

SPE Managing Costs and Maintaining Quality

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President's Forum: www.spe.org



We are a bit further into the year since I wrote my last column, and unfortunately the global economic crisis deepens. Companies have already tightened such things as travel budgets and will certainly be watching cash flow very carefully. I maintain, however, that this is the time we should focus on preparing for the next upturn by retaining capacity and developing or improving the relevant technology. In an ideal world, R&D and training would be anti-cyclic to the economic cycle: use a lower demand on staff in a downturn to train them for the next phase and allow this human capital

to develop new ideas/R&D when there is time for it. Now, more than ever, companies should be seeking innovative ideas and technology to reduce their operating costs and produce better results.

Crisis or no crisis, SPE presidents have to travel. So, I am writing this column on a low-cost airliner visiting sections in India. I am over 6 ft tall, so I am particularly averse to cramped budget seating! However, if our members have to tighten their belts, so does SPE.

The Fiscal Year 2010 budget, which begins 1 April, reflects significant economies in both operating (which includes staff travel) and program expenses. Through the year, we will exercise additional cost-cutting measures to achieve even more savings in program expenses. We'll use technologies like Skype or WebEx for committee meetings, renegotiate contracts with hotels and conference venues wherever possible, and hold both committee meetings and events in more cost-effective locations. For instance, why do we need to hold a workshop committee meeting in a hotel for USD 1,000 if one of the committee members has an office with meeting rooms to do the same! At the same time, both volunteers and staff will do everything possible to increase the quality of SPE programs. We might have fewer papers at a conference, but we (the program committee) will ensure that the quality of the papers will be higher. We can do that, as most conferences now get more abstracts than previously (in earlier downturns, the saying in my company was "He who publishes, stays."), which allows us to choose the very best and focus presentations in fewer but better sessions. So please come, as SPE conferences will be better than ever!

For many of you, though, travel constraints are a bottleneck. Our response is to place SPE's technical conferences and workshops close to major petroleum operations to help reduce or eliminate travel costs. We are even examining whether we can relocate some currently scheduled events to be more conveniently placed. We also plan to make greater use of technology in the development of event programs to make members' participation easier and to reduce the number of committee meetings that volunteer organizers will be asked to attend.

This is just the time when SPE's online resources will assume additional importance as a way of keeping in contact with peers around the world and transferring technology and knowledge. The eLibrary may be the Society's most valuable resource. Currently at more than 50,000 documents, it covers the evolution of technology in drilling, completion, exploration, production, facilities, reservoir simulation, formation evaluation, safety and environmental protection, risk management, and much more. The eLibrary includes technical papers presented at SPE-sponsored conferences since the late 1950s and pub-

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lished in SPE's peer-reviewed journals since the early 1950s, and papers from the conferences of SPE's predecessor organization back to 1925 are being added. Recently, SPE began adding other types of content to the eLibrary as well, such as presentations from special sessions at conferences and Distinguished Lecturer presentations. The eLibrary papers are also part of OnePetro, which combines the libraries of a number of professional organizations. It currently offers almost 80,000 documents covering the upstream oil and gas industry. Operated by the SPE, other participants include American Petroleum Institute, American Society of Safety Engineers, American Rock Mechanics Association (ARMA), NACE International (corrosion engineers), Society of Petrophysicists and Well Log Analysts, Society for Underwater Technology, World Petroleum Council (WPC), and the Offshore Technology Conference. OnePetro offers the first online availability of ARMA and WPC documents. OnePetro is available at <http://www.onepetro.org>.

We are very excited about our work with Google to index the first page of the SPE technical papers in the eLibrary/OnePetro, thus expanding the search capabilities related to our important resource of technology. The new *JPT Online* has many first-time features for SPE, including blogging from meetings, comments and ratings on articles, reader polls, and article emailing with a "most emailed" list.

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Other features currently in development include a pilot technology-focused "wiki;" and an SPE-specific professional network, My SPE Network, to allow SPE members to better connect and keep up with other members, blog, and post content on their own personal SPE web page. We are also developing an interface to Google Earth to provide a visual representation of the location of SPE sections and meetings worldwide. SPE will test various technologies such as wikis and other forms of collaboration in a new "beta" area of the site.

A famous Dutch football player, Johan Crujff, used to say that "every disadvantage has its advantage." This can be interpreted as, yes we are in a global downturn, but let's use this "disadvantage" to develop more cost-effective offerings using new technology and come out of this downturn stronger than ever! I hope that our industry will do the same.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas on the President's Forum at www.spe.org. **JPT**

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