aberdeen, and prefer these to the more general conferences and exhibitions like the Offshore Technology Conference and the SPE Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition. We must take into account that there are other societies and service companies who are more than willing to educate and train Chinese engineers, so our offerings must be compelling.

Visiting China is an amazing experience and the fascinating cultural differences can only enrich SPE in the long run. We have so much to learn from each other, though there is still some way to go before SPE can realize its full potential in China. We also want the Chinese to think of the SPE as more than a window on the external world. An effective window works equally well in both directions as the Chinese NOCs and their stakeholders become corporate citizens of the world.

Please share any thoughts and ideas on this challenge through the President's Forum at www.spe.org.

The SPE Board of Directors met 19–21 September, immediately prior to the Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition. The board's work is done primarily through five committees. Following are a few of the actions taken at the meetings:

Board Committee on Finance and Administration

- Established profiles (see SPE.org) for SPE International Board positions that define the role, time and financial commitments, responsibilities, and preferred experience.

- Approved a policy for SPE contributions for disaster relief. The policy provides for USD 5,000 per event, up to a total of USD 60,000 per year. Contributions may be authorized by the SPE President, Executive Director, and the Regional Director in whose region the disaster occurs.

Board Committee on Technical Programs and Meetings

- Agreed to expand the Technology Transfer Pilot Program to include a dozen events over the next year. This program is designed to measure and document how well SPE meets the needs of its six disciplines in all stages of technology adoption.
- SPE workshops will capture learnings from technical presentations by requiring presenters to submit abstracts. Staff also will collect and post summary/conclusion slides from speakers for distribution to participants.

Board Committee on Print and Electronic Media

- Reviewed reader-survey results for the SPE peer-reviewed journals. More than 10,000 respondents rated their satisfaction with the journals, with 77% to 83% rating the journals as very good or excellent.
- Reviewed Editorial Review Committee performance, which included a report on significant improvements in efficiencies.

Board Committee on Education and Professional Activities

- Approved spending up to USD 509,000 to expand the energy education program. The efforts include increased distribution and translations of the Oil and Natural Gas book, enhancements of the energy4me website, and translation of the Energy4Me Kit that is used by members and teachers.
- Reviewed strategic plan for SPE's training/continuing education efforts. The plan follows recommendations arising from results from the 2007 SPE Member Needs Assessment.

Board Committee on Membership

- Changed the Russia National Council to the Russia and Caspian Regional Council to encompass all countries covered by the Russia and Caspian Region.
- Established Regional Young Professionals Focal Points to help Regional Directors on young professionals and student initiatives within their jurisdiction.
- Approved establishment of the SPE Surat Section in Gujarat, India. SPE now has 169 sections.
- Approved formation of a student chapter at Gajah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The Java Indonesia Section will sponsor this chapter. SPE now has 194 student chapters.

Additionally, following review of progress on 2005–25 Long Range Plan actions, the board adopted a Strategic Plan that evolved from a reorganization of Long Range Plan chapters. Additionally, the board agreed to replace the process of periodically developing date-defined long-range plans with annual review of a perpetual strategic plan. The new SPE Strategic Plan is posted on SPE.org.

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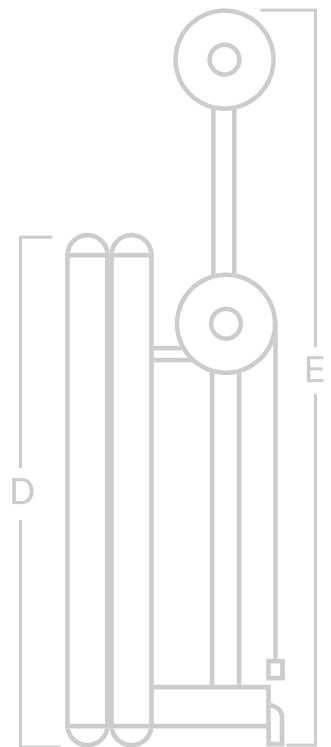
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