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.

IEEE★USA
www.ieeeusa.org/business

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.

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).