

To All the Dedicated Serving Members in All the Committees in IEM

By: *Engr. Gary Lim Eng Hwa, M.I.E.M., P.Eng.*

I am among you who had allocated and will continue to allocate some of our precious time to serve IEM. It is my personal believe that ALL of us wants to see a better IEM in future years hence we all decided to stand up and be counted. Personally, I want to be in touch with the progress of my field of engineering during the rapid phase of development in order not to fall behind. The introduction of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program has prompted more participation among our members to be in touch with development of engineering.

Here I would like to appeal to ALL serving committee members to CONSCIOUSLY instill into our mind some "business sense" when coming to COST aspects for ANY proposed or currently on-going activities. It appears that IEM will probably incur a loss for financial year 2006 and the recent increase of membership fee to RM130 for year 2007 from RM110 for year 2006 is probably adequate to cover the loss. Why do I make such a strong statement? Here I would like to quote a few examples where decision by CONSENSSES MUST which had been the norm because it is a democratic society, majority will dictate without taking into the COST aspects. Here I would quote a few examples:

- Publication of IEM directory, what value has it got in it. If I look at the directory there are 3 members who share my EXACT name. This has been published yearly probably because it is IEM tradition. There will be substantial saving in cost or at least resources if this is stopped.
- Proposed IEM membership card, whilst I am not fully involved in this project, I was presented the costing which includes printing the card (outsourced or internal) for ALL 18,000 members. Please ensure that the issuing of the card is based on NEED basis of the member not a decision of the committee to provide for ALL 18,000 members. Direct Access Credit Card has provided IEM members the privilege of embossing our membership number onto the credit card for FREE, why do we need another card for identification which is going to cost IEM.
- Evening talk with free refreshment up to 30 members which cost IEM about RM40,000 per annum. I raised this issue during a committee meeting and was out voted because traditionally this has been provided and would continue to provide. Why do I object to this arrangement? The purpose of members attending the talk is to gain knowledge and not for the food. With the current response to the Evening talk averaging above 60 per session, there are disgruntled member when there are no more food left or no cutlery for them to use. When I became the Building Services Technical Division Chairman and currently still the Chairman, I managed to convince my committee to remove this facility instead provide ALL registering members a tub of drinking water. This is substantially cheaper then earlier arrangement.
- IEM Monthly Bulletin. Every Technical Division would normally prepare a brief write up of an evening talk or seminar held which is to be published in the bulletin so that the knowledge could be shared to those who are not able to attend or to the members outside the Petaling Jaya. It seems that there are no pages left for these technical write up due to constraint on the number of pages, which may have a financial implication, this is acceptable. However, could we evaluate the pages that involve the membership list which does not carry value to the members at large. This list should be maintained at IEM website and of course be given the due respect.
- IEM Annual Dinner. I understand there is so much arm twisting in order to sell off the tables booked for the night. Why not get 5 major sponsors where they get the mileage out of the dinner and contribute substantial income for the dinner like what MASHRAE had been doing. Why was this not done? This is because there are committee members felt that we are commercialising IEM, would it be a double standard when we allow companies to place advertisement in IEM Monthly bulletin. Engineers are not so gullible to fall for such commercialising of IEM, we are trained to evaluate options and offer our best economical solution. If such proposal is tabled, it will be out voted because it has not been IEM way.
- Vendor Sponsored Seminars, a taboo in IEM. Any businessman would like to have a return on their investment and if the vendor is to sponsor a seminar, the rules says that there should be no visible display of the logo or company's product, where is the mileage? Engineers are viewed as mindless and would believe what are presented, this is definitely not true.
- Technical Visits, coach provided. Members pay a nominal RM5.00 as commitment fees whilst IEM arrange for a coach that cost RM400. This is operated at a loss and Technical Division is to budget for this loss, there is no business sense. Such visit should be self financing otherwise it should not proceed. BSTD now arrange visits without coach provided and we target to breakeven.

I have presented cases which have I been involved and I hope that these should be viewed as constructive criticism. Let me guess what is going to happen after this, birth of NEW committees to look into the above matters and I will be invited to ALL. Many moons will pass and finally a report of recommendation, this will go through the MAIN committee, deliberate for many months again and finally to be presented to the highest level. More deliberation and many moons will pass and based on the show of hands (a democratic society) it will be voted acceptable or not acceptable.

If only our existing committees members in the various committees are to ask oneself, if this is my own company's business, would I allow such practice if the answer is no, then implement the change, do not form NEW committee because all serving committee members have already given their time to serve IEM, don't squeeze anymore. ■

COMMENTS FROM THE BULLETIN EDITOR

First and foremost, we wish to thank all who have contributed articles as well as comments and feedback (in the form of letters and comments) to us. I wish to thank Engr. Lim's contribution for his precious time to serve IEM and his good intention with his 'personal believe that ALL of us wants to see a better IEM in future years hence we all decided to stand up and be counted'.

It is good that as an Engineer by profession, Engr. Lim still sees the importance of "Ringgit and sens" as the bottom line for survival. It is very true that we have to consider the financial implications seriously together with our objectives and strategies action plans.

Maybe, my 2-sens worth of contribution could help our readers in their good intentions towards making IEM a better institution in the years to come.

1. The publication of IEM directory do NOT cost IEM a cent as this has been provided for in the contract with Dimension Publishing Sdn. Bhd. There have been many discussions on the usefulness of the directory. Those who are for it cited it as a document for checking on IEM members for authenticity and networking and why scrap it if it is free-of-charge as provided by the contract. Those that are against it would cite the noble cause of trying to stop the waste of resources. We, at the Standing Committee on Information and Publications, are caught between the frying pan and fire. We also have requested feedback whether members would like to have their corresponding contact, be it address of residence, business or e-mail, but to no avail as there were hardly any feedback until we receive your letter. Maybe the AGM could be a forum to decide on this. We would appreciate all members to provide feedbacks on any errors or comments on the directory and any other publications for future improvements. As the saying goes, "If we are good, tell all your friends! If there are any shortcomings, please tell us!". Your cooperation will be much appreciated.
2. Yes, it is true that IEM Technical Divisions would normally submit brief write-ups on talks or seminars organised by them to be published in the bulletin "so that the knowledge could be shared to those who are not able to attend or to the members outside the Petaling Jaya". You must have noticed that some of these reports were submit a few months after the event and expected them to be published at once. We have not rejected any articles or reports due to lack of space though you are right in pointing out that our monthly Bulletin has limited pages and face the constraint on the number of pages that has to be shared among feature articles, reports, letters and comments as well as other information relating to IEM's running routine such as informing new members of their approval to Professional Interviews and upgrade to corporate members, etc. We ask for everyone's patience as we always try to get everything in hand printed as soon as possible. Many a time we receive articles that do not suit the monthly theme for immediate publication as well as to give diversity to the Bulletin to attract general and specialised reading in the many engineering disciplines within the IEM but we have not rejected any articles due to limitation of space.
3. The IEM Membership Card is to give a sense of belongingness and authenticity to all IEM Members. Maybe your idea could be considered by IEM to work out with Southern Bank to have a mass recruitment drive at the IEM for all members to be issued with its Direct Access Credit Card with the embossing our membership number and photograph onto the credit card for FREE. This is good for business for the bank as well, but some consideration by IEM's legal experts has to be given so as not to give the message that IEM is seen to be giving some kind of endorsement on the Bank.
4. Though costs are incurred during evening talks and technical site visits, these are some of the facilities offered by IEM to its members apart from IEM publications. You would have noticed by now that it takes a brave heart, tact, patience and persistence to initiate changes. In the end, the democratic process of consensus would still decide the outcome. We have to really give some serious thought to this by asking ourselves "What do we expect from IEM? What are IEM's objectives? How can IEM serve its members and make profit or to ensure money well spent (as seen by the last budget of a large deficit in trying to accommodate the many wish lists submitted)? What will IEM do with the excess funds?"
5. Sponsorship is a tricky question to answer and anyone could always look at it from the other perspective. I hope IEM could really some serious thought and study this matter as there are very few free lunches or dinners in this harsh real world. We hope anyone who knows of any genuine one, please inform IEM for the benefit of our members.
6. We have been told that some conferences organised by other organisations and even some of IEM Technical Divisions have been very successful in raising funds and making profits from such events, maybe it would be beneficial to share some of their secrets so that IEM could also benefit from such strategies.

We have seen that under your Chairmanship, the BSTD has done well. Please keep up the good work for the sake of our beloved IEM and all our friends. May I take this opportunity to wish Engr. Lim and all Chinese IEM members a Happy and Prosperous Chinese New Year.

I do not wish to bore our readers anymore and hope that this could have answered some of the questions raised. By the way, these comments and opinions are made as the Bulletin Editor and may not reflect that of others in the IEM.

Happy reading and regards,

Engr. Mah Soo, Bulletin Editor