

## AICN Welcomes a New Network in New Hampshire

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) wants to congratulate Madeleine Lowe and the IEEE New Hampshire Section Consultants Network on the formation of an Affinity Group.

This newest Consultants Network became official on 10 December 2009. If you want to wish them well, check the [IEEE-USA Web site](#) for contact information for the New Hampshire Section Consultants' Network. If other groups want to form a consultants network, the IEEE-USA Web site also contains step-by-step instructions about how to become a formal network. We encourage new consultants networks to register as "Affinity Groups." After groups form a network, they can take advantage of IEEE's branding and resources, and also qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates.

If IEEE members belong to Consultants Networks, but you don't see their network's contact information on our Web site, please contact Daryll Griffin at [d.r.griffin@ieee.org](mailto:d.r.griffin@ieee.org).



## Reenergizing Your Local Network

From time to time, the Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICN) receives requests for assistance from a new network, or a network wanting to become more active again. On occasion, Gary Blank, immediate past AICN Chair and current Vice President of IEEE-USA's Career & Member Services, travels to meetings to hold day-long sessions on establishing or reenergizing your network. Following are some helpful hints to get your own network started or reenergized. **Attend Monthly Section Meetings**



First, network chairs need to know that they can't do it alone. Chairs need a core group of three to four people who want to network with other consultants in their geographic area. If you don't know other consultants with those interests, you need to go find those people. How do you find them? Attend your monthly IEEE Section and Chapter meetings, and start networking. You may want to develop a brief presentation at the meeting to solicit participation. You can also contact an AICN Committee member, who may know of someone in your community who might be a good fit.

### Start With Something Social

Second, once you have your core group established, start with something social. Have fun before you start working!

Make your first meeting strictly social, and practice your networking skills — always valuable for consulting. Don't schedule any presentations or long speeches — just a heavy dose of networking to find out what topics interest people. You may also meet a few more people to add to your core group. Also, remember the golden rule for having a successful meeting: *"Provide free food and they will come."* Most networks have registered as Affinity Groups and qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates. Dormant networks may want to explore this benefit, to offset some of the meeting costs.

### Have a Strong Organization

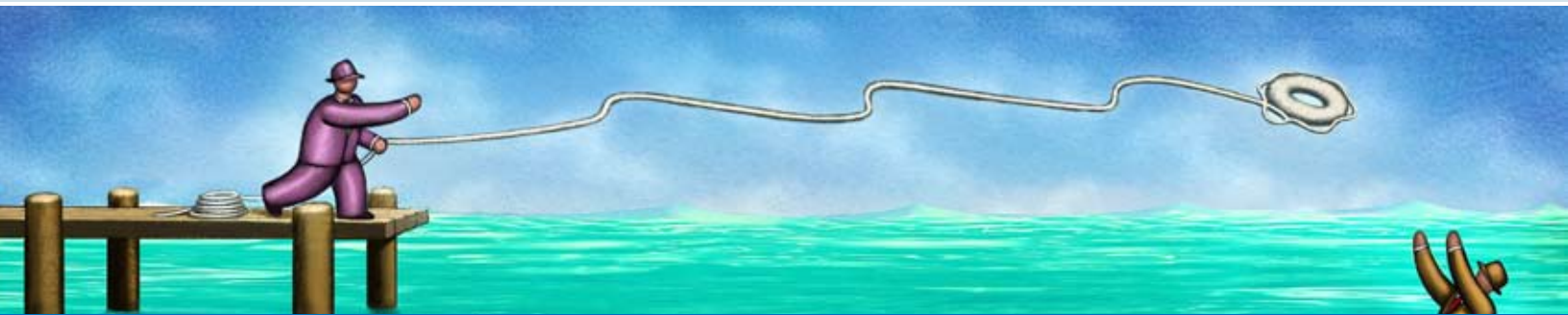
Third, create a strong program activities committee. Strong programs will bring network members out to your meetings. Maybe not to every meeting, but if a network has an interesting program that strikes a chord, members will take time out to attend meetings. Once again, be sure to build in time for networking at all meetings.

### Be Innovative

Fourth, be as innovative as possible when it comes to planning your meetings. If you are creative, you can give your members what they want, but also broaden your topics to include: legislative updates' how to work with the U.S. Small Business Administration; or moving from consulting to entrepreneurship, for example.

Additionally, incorporate social networking websites into your network activities. Many businesses have set-up Facebook and LinkedIn groups to augment communications and the services they provide. Twitter is also an excellent way to notify members quickly about a hot lead on a new

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## How to Land Your First Client

By Michael W. McLaughlin

Consulting is a big — and growing — business.

The market for consulting services is estimated to be between \$130 billion and \$150 billion annually. Professional consultants are among the highest paid workers, earning more than many doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.

It's not surprising that consulting is attractive to many people who want to launch a business. After all, if you have a saleable skill, it's an easy business to enter. On the flip side of the coin, consulting is fiercely competitive. Just ten firms own almost 40% of the consulting market share in North America alone, and they fight for every opportunity to grow.

Today, clients have instant access to legions of experts at the click of a mouse, and they have found low-cost, offshore alternatives for many consulting projects.

But the beauty is that many of the large, lumbering consulting firms focus on thin slices of the market. That creates an opportunity for smaller firms and individual consultants familiar with guerrilla methods to snag their share of profitable business.

So, how do you break into consulting?

### Think about Your Fourth Client First

As a new consultant, you should be able to generate a project — or maybe several — through your networks of friends, past employers and colleagues. After all, research shows that clients use their networks to select consultants more than any other method, and no doubt, they know someone who knows you.

Unfortunately, your address book alone won't sustain your consulting business long-term. If your goal is to build a sustainable consulting practice, the real question isn't how to get your first client, but how to create a business that will attract the second, third and fourth clients to your practice.

Before you ask your contacts — or anyone else — to hire you as a consultant for that first project, ensure your success by taking a longer view of your business. Work hard to land that first client, but also put the marketing and consulting fundamentals in place that will secure your future as a consultant.

Start with these four simple tips:

- Know exactly what to say — in one minute or less — to prove you are the best consultant a client can find.
- Create a marketing strategy that emphasizes action over planning.
- Become a master of the consulting process, not just a subject-matter expert.
- Win with value and results, not price.

### Have Something to Say...

Prospective clients rarely look for consultants until they have a pressing need. In other words, "we just can't do it ourselves; let's get outside help fast." A recent client admitted that his team had been spinning its wheels trying to resolve a complex transportation problem for three years before they hired consultants and gave them four weeks to come up with a solution. They did. The point is, that when most clients are in the market for help, they want it yesterday. And they want the best consultants they can find, at an affordable price. So, take the time to define what makes you the best consultant a client can find.

Many consultants mistakenly believe that by defining their expertise broadly, they'll appeal to a wider audience and land more clients. The less specific you are, the less likely it is clients will think of you when they need help.

Why would clients turn to you for their most important projects? Be prepared to answer these questions during your first conversation with them:

- What, exactly, are you offering? Is it strategy development, financial management, operations improvement, sales and marketing advice, technology development, change management assistance, or something else?
- Why is it needed? What specific business problem or opportunity will your services address?
- How will the client be better off after having worked with you?
- What's really different about your firm, its services, results, or approach?
- What quantifiable benefits and results can your client expect?

If you can't articulate the answers in a minute or less, keep working. You may only have that one minute to make a first impression on a client, so make it count.

### **And Someone to Say It To**

The market has no shortage of prospective clients, but truly profitable projects can be few and far between. If you want to work for the most profitable clients, you'll have to compete for and grab their attention. And for that you must have a plan — a real one.

Many veteran consultants haven't looked at their marketing plans since first creating them. As a result, they drift from project to project, getting by on meager profit margins. Guerrilla consultants, however, leave the low-profit projects for others. They focus on attracting and keeping the clients that give them the opportunity for financial and professional growth. Guerrillas begin that process by creating a one-page marketing plan that lays out how to get and hold onto profitable clients.

Forget the reams of fancy charts, detailed analyses and bullet-proof competitive intelligence. You can draft your first marketing plan in seven sentences:

- Sentence one explains the purpose of your marketing.
- Sentence two explains how you achieve that purpose by describing the substantive benefits you provide to clients.
- Sentence three describes your target market(s).
- Sentence four describes your niche.
- Sentence five outlines the marketing weapons you will use.
- Sentence six reveals the identity of your business.
- Sentence seven provides your marketing budget.

As you create your marketing plan, remember: you are building a platform from which to consistently communicate your ideas to prospective clients. That's the fastest way to launch a new practice, because prospective clients equate the success of a firm with consistent visibility. So, create a marketing plan that maximizes your visibility in the market. Over time, keep your business networks healthy with constant attention; establish a credible Web presence; speak for industry and trade groups; participate in studies and surveys; publish articles; and make contributions to your targeted industry association and local business community.

And, most importantly, once you begin your marketing program, never stop. You'll reap the benefits for the long haul, if you stick to your marketing guns.

### **When a Client Asks What Time It Is, Don't Take His Watch**

Perhaps the most serious challenge facing consultants is client skepticism. In a study by business analysis firm Ross McManus, only 35% of clients are satisfied with their consultants.

Part of the problem is that many consultants are deep subject-matter experts, but less familiar with the consulting process. Before you get too far into the business, get a firm grasp of the fundamentals of consulting, including how to:

- Qualify each project to determine your ability to win the work and earn a profit. These two factors don't always go hand-in-hand.

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## Secretary Chu Announces \$47 Million to Improve Efficiency in Information Technology and Communications Sectors

On 6 January 2010, Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced that the Department of Energy is awarding [\\$47 million for 14 projects](#) across the country, to support the development of new technologies that can improve energy efficiency in information technology (IT) and communication technology sectors. The data processing, data storage, and telecommunications industries are a crucial part of the American information economy. The rapid growth of these industries has led to an increase in electricity use, but improvements in these sectors' energy efficiency can provide significant energy and cost savings. The energy efficiency projects announced today will reduce energy use and carbon pollution, while helping to develop a strong, competitive domestic industry.

"These *Recovery Act* projects will improve the efficiency of a strong and growing sector of the American economy. By reducing energy use and energy costs for the IT and telecommunications industries, this funding will help create jobs and ensure the sector remains competitive," said Secretary Chu. "The expected growth of these industries means that new technologies adopted today will yield benefits for many years to come."

The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* is providing funding for research, development and demonstration projects in three subject areas. Projects may include aspects of more than one topic area:

**Equipment and Software** – These projects will focus on the core components of a data or telecommunications center, such as servers and networking devices, as well as software to optimize equipment energy use.

**Power Supply Chain** – These projects will develop technologies to minimize the power loss and heat generation that occurs as electricity moves through the ever growing number of server-based IT and communications systems.

**Cooling** – This effort will seek to demonstrate ways to cool the equipment used in IT and telecommunications work more effectively, and with less power than current methods.

The \$47 million in federal funds for these projects will be matched by more than \$70 million in private industry funding, for a total project value of more than \$115 million.

Each project promises significant reductions in energy consumed by information technology and communications systems. One company, Power Assure, Inc., estimates its new power management software, which more efficiently regulates server energy usage by turning servers off and on

when needed, could reduce energy use by 50 percent in data centers and large server farms.

Another company, Federspiel Controls, is developing a new dynamic cooling system that employs variable fan speeds, adjustable air inlets, and wireless temperature sensors to continually monitor and adjust temperatures. The company estimates conventional static cooling systems now typically consume 25 percent of the energy used in a data center.

Information technology and telecommunications facilities account for approximately 120 billion kilowatt hours of electricity annually – or three percent of all U.S. electricity use. Moreover, rapid growth in the U.S. data center industry is projected to require two new large power plants per year just to keep pace with the expected demand growth. Without gains in efficiency, the industry would face increasing costs and greenhouse gas emissions, along with challenges to the reliability of the electricity service.

The projects below have been selected for awards. The lead applicant is listed below. The specifics and final details for each award will depend on contract negotiations between the grantee and the Department of Energy:

### Equipment & Software Projects

IBM T.J. Watson Research Center (\$1.6 million)  
SeaMicro Inc. (\$9.3 million)  
Alcatel-Lucent, Bell Labs (\$300,000)  
California Institute of Technology (\$300,000)

### Power Supply Chain Projects

Lineage Power Corporation (\$2.4 million)  
BAE Systems (\$222,000)  
Power Assure, Inc. (\$5 million)  
Hewlett-Packard Company (\$7.4 million)  
Columbia University (\$2.8 million)

### Cooling

IBM T.J. Watson Research Center (\$2.3 million)  
Federspiel Controls, Inc. (\$584,000)  
Yahoo! Inc. (\$9.9 million)  
Alcatel-Lucent (\$1.8 million)  
Edison Materials Technology Center (\$2.8 million)

*Source: U.S. Department of Energy Press Release*

## IEEE-USA Consultants Database Member Profile

### IEEE-USA Consultants Database: Sample Profile - John Smith, P.E.

In this newsletter, we have heavily promoted the benefits of joining IEEE-USA's Consultants Database (an exclusive, online database available to U.S. IEEE member independent consultants for members in good standing with their local IEEE Consultants Network). Prospective clients, fellow consultants and engineering industry partners search this database on a daily basis for consultants with relevant qualifications to provide expertise for their projects.

In addition, consulting assignments are posted on its Assignment Board, so database members can pick and choose assignments to pursue. The annual fee for a listing in IEEE-USA's Consultants Database is only \$79 for IEEE Members. Following is a fictitious example of what a consultant profile looks like.

#### Listing/Contact Information (Sample Profile)

##### John Smith, P.E.

Professional Engineer  
IEEE Member  
Partner  
Dave Paul Associates, Ltd.  
Happyville, CA  
Telephone: (213) 555-1212  
Fax: (213) 555-1515  
Email: johns@ieee.org  
Website:

#### Key (searchable) Phrases

*Electromagnetic Interference*  
*Electromagnetic Compatibility*  
*Electrostatic Discharge*  
*Grounding and Shielding*

#### Technical Categories/ Specialties

Electromagnetics, including EMI, EMC and EMP  
Circuits and Printed Circuit Design  
Computers  
Medical  
Vehicular  
Embedded Systems, Hardware  
Software and Controls  
Expert Witness  
Training

#### A 200- or 1600-character maximum description of your consulting specialty:

Consulting engineer specializing in EMI and EMC, which includes regulations (FCC, CE, FDA, MIL-STD-461), radio frequency interference, electrostatic discharge (ESD), EMP, lightning, power disturbances. Clients include medical, computer, industrial, vehicular, military, utilities. Services include training, design, and on-site troubleshooting. Registered PE, 20 years experience.

Available for contract engineering? Yes

Actively seeking international assignments? Yes

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consulting contract. Social networking websites not only provide an extra means of communication, but also another way to promote your network activities.

Also consider turning one of your meetings into an annual fundraising event for the network. Maybe an annual holiday party can become a party and silent auction. It takes a bit of planning, but after a few years, it could morph into a special event that people look forward to – one that provides funding for future activities.

Don't be afraid to borrow from your fellow networks. If another network is doing something that works, feel free to borrow that idea and follow suit. You can check the IEEE-USA website for the latest consultant network workshop listing.

While you're being innovative, don't forget the basics for any successful program:

- Send your event notice early and often by e-mail four weeks out; then, e-mail again two weeks out. Another e-mail a week before, and a final follow-up e-mail the day prior to the event is usually effective. These notices provide enough time for people to plan to attend.
- Make sure your notices attract attention. Sell the benefits of your program, so people will want to participate.
- Keeping an up-to-date emailing list is critical to success.

### **Services Are Key**

Lastly, if possible, in addition to meetings, try to create another additional service that network members can use. This additional service could be as simple as forwarding this newsletter to your network members every quarter, or having your chair start a blog about topics that affect local consultants.

To summarize — don't strictly rely on speakers and PowerPoint presentations to have a successful network and meetings. We believe that using these ideas will help provide the necessary spark that reenergizes your network. And all network chairs are always welcome to e-mail or call the IEEE-USA office for assistance in jump starting your network.

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- Scope projects, so you and the client know what work will be done and the anticipated results. Your profit can evaporate, if you have an ambiguous statement of the project scope.
- Find the pricing strategy that's fair to clients and protects your bottom line. Pricing services is as much an art as a science, and there are at least fifteen different pricing strategies you can use.
- Prepare proposals that make the most of this time-consuming activity. Make sure you're talking to the decision-maker, and that the project has funding.
- Deliver flawless work and communicate effectively with your client.

Do those five things well, and you'll have more client work than you can handle. If you're new to the business, interview consultants about how they handle different aspects of the business. Read books, articles and reports by leading thinkers in the field. Consider joining one of the many professional associations for consultants. You can save years of learning things the hard way.

### **The End is the Beginning**

Your clearest path to a new client is your network of former employers, and others who can make introductions to get that first project kicked off. Keep in mind, though, that consulting begins and ends with results.

To succeed, you must offer and deliver undisputed value to your clients and everyone else in your network. Value is also the foundation on which you must build your marketing. Your network of colleagues won't support you or your business, if your value is questioned anywhere along the way.

So, before you launch your practice, give these ideas some thought. They'll help put you on the road to long-term success.

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This article is reprinted here with permission from the author. Michael W. McLaughlin is the co-author, with Jay Conrad Levinson, of *Guerrilla Marketing for Consultants*. Michael is a principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP, and has over twenty years of consulting experience with clients in businesses of every size, from small start-ups to some of the world's highest-profile companies. He is also the publisher of *Management Consulting News*. For more information, visit [GuerrillaConsulting.com](http://GuerrillaConsulting.com).