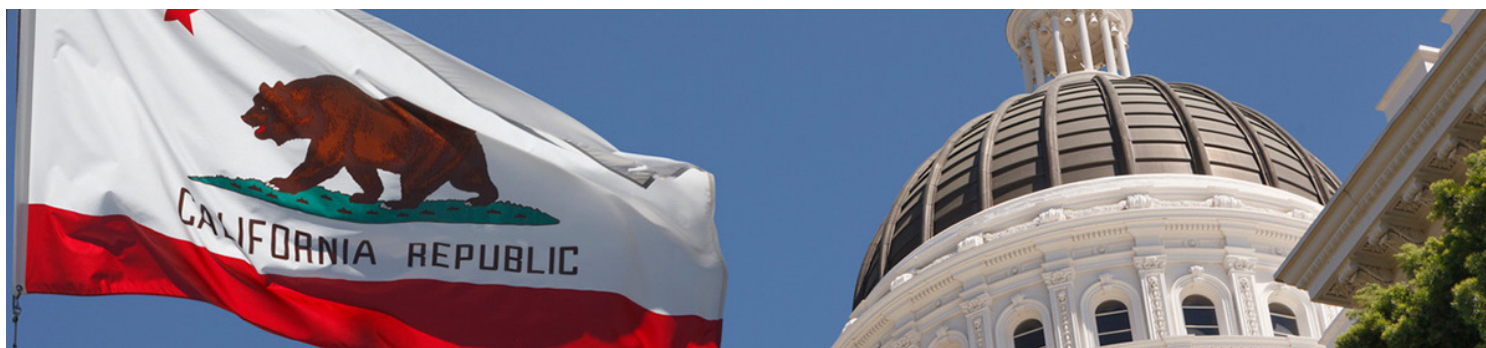


AICN Newsletter

The Quarterly Publication of the Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks

1st QUARTER 2020



U.S. CONGRESS MAY BE LOOKING TO ADOPT ITS OWN VERSION OF CALIFORNIA'S AB 5

On 1 January, California's AB 5 became law. The law redefines the relationship between employers and consultants. This law makes it harder for employers to classify individuals as contract workers, as opposed to regular employees. As IEEE-USA reported in this newsletter and in [IEEE-USA InSight](#), California's new AB 5 law has caused a bit of an uproar among consultants in California.

In January's [IEEE-USA's monthly Government Relations webinar](#), Russ Harrison, IEEE-USA's Director of Government Relations, gave a brief update on the upheaval the new law has caused in the California consultant community. Further, Harrison explained how IEEE-USA is working to get changes to the law made that favor independent contractors. In addition, the [California independent contractor community is rising up to try and repeal the law](#).

IEEE-USA has also been reporting it is possible other jurisdictions will look to pass similar bills to California's AB 5. In addition, Representative Robert Scott, D-Va. introduced [H.R. 2474 – Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019](#) or the Pro Act. The bill looks to define what constitutes an “employee,” by further limiting who can be considered an independent contractor.

H.R. 2474 is slowly making its way through the legislative process, and may actually pass in the House. If so, the bill is unlikely to get any traction in the Senate. If you want to know more about the Pro Act, please read this recent [article](#) published in *The California Globe*.

Still more states and local jurisdictions may adopt bills similar to AB 5, so be alert -- let [IEEE-USA](#) know if a similar bill to AB 5 is introduced in your state. ■

AICNCC WELCOMES A NEW CONSULTANTS NETWORK IN TUNISIA

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates Habib Kammoun, on forming the IEEE Tunisia Section Consultants Network. The new Tunisia Consultants Network became official on 18 January 2020.



If fellow consultants would like to give a personal welcome to any new network, check out the consultants page on [IEEE-USA's website](#) for contact information. If other IEEE members would like to form a consultants network, [IEEE-USA offers 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 qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates. If you don't see your consultants network's contact information listed on the IEEE-USA website, contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org. ■

For questions, comments or submissions
please contact Daryll Griffin at +1 202 530 8337
or d.r.griffin@ieee.org.

<https://ieeusa.org/careers/consultants/>

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HAVE A STARTUP? GET YOUR \$10,000 CREDIT FOR AMAZON WEB SERVICES:

IEEE strikes a deal with the technology giant to give early-stage companies free access to 150 Web-based resources

Most startups need as much financial help as they can get. So, IEEE has collaborated with [Amazon Web Services](#) —to provide members participating in the [IEEE Entrepreneurship community](#), with a host of [cloud-computing options](#), through the [AWS Activate](#) program.

The program provides early-stage startups with access to 150 Web-based services and tools to help them build, launch and scale their businesses. The products include analytics, business applications, developer tools, media services and storage.

IEEE members who participate in the IEEE Entrepreneurship community are eligible for the AWS program. Free to join, the community is open to a variety of innovators including early-stage startups, seasoned founders, vendors, service providers and intrapreneurs. The community is part of the IEEE Entrepreneurship Initiative Program, which offers online resources and coordinates with organizations throughout IEEE that target entrepreneurial audiences in their activities and events, so people can meet and support one another in growing their engineering-driven endeavors.

The Offer

IEEE Entrepreneurship community participants are eligible for a U.S. \$10,000 promotional credit, which is available for two years. Participants may apply the credit toward new AWS services, or those the startups are already using, according to [Samantha Snabes](#), IEEE's Entrepreneurship Initiative Chair.

"This credit means the startups don't have to put out the initial investment themselves to get onto the cloud," Snabes says. "Because the credit is available for two years, it's great for those startups still figuring out what they want to do."

The agreement also includes one year of AWS [business support](#), up to \$5,000. That covers access to cloud support engineers and subject matter experts, plus technologies and programs.

Participants receive 80 credits toward AWS [self-paced labs](#), an \$80 value. There are introductory, advanced and expert-level courses available. Tutorials cover such subjects as developing

applications for the cloud, creating Alexa skills that respond to voice commands used on Amazon's digital assistants, and ways to secure an AWS platform.

"An exciting thing about AWS Activate is that there is a depth of variety in additional services and tools that allow startups to scale their development," Snabes says.

To apply for the offer, complete [this form](#). After your information has been verified, you'll receive an AWS Activate ID and validation code. To use the code, your startup's name has to be part of the email address domain.

More to Come

Snabes says Amazon's Venture Capital and Startup Group has taken an active interest in supporting other IEEE areas that relate to developing small and medium businesses, such as the [IEEE Innovation Nation](#). The Innovation Nation program aims to increase the number of startups in developing countries, by providing them with training, mentoring and financing. So far, members have launched the program in [Bosnia, Herzegovina](#) and [Sri Lanka](#).

In the process of opening a facility in Sri Lanka, AWS recently met with volunteers of the [IEEE Sri Lanka Section](#), as well as members working at the country's engineering universities. For example, AWS wanted to see how it could assist them by offering speakers from the company's global education initiative, as well as supporting the IEEE Innovation Nation program.

"It's because of this new partnership that doors have been opened for other parts of IEEE to gain access to AWS's expertise and services," Snabes says. "IEEE Entrepreneurship leaders are actively looking for other services to help members in the startup arena, to grow and scale their businesses, while benefiting from connecting with their engineering-driven entrepreneurial community." ■

This story is a reprint from The Institute, an IEEE Spectrum publication.

AICN COMMITTEE MEMBER DELIVERS PRESENTATION TO FOOTHILLS CONSULTANT NETWORK

In early January 2020, Robert Peruzzi, member of the [AICNCC](#), and president of R. Peruzzi Consulting, Inc., visited the [Foothill CA Consultants Network](#). Peruzzi presented a talk on Professional & Forensic Engineering and Expert Witness Career Progression. His presentation addressed electrical engineering career paths, specifically paths leading to independent consulting, forensic engineering and expert witnessing.

In addition, IEEE-USA Board Member John Walz attended the January meeting of the [Chicago/Rockford Consultants' Network](#). Pat Helmers headlined the

meeting, with a presentation on Selling for Technology Consultants. Helmers spoke about how consultants could address a prospective buyer's challenges and aspirations, by getting them excited about, and ready to buy into, the consultant's proposal. He believes this is a solid path for growing loyal clients for life. This meeting drew half of the network's membership.

If you are in an area, where there is [local consultants network](#), check out when they are holding their next meeting. As you can see, local consultants' networks

are providing networking and direct support to independent consultants.

In Minneapolis? Look for information on an upcoming meeting -- where the AICNCC will collaborate with the IEEE Consultants Network of the Twin Cities for a spring workshop.

If you're in an area where there is no local consultants network, and you want to start one, check out our guide on "[Starting a local Consultants Network](#)." In addition, please contact the [staff person](#) for the [AICNCC](#). The committee will assist you with starting a new local network. ■

NEW IEEE-USA AUDIOBOOK OFFERS SAGE ENGINEERING CAREER ADVICE FROM DAD

IEEE-USA is offering its new audiobook, *Valuable Lessons I Learned from Dad's Workshop - Vol. 1: Be Creative—Plan Ahead*, free to members.

Author Harry T. Roman's father loved to solve problems, and invent things on the spot. And in IEEE-USA's new, free audio book for members — *Valuable Career Lessons I Learned in Dad's Workshop — Vol.1: Be Creative; Plan Ahead* — Roman pays tribute to his father by gathering vignettes from more than 40+ years of sage advice from his Dad. In the audiobook, he

discusses how these lessons are very relevant to modern day engineering careers.

Always inspiring and often humorous, in Volume 1 of this two-volume series,

IEEE members can download this free audiobook from the [IEEE-USA Shop](#).

Follow the instructions to download your free audio book in MP3 format. No Promo Code required! Don't miss this free gift from IEEE-USA! ■



ANOTHER CONSULTANT BLOG WORTH READING: REFERRAL TACTICS FOR ATTRACTING NEW CLIENTS

In September 2019, IEEE-USA hosted the webinar, "[Is Your Focus Your Magic?](#)" By the title, many IEEE consultants missed that the presentation was geared to help them improve their communications with clients. IEEE consultants--give this webinar a watch. It offers ways for you to up your game--to improve your focus and your business.

Laura Burford, the webinar presenter, also has blog that she regularly updates. Her blog post "[Five Referral Tactics for Attracting New Clients](#)" is a good read, and it provides useful information about how consultants use referrals to get clients. Just click the [link](#) and scroll down to find the story. ■

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IEEE-USA INTRODUCES ITS FIRST-EVER ENGINEERING COMIC BOOK, NEW ENGINEERING SUPERHEROES!

Move over, Thor! Skedaddle, Spider-Woman! And take your psionic energy with you!

There's a new duo of superheroes in town, ready to battle the Forces of Evil, and they come from a long line of geniuses. One of them, quite conveniently, is one of the most prolific inventors and futurists in the history of engineering.

His identity—and how the present generation of his imaginary descendants manages to save the day—is just one of the compelling and action-packed aspects of the first IEEE-USA e-comic book—complete with new superheroes, who are engineers.

You can purchase IEEE-USA's new engineering comic book online through

the [IEEE-USA Shop](#) for only \$2.99 for members; non-members pay \$4.99. Get it today and add it to your comic book collection!

Dedicated fittingly to “All engineers—and all engineers to come,” IEEE-USA created [The Slate Twins: Caught in the Currents](#) with several audiences in mind. According to Georgia Stelluto, IEEE-USA Publishing Manager and Manager/Editor, IEEE-USA E-BOOKS, “Getting kids — young and old — excited about engineering is our main goal. But we also wanted to put the fun back into engineering for Young Professionals, as well as for mid-career and senior-level, more experienced engineers.”

All the technology—real and fantasy—is designed to help fuel imaginations; and to stimulate readers' creativity, no matter their ages. Much like other superhero comic books, [The Slate Twins: Caught in the Currents](#), also offers the benefits of stress reduction, social representation and intellectual stimulation—for all age groups. Get your comic book today—add it to your collection!

A limited quantity of full-color, print copies are available for IEEE members to take to local elementary, middle and high schools, as well as colleges and universities; or other adult or kid-friendly engineering events, conferences and activities. To obtain copies, contact Georgia Stelluto (g.stelluto@ieee.org) and Marnie James (m.c.james@ieee.org).

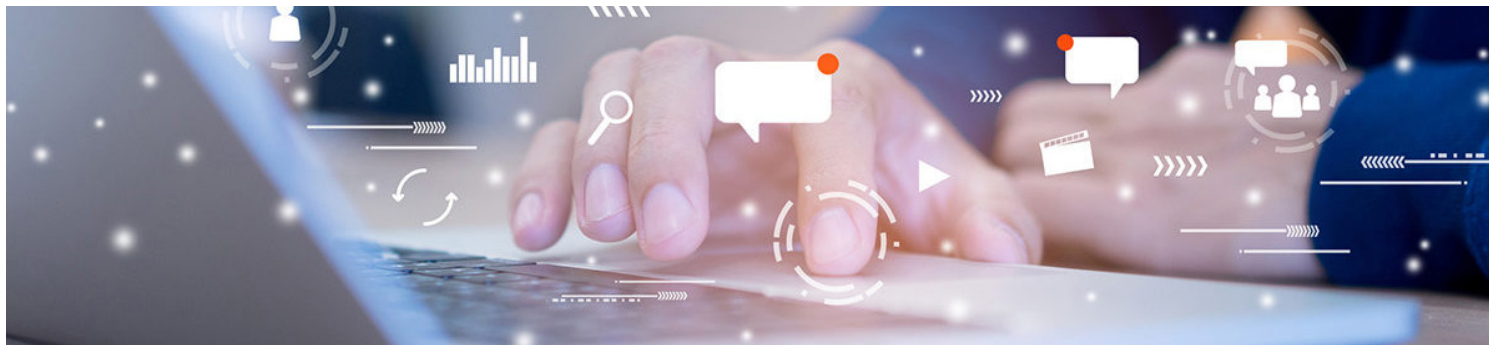
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2nd QUARTER 2020



CONSULTANTS: WHAT ARE YOU DOING DURING THE PANDEMIC?

With this unprecedented economic halt in America and around the world, independent consultants find themselves in a strange place. With workplaces shut down, companies have stopped or delayed many consulting projects. With so much uncertainty, the search for new clients has stopped, as well.

Members of the Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) want to share what they are doing during these unprecedented times with other consultants.

While everyone agrees everything is fluid at present, it does not mean consultants should pass the time idly. Jacob Beningo, AICNCC chair and CEO of Beningo Embedded Group, says he is "reaching out to current and past clients to ascertain the impact to their operations and offer them support, as many companies are now learning how to

operate efficiently with a remote workforce. Early on during the crisis, I had one client ready to agree to a significant contract--only to call back the next day to say they had reduced their budget--now they only had a third of the amount they had previously agreed to. Unfortunately, this theme is becoming common, as companies take a narrow and short-term view of the economy."

Other committee members are doing similar things. William Kassebaum, a long-time committee member and IEEE volunteer, said that clients have placed several possible developing projects on hold. Hermann Amaya, another long-time committee member added all his client have cancelled meetings or visits.

The AICNCC imagines that many consultants across the country are facing similar situations. Unlike many full-time, paid employees, when consultant contracts end, consultants no longer

Continued on next page >

AICNCC WELCOMES NEW AFFINITY GROUP IN BANGALORE



The Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) congratulates Jibin Sabu, on forming the IEEE Bangalore Section Consultants Network Affinity Group. The new Bangalore Consultants Network became official on 19 March 2020. To give a personal welcome to any new network, check out the consultants page on IEEE-USA's website for contact information. IEEE-USA also offers 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 qualify for funding through IEEE Section rebates. If you don't see your consultants network's contact information listed on the IEEE-USA website, contact Daryll Griffin at d.r.griffin@ieee.org.

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< Continued from previous page

receive income. Some consultants who take contracts sign W-2 forms, making them eligible to apply for unemployment benefits. However, most consultants have to adjust to closing contracts, with no new ones to replace them.

So how are consultants keeping themselves busy?

One thing consultants could do is focus on improving their skill sets and business practices, during this shut down. Kassebaum says he is reviewing his internal infrastructure tools, and examining different software tools such as Harvest, Forecast, QBO, Astra Finance, Calendly and MailChimp. He will also be looking at ways to build credit, to help finance his survival during these times, and spur growth later in the year. Kassebaum is also researching topics of interest, and providing his input through social media, websites and blogs.

Amaya is now doing more research for contracts online, by checking government databases. To be specific, he is reviewing the terms of his past 16 federal contracts, to find out other possibilities—such as the NAICS Codes awarded, Department of Defense agencies that awarded contracts, and reviewing client power utilities requirements for possible contracts. “I’m also taking advantage of free webinars, and considering taking an online management course from MIT”, says Amaya, “In addition,

I’m also looking to diversify my business offerings by learning different software platforms.”

Beningo is reviewing active projects, deadlines, general business cash flow, and making adjustments for between now and the end of the year. Further, he is taking advantage of this time to clean his office, and reorganize his files and workspace, so he can be more efficient when things ramp back up. With a little extra time available, Beningo is also developing new offerings and products for clients that he will launch, as the crisis begins to turn a corner. Lastly, he is holding remote workshops; continuing to write his newsletter; and again, staying in touch with clients—looking for opportunities to engage with them. Beningo reminds everyone to prepare now, for the project onslaught that will undoubtedly come later this year.

Lastly, AICNCC members recommend that—like everyone else—consultants should look to spend more time with family, catch up on sleep, and spend time on some activities to motivate you. Reenergize yourself—like catching that big one that got away!

Want to engage more with the AICNCC? Committee members will be monitoring social media through the Consultants Exchange in IEEE Collabratec, and in the IEEE-USA LinkedIn Group. Join, ask questions, and engage with the committee! ■

PAST PRESENTATIONS CAN HELP NEW AND EXPERIENCED CONSULTANTS IN THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19

With states, counties and cities beginning to reopen, many independent consultants will be looking to restart suspended projects; or looking to pick up new contracts to help businesses cope in this new, COVID-19 era. For years, IEEE-USA has offered webinar presentations, to assist consultants in every aspect of improving their practices. With things slowly picking back up, consultants still have time to review a few of these presentations, and put some of the recommendations to improve their practices in place.

Is Your Focus Your Magic? – This presentation discusses the key components for defining your focus; as well as the impact of focus on all aspects of your business.

Contracts and Contract Provisions – Other Important Aspects to Consider – This webinar examines the importance of a well-drafted, professional, services agreement. It also covers some of the critical risk management provisions we should address, in all professional services agreements.

Building the Consultant Practice of Tomorrow Using Today’s Online Tools – This presentation focuses on how

small consulting companies can utilize three cloud technologies to increase their marketing reach, decrease their costs of doing business, and increase profitability.

So You Want To Be a Consultant? – This webinar provides a brief overview of the IEEE-USA E-Book, **Consulting for Geeks**.

The IEEE Member Group Insurance Program – Your success depends on how you protect your business and yourself -- from errors and omissions that may result from the work you perform.

Functioning as a Professional Consultant – This webinar covers 10 qualities a professional consultant should possess.

Consulting 102 – As a follow up to Consulting 101, this webinar will address the most important challenges facing consultants -- **How to Find Clients**.

Consulting 101 – If you're considering making the transition from a full-time, corporate position to a full-time independent consultant -- this webinar is for you.

***Webinars listed above without direct links can be found on the [IEEE-USA Archived Webinar Page](#). ■*

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CONSULTANTS AFFECTED BY COVID-19

The economy crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected workers and large companies, but also small businesses and independent consultants. IEEE-USA offers information to the consultant community about federal and state provided resources for assistance. IEEE-USA Director of Government Relations, Russ Harrison, provided an in-depth analysis of these government resources, during his [webinar](#)

on 6 April. Harrison spoke about the CARES Act that Congress passed into law on 27 March 2020. He focused on three main portions of the bill. The Paycheck Protection Program, the Economy Injury and Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, and the Small Business Administration Loan Subsidy program. Consultants in need -- take a look at this webinar -- full of resources that may help you. ■

NOW OPEN: SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR 2020 IEEE-USA AWARDS

IEEE-USA is now seeking nominations for its annual awards and recognitions, given in one of three categories: professionalism, technical achievement, and literary contributions to public awareness and understanding of the engineering profession in the United States. For more details, or to nominate a deserving colleague, visit: <https://ieeeusa.org/volunteers/awards-recognition/>. ■

COVID-19: WHAT GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS NEED TO KNOW

The law firm, Venable LLP, has produced a webinar and article to help educate government contractors regarding new policies surrounding the Covid-19 crisis. These resources may be helpful to those consultants that have government contracts. This [link](#) will take you to the article and webinar. ■



HANDLING SUDDEN DECLINES IN BUSINESS...

By Daryl Gerke

With the COVID pandemic, many businesses have seen drastic reductions in revenues-- including consulting firms.

So what do you do? Don't panic. Okay, maybe for a moment, but then put on your consulting thinking cap, and start figuring out some alternate plans. After all, that is what consultants do — solve problems — and usually difficult ones that clients cannot or will not handle themselves.

A good first step is to take stock of your finances. How long can you go at your present burn rate, with little or no income? What expenses can you trim or eliminate? Are there other sources you can tap — either savings, or alternate income?

The next step is to take a hard look at both current and past sources of consulting income. Are there potential areas you have not pursued that might provide income? Is it time to pivot?

I have long used a model dubbed ACT, for Aware – Critique – Try. Not sure where I learned it, but it was many years ago. It has served me well throughout my career.

Aware: Time for creative ideas. Brainstorm. Create mind maps — make lists — whatever it takes to get the juices flowing. Don't hold back. At this stage, nothing is too far out, or too impractical.

Critique: Next, sort through your ideas and pick a couple (not more than three) to develop further. Start with some preliminary plans. List some objectives. However, don't overcomplicate things — keep it simple. You can refine things later.

Try: This step is where most people fail, due to fear and/or procrastination. Nevertheless, if your business is sinking, now is not the time to crawl into a hole and hide — or spend valuable time on things that don't matter. *The house is on fire — grab a hose or bucket — now!*

Here is a real world example. The year is 1992. After five years in business, we (me and my business partner) finally felt like we arrived. Business flowed in with regularity — until it stopped — dead. While normally we each billed about 80 hours/month, as I recall, the two of us billed about 24 hours total for the entire fourth quarter. Ouch — ouch —ouch!

What happened, we wondered? Had the parade gone in a different direction? Where was everybody, anyway? Moreover, what are we going to do?

A little background. We had been riding two waves — EMI (Electromagnetic Interference) in personal computers, and in defense. We had two major clients that provided well over half our business. When the PCs and defense suddenly dried up, so did the business from our two big clients, along with others. Too few eggs in two few baskets.

We began to look at where any other business had come from. Nothing major, but medical devices stood out. At the time, we both lived in Minneapolis/St. Paul, a medical hub, one often dubbed “Medical Alley.” A bunch of our past business was literally right in our back yard.

We noted this market was underserved. Using simple electronics, people didn’t regard it as glamorous as PCs or defense. It is also highly regulated, which scared others away. Aha — a [“barrier to entry,”](#) if we could crack it.

Based on these observations, we put together a simple, three-part plan:

—[Offered to write a simple column](#) for a leading medical device magazine. Having written for a number of magazines, we had the skills and credibility to deliver. The magazine jumped at our offer, and thus began a fortuitous, long-term relationship.

—[Joined an industry committee](#) on medical devices. We approached this step with care, as committees can suck a lot of time, and there were only two of us. However, that worked, too.

—[Enhanced personal contacts in the FDA.](#) We had already worked with FDA engineers, so that was simple. In addition, we truly enjoyed working with them as fellow professionals.

Six months later, we were back in business and recognized as EMI experts in the medical industry. We knew we had succeeded when an FDA engineer responded to a question about who to contact, he said in jest, “Dial 1-800-KIMMEL GERKE.”

As an aside, not long after we got a real 800 number — 888-EMI-GURU. It has served us well. It also became our trademark and web address (www.emiguru.com.)

We didn’t stop there. We continued to burnish our reputation by [writing a book](#).

Our quick, “three-part plan” probably saved the business at a critical time.

The medical “pivot” became a model for expansion into other markets. We ultimately ended up with a portfolio of industries we served — computers, defense, medical, industrial controls, vehicles, facilities, and more. Some were even [niches](#) within niches, like nuclear power plants, or farm machinery.

As the old saying goes, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” Or consider another old saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.”

We continued for the next 23 years, until my business partner passed away in 2015.

However, even now, I stay involved in semi-retirement, at a level that suits me just fine. ■

WHAT I AM DOING TO MAINTAIN MY PRACTICE DURING THE COVID CRISIS

By Robert Peruzzi

Like with most consultants, when America shut down, so did my consulting practice. With no business, I had to take some action to maintain myself, until this crisis subsided. My first step was to apply online for a Payroll Protection Program (PPP) loan, at the bank I use for my S-Corporation business. I applied too late for the first batch of forgivable loans; in fact, the bank is too backlogged to even accept my application for the next round. I also completed a generic PPP application, and I have it ready to go. A friendly staff member at my bank says she will contact me, when they once again accept PPL applications. I chose not to apply for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (IEDL).

Unemployment

Through the **CARES Act**, consultants or gig workers are eligible for unemployment compensation. In addition to my consultant practice, I’m also a sole proprietor for my music business. So, I also applied for unemployment compensation under the Covid-19 special program. At the writing of this article, I have not heard back for my state’s unemployment office, on if I will receive unemployment—or how much I will receive, and how many unemployment payments I will receive.

Otherwise, along with the rest of America, I am waiting for business activity to resume, so I can restart my consultant practice. ■

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LESSONS ON CONSULTING: A THREE-PART YOUTUBE SERIES FOR BEGINNERS

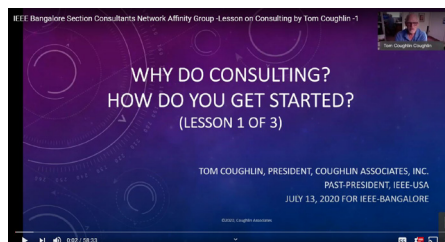
Four years ago, IEEE launched the [IEEE Consultants Network](#) subscription service. The main feature of this free service is to provide IEEE members with online networking opportunities with other IEEE consultants. This service has grown to over 6,500 subscribers in four, short years — wanting to learn about becoming independent consultants. While this subscription service is for consultants of all experience levels, we know that the majority of these subscribers are just beginning their journey as independent consultants.

[Thomas Coughlin](#), President of Coughlin Associates and IEEE-USA's 2019 President, put together a three-part presentation on “Getting Started as an Independent Consultant.” We believe these presentations would be a great resource for those just beginning their consultant businesses. Coughlin first gave this presentation this summer to the IEEE Bangalore Section Consultants Network Affinity Group. He has now made this three-part presentation available on YouTube for all IEEE members.

Not only do these presentations provide great information, but new local IEEE Consultants Networks can benefit from them, as well. This presentation is also a great follow-up to the recent IEEE-USA webinar, [The Life of a Consultant](#). Coughlin has also included his contact information, just in case IEEE members have questions after watching these sessions.

SESSION 1

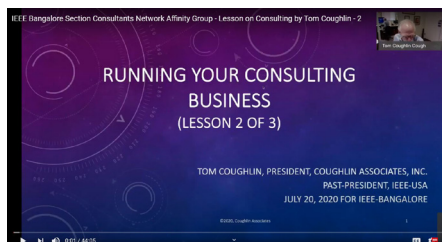
WHY DO CONSULTING? HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?



(<https://youtu.be/eIVuvT9daTM>)

SESSION 2

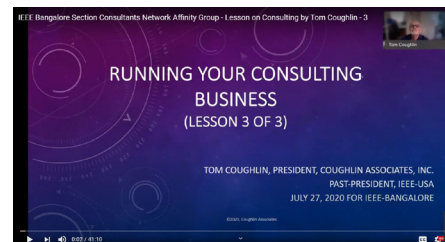
RUNNING YOUR CONSULTANT BUSINESS, PART 1



(<https://youtu.be/OL3KsSVP5k>)

SESSION 3

RUNNING YOUR CONSULTANT BUSINESS, PART 2



(<https://youtu.be/XeiDFtmLo0k>)

IEEE-USA CONSULTANTS FEE SURVEY REPORT — 2020 EDITION



All findings in this report represent only those IEEE members who identified themselves as self-employed consultants. For purposes of this survey, such participants are defined as the 600 individuals who indicated 50 percent, or more, of their consulting income came from working independently, with partners, or incorporated. The information provided is critical for consultants' success — such as a general profile of an IEEE consultant; top areas of consultant services; and most importantly, the median hourly rate consultants charge. This Report is one of a kind, and we believe each annual publication should be in the library of all IEEE independent consultants. Purchase the IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report — 2020 Edition today! Available now from the IEEE-USA Shop: <https://ieeeusa.org/shop/careers/compensation/ieee-usa-consultants-fee-survey-report-2020-edition/>

For questions, comments or submissions
please contact Daryll Griffin at +1 202 530 8337
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<https://ieeeusa.org/careers/consultants/>

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LOOKING FOR MORE CONSULTING CLIENTS?

Our friend, Laura Burford, is back creating good content for independent consultants. You may remember Burford from our 2019 IEEE-USA Webinar, [Is Your Focus Your Magic?](#), where she discussed the impact of focus on all aspects of your business. This summer she published a **Help Me, Help You** Survey. She wanted to know what consultants wanted to learn about; as well as what delivery medium worked best for them.

What Burford learned is that the topic consultants most wanted to discuss was *How Do You Get More Consulting Clients?* So, the first [video](#) from her relaunched [YouTube channel](#) addresses that very topic.



“I don’t care if you are new to consulting, or an experienced consultant; just about everyone I know is looking to get more clients,” Burford says. But how? This video includes guidelines, strategies and actions items that you can implement starting today. All of these guidance tools work! You can do all of them, or just one or two. None requires speaking, writing, or purchasing ads.

Burford also notes she will release new videos released every Thursday, on her relaunched YouTube channel, with a focus on more educational videos — on the topics you want to hear about. You can also checkout her [website](#). ■

IEEE REGION II CONSULTANTS NETWORK

Proposal for a New Entity within IEEE Region II

Are you presently, or are you considering, becoming an electrical engineering consultant? If not already, you should visit <https://ieeeusa.org/careers/consultants/> as a first step. Consider these ideas for taking it further.

Here are three, simple activities common to all consulting efforts:

1. Engaging with a client
2. Pleasing clients with your work
3. Getting paid

The second step is all up to you. A support group, such as a consultants network, can help you learn and hone your skills for steps one and three.

Unfortunately, over the past few years, most of the IEEE Sections within Region II has been able to sustain an active consultants network. A solution to finding a critical mass of interested consultants is to increase the geographical area from which members are drawn. Now is a good time to form a Region II IEEE Consultants Network.

The now-defunct Philadelphia IEEE Consultants Network (CONET) presented these topics at their meetings:

- Legal Aspects: PE Licensing, Incorporation, Tax IDs
- Accounting: Accountants, Bookkeeping, Taxes, Tax Strategies
- Insurance: Professional Liability, General Liability, Medical, Disability, Life
- Administration: How Much To Charge, Quotes, Billing, Database
- Protecting Your Status as a Consultant Versus as an Employee

The 2020 Pandemic has inspired widespread use of remote meetings and video conferences. Let’s form a Region II Consultants Network using remote meetings as a framework, with occasional, live get-togethers.

Any and all who may be interested, please contact me directly: Robert O. Peruzzi. Peruzzi@RPeruzzi.com ■

WHY MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS CHOOSE TO GO INDEPENDENT

The website “consultancy.org” has published an interesting piece on why management consultants in Britain are favoring independent consulting, over working for a consultant management firm. They cite a new study suggesting that despite uncertainty around Brexit, IR35 and COVID-19, independent consultants in Britain have still managed to realize their hopes for improved work-life balance, as well as flexibility around assignments they take. The story can be found at this [link](#).

In addition, the website also provides an interesting story on how COVID-19 is affecting independent consultants around world. It bases that information on a survey taken of almost 1,000 respondents in 20+ countries. Most of the surveyed consultants were outside the engineering industry; however, it still provides a good insight into the initial impact of COVID-19 on independent consultants — internationally and in different sectors. Check out that story at this [link](#). ■

IEEE-USA'S OCTOBER FREE NEW E-BOOK FOR MEMBERS URGES ENGINEERS: DO YOUR R&D!

At long last, prolific IEEE-USA E-BOOKS author, IEEE Senior Life Member, veteran engineer and educator Harry T. Roman has written an e-book about the discipline where he devoted most of his career: research and development, or R&D. His new IEEE-USA E-Book, [Do Your R&D!](#), comes on the heels of Roman's more than 550 published scientific papers, articles and monographs, as well as books on a wealth of topics for engineers.



Roman thinks more technical professionals, at all levels, need to enhance their appreciation of R&D — risks and all. Despite it being an expense that can be difficult to quantify — especially in difficult economic times. He believes R&D is nothing less than “technological due diligence.”

“R&D is powerful stuff — the lifeblood of new product development. It is the groundwork for what we consider technologically driven progress,” Roman writes. He points to major companies like Du Pont and 3M, both noted for continuous innovation over long periods of time. However, he also notes that “the business end of a company can have serious doubts about just what needs to be done and financed through R&D.”

IEEE members can download this free new e-book from the IEEE-USA Shop Go to: <https://ieeeyusa.org/shop/careers/career-resources/do-your-rd/> ■

START AN IEEE LOCAL CONSULTANTS NETWORK!

This Fall, the [Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee \(AICNCC\)](#) has embarked on a series of webinars to encourage IEEE Sections to start or restart local consultants networks. The first in this series was “How to Start a Consultants Network”; the second webinar was “[The Life of Consultant](#)”; and the third was “[How to Keep Your Patent Options Open on a Tight Budget](#).”

The AICNCC has scheduled the fourth and fifth webinars in this series. On November 12 at 2:00pm please join us for “[Professional & Forensic Engineering and Expert Witness Career Progression](#).” Becoming an expert witness is another way for consultants to expand their practice. Our speaker will outline how you may be able to include expert witnessing in

your practice. On November 19 at 2:00pm please join us for “[Highlights from the 2020 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report](#).” This will just be a brief overview of the finding from our 2020 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey.

Please join us for these next two webinars and the AICNCC hopes that IEEE consultants are inspired to come together to form local IEEE consultant networks where they can share knowledge and information with their fellow consultants.

Please Note: By the time of the printing of this newsletter “How to Start a Consultants Network” and “How to Keep Your Patent Options Open on a Tight Budget” webinars recording should be posted on the [IEEE-USA Archived Webinar page](#). ■

AICN Newsletter

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4th QUARTER 2020

2020 IEEE-USA CONSULTANTS FEE SURVEY: AVERAGE AGE, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE SUGGEST YOUNGER DEMOGRAPHIC

BY HELEN HORWITZ

Can it be that more mid- to late-career engineers are becoming consultants? According to the [2020 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report](#), the average (mean) age of consultants has declined to 57.9 years — from 61 years of age in the [2019](#) and [2019](#) reports.

This report attributes the 3.3-year age decline to two factors: first, a 7.9% increase in survey respondents ages 55-59, and second, a 20.9% decrease in respondents over age 65. Consultants had a mean of 24 years of professional experience, slightly below the mean of 26.4 years in 2019.

On average, male consultants in the survey had more professional experience than female consultants; but the gender gap between them decreased seven years from 2019 — from 10 to three. The mean years of women's experience was 21.4 years (up from 17.3); for men, it was 24.3 years (down from 27.2). The report ascribes the

shrinking professional experience gap to the growth in women's average years of professional experience and a decline in men's.

Elsewhere in the report, it is noted that as with IEEE general membership, the vast majority of consultants are male (92.2%), and identifies as non-Hispanic white (73.5%). The largest minority group among consultants remains Asian or Pacific Islander, with 5.7%, although another 6.3% preferred not to answer the question about ethnicity.

Conducted over a four-week period starting in mid-June 2020, the Survey drew only 11.5% of respondents over the age of 70 — less than half the 25.1% who reported being in this age category last year. Another 35.9% reported being ages 60-69; the 45-59 age range drew 41%.

Nearly 83% (82.8%) are U.S. citizens by birth. Another 12% are naturalized citizens. Consistent with 2019, 3.4% are permanent resident aliens.



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IEEE-USA WEBINAR REVIEWING THE 2020 IEEE-USA CONSULTANT FEE SURVEY REPORT

The Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) is working to provide every opportunity for independent consultants to understand the [2020 IEEE-USA Consultant Fee Survey Report](#). In addition to reprinting in this newsletter the article "[2020 IEEE-USA Consultant Fee Survey, Average Age, Years of Experience Suggest Younger Demographic](#)" originally published by IEEE-USA Insight, the committee also conducted a webinar to help with the understanding of the report.

Josephine Russo, a member of the IEEE Research team and author of the [2020 IEEE-USA Consultant Fee Survey Report](#), provides a short review of the findings from the 2020 report. You can view the "[Highlights From The 2020 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report](#)" on the [IEEE-USA Webinar page](#). ■

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2020 IEEE-USA CONSULTANTS FEE SURVEY REPORT



(<https://youtu.be/e3XQrB05jX8>)

For questions, comments or submissions
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or d.r.griffin@ieee.org.
<https://ieeeusa.org/careers/consultants/>

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IEEE★USA

The median hourly rate charged this year by consultants is \$150; a \$10 decrease from last year, and the same as in 2018. Consistent with previous reports the past few years, the 2020 findings show some flattening across experience levels. Consultants who have been in their professions for fewer than 15 years report this \$150 median hourly rate. Those with 25-34 years of experience report \$163, the highest median hourly rate.

When the data includes the number of years as a consultant, rather than in the profession, there's slightly more variation. The typical rate begins at \$135 an hour for those with less than five years of consulting experience. The rate increases to \$175 an hour, for those with 20-24 years' experience. The highest deciles show lower rates (\$360/hour) than the highest seen in previous reports (\$400/hour).

Education levels are an important factor in what consultants charge. Those with a Ph.D. or an MBA have a \$43 advantage in their median hourly rate, over those with Bachelor's or Master's degrees.

Some 25% of this year's respondents (down from 32.4% in 2019) have a Professional Engineer's (P.E.) license, giving them a \$10 hourly advantage. This hourly increase is consistent with last year, but down somewhat — compared to a \$22 hourly advantage in 2018, over those without a license.

To understand respondents' areas of expertise, the survey asked them to select all the technical specialties — of 96 listed — in which they offer consulting services. The top five growth areas since 2016 were: Systems Engineering (35.2%); Project Management (32.9%); Electrical Power Systems (26.5%); Software Development, Application & Management (25.2%) and Management (24.5%). The five areas with the greatest increases since 2016 include: Python (+9.6%); Information Technology (+6.4%); Electro-Mechanical (+4.8%); C/C++ (+4.2%); and Automation (+3.6%).

The five areas with the greatest losses since 2016 were: Hardware, General (-3.7%); Antenna (-3.7%); Microwave (-4.4%); Illumination/Lighting (-5.2%) and Networks — LAN/WAN — Other (-5.8%).

As with the last three survey reports, three out of four consultants (75.3%) worked out of their home office. (Reminder: The 2020 Survey comprises consultant fees and related information for 2019, before the COVID-10 pandemic.) About four in 10 (42.7%) carry professional liability insurance, in case of errors or omissions.

Respondents who worked solely as independent consultants in 2019 continue to decline. After peaking at 48.6% in 2018, sole independent consultants dipped slightly to 44.3% in 2019, and dropped to 37.5% this year. More than four in 10 (43.8%) spent their consulting hours with partners as a contract employee; as an employee of another company (not their own); or incorporated.

Most of the average consultant's business continues to come from repeat clients — 62.3% in 2019. But having connections is vital, as earnings also come from referrals by clients and friends (14.1%). Client contacts made by networking accounts for another 10.1%. The Survey introduced several new categories, but respondents barely used them; they include social media networking (1.4%) and Internet Ad/Google Ad (0.7%)

The majority of consultants (59.4%) work with private, non-defense and non-utilities companies. When defense and utilities-related firms are added in, the private industry share rises to more than eight in 10 respondents.

Reflecting U.S. IEEE members as a whole, respondents to this survey worked in a variety of business lines — before becoming consultants. Electrical/Electronics Manufacturing (13.%) is the most common. Communications and Consulting (both at 10.2%) are next, rounding out the top three lines of business.

When looking at which parts of the United States offer the highest rates of compensation, the Middle Atlantic Region (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania) had the highest average hourly rate — \$175, down from \$195 in 2019. The East North Central Region (Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio) and the New England Region (New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut) both reported an average hourly rate of \$143, which is \$7 below the overall median hourly rate of \$150.

The IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey analyzes responses using United States Census Bureau Regions, not IEEE Region designations.

Finally, because the survey was conducted several months after the COVID-19 pandemic had begun, questions were included about how the crisis was affecting consultants. One-third (34%) said the pandemic was negatively affecting their business; 30% said it was having both negative and positive effects. Slightly fewer than three in 10 (28%) reported it was having no effect; and seven percent said it was having a positive effect.

When respondents were asked for examples of the positive effects of the pandemic on their business, it wasn't surprising that

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the ability to work from home more was cited overwhelmingly. Negative effects included travel restrictions that limit productivity and difficulty in connecting or communicating with clients.

IEEE-USA has conducted surveys about the compensation and fringe benefits of its members since 1972. A separate consultants' fee survey began in 1998. This past June, 9,938 IEEE members, identified as consultants in the IEEE membership database, were emailed an invitation to complete the 2020 Consultants Fee Survey. Some 956 respondents participated

in the survey, a 9.6% response rate. All findings in this report represent only those who were identified as self-employed consultants, defined as the 600 who indicated that at least half of their consulting hours, from their personally earned income in 2019, came from fee-based consulting. IEEE Strategic Research conducted the survey and prepared the report.

The [2020 IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report](#) is available for purchase from the [IEEE-USA Shop](#). Non-member price is \$49.95; member price is \$29.95. ■

ARE YOU A CONTRACTOR? ARE YOU SURE? – IEEE-USA PRESENTATION ON DOL'S INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR RULES

Russell Harrison, IEEE-USA's Director of Government Relations recently gave to the IEEE Region 2 Baltimore Section a presentation outlining the United States Department of Labor (DOL) new independent contractor rules.

Mr. Harrison compares DOL's rules to the AB 5 law in California to make the point that a national debate is beginning over how to regulate independent contractors.

The presentation is available for viewing online from Zoom using this [link](#) and passcode: **4FFH26&p**

You can also download the slides and a full copy of the video [here](#). ■

ARE YOU A CONTRACTOR? ARE YOU SURE?



HOW TO START AND EXPAND A SUCCESSFUL CONSULTING PRACTICE OR BUSINESS

Within the IEEE membership we have many independent consultants willing to share their time and knowledge to assist their fellow colleagues. William Kassebaum, independent consultants and member long-time member of the Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) gave a webinar presentation to the [IEEE Chicago/Rockford Consultant's Network](#) titled "[How to Start and Expand a Successful Consulting Practice or Business](#)."

Mr. Kassebaum states that starting a business requires some planning and forethought. Just like a product or system we might design, the effort of building a business requires changing, adapting, and evolving. In a system design, we might call that an evolutionary spiral where we constantly drafting the requirements, design, implement, and test — and back around again. As we grow a business practice, we go through the same stages.

HOW TO START AND EXPAND A SUCCESSFUL CONSULTING PRACTICE OR BUSINESS



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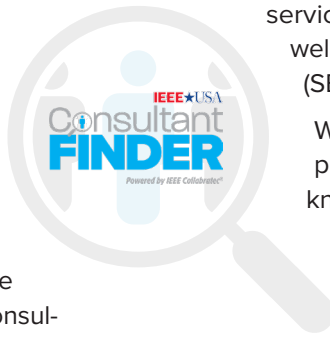
RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION: YOU STILL HAVE TIME

Although, the new year has started, you still have time to renew your subscription for the IEEE-USA Consultant Finder. In the fall of 2018, IEEE-USA introduced the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder](#), powered by IEEE Collabratec, to IEEE members. This redesigned service's key features include:

- Simple and advanced search features
- An assignment placement portal
- A full consultant profile for paid subscribers

In addition, the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder's](#) visual design makes it easy to use. It also has web crawlers, so even more potential clients will be able to find this new website—and the individual consultant profiles. Lastly, the Finder has opened this service fully to international independent consultants (those outside of North America) to post their profiles and market their services. Since Collaboratec powers this service, all 400,000 IEEE members have access to the Finder. Moreover, clients, project managers and HR professionals can search for consultants to hire – free!

All IEEE members considering, or jumping into, the world of the gig economy should check out the IEEE-USA Consultant Finder for marketing their services. The IEEE membership renewal period is the best and easiest time to get started. When you renew your IEEE membership, just add the [IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium](#) to your cart. This step allows your IEEE Collabratec profile to be listed in the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder](#).



The visual upgrade makes the Finder easier to use; and it will attract even more clients, project managers and HR professionals to search for a consultant, or post a consulting or contract assignment. IEEE-USA is also actively trying to promote this service to professionals through Google ad words, as well as constantly updating Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tags.

We look forward to your continued support of this product with your renewed subscription. IEEE-USA knows this service will benefit all IEEE independent consultant members and their consultant practices.

Please note: Current “Membership Premium” subscribers—it is now a great time to review your consultant profile. Log in via IEEE Collabratec (or the IEEE Collabratec App)—and consider adding, or updating, your photo; reviewing your biography; and updating your desired salary, or hourly rate.

You can also review the IEEE-USA webinar [“All You Ever Wanted to Know about the New IEEE-USA Consultant Finder.”](#) This webinar outlines the new features of this service.

Again, welcome to the IEEE-USA Consultant Finder. And thank you to those that have already subscribed to this great service. We hope you like the new look and upgrades. For IEEE members who have not yet subscribed, be sure to take a closer look—don't miss this great opportunity!. ■

◀ How to Start and Expand a Successful Consulting Practice or Business (continued from previous page)

This presentation covers three main topic areas:

- steps to forming a new business — forms of business, evaluation of the business model, and initial planning & goal setting
- marketing, sales, operation, and getting paid;
- tips and tools to improve operations, efficiency, and ROI.

Your business should iterate through all these concepts as it grows — re-evaluating, improving operations, and automating

repetitive business operations. These topics and methods apply regardless of the type of business you are building — whether a consultancy, a product company, or service business.

You can view this webinar presentation using this [link](#). The presentation is around 90 minutes and is split across several videos, but the playlist should automatically load them in order for you. ■