

Professional Networking

by: Steve Snelling

Professional Networking is different from Social Networking. Professional Networking is more about developing your work contacts and References, including University Professors and alumni. Professional Networking should be ongoing, fun, and lead to some long-term contacts.

Professional engineering Societies like the Institute of Industrial & Systems Engineers (IISE) can be very helpful with developing a professional network. IISE has local Student Chapters, Professional Chapters, Regional activities, and National activities. Some of the national activities include: Societies, Divisions, Interest groups, Mentoring, and Annual Conferences.

Annual IISE Conferences make it easy to do professional networking, such as attending the various educational Track sessions, and meeting working engineers & students from different countries and industries. You can use the name-signs everyone wears, with “experience ribbons” that identify their membership in the different divisions & interest groups. And the colorful polo-shirts with school names/logos, worn by the University ISE students, can be useful for identifying which schools have students in attendance.

You can add to your professional network, by being active and encouraging an ongoing exchange of ideas. When attending speaker meetings, tours, or special events, look for people you have common interests with and exchange some information. Talk to them about their jobs and the type of projects they work on. Be willing to give out your name and email address, so you can both do follow-up communication. If you use LinkedIn, make sure your online profile accurately describes your background and interests. Attend alumni events and get to know other ISEs from your University.

Volunteer to work on special projects that interest you, since you are likely to meet others with similar interests. Don’t be shy during meet & greet events; mingle and meet as many people as you can at these types of events. Keep good records of your professional contacts, including where and how you originally met them.