



HOW INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION CAN ENHANCE YOUR CAREER

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I recently had the opportunity to present to a group of young professionals on the benefits of volunteering with industry associations. These groups might include technical associations (e.g. Institute of Transportation Engineers) or a professional group, such as FIDIC. There are many different associations out there depending on your field of practice and geographic location.

Having been involved with several different industry associations, I have experienced numerous benefits to my professional career and personal life and it has also benefited my firm. I have realized that many of these benefits may not be initially obvious to young professionals entering the industry. I hope to cover some of these advantages in this article for the benefit of others.

Professional Career



Knowledge Transfer: There is clearly a lot to learn from participation with industry associations. The formal learning through courses and conferences are obvious, but there is also a lot that can be learned by working closely with industry colleagues, including technical and professional knowledge transfer. By working with highly motivated individuals, you can develop mentors within your own demographic rather than relying only on the traditional senior/junior relationship.

Professional Network: When involved with industry associations, you will work collaboratively with your peers, which may include competitors and clients. Working alongside clients has clear benefits as establishing relationships with the people that you work for, or want to work for, makes it easier to secure and deliver on projects.

Getting to know a client outside of a project relationship allows you to learn about their objectives, priorities, and communication style prior to working for them. Working with competitors also has advantages as it helps you develop an understanding for what is happening in your industry. Furthermore, there may be opportunities to partner in the future and one day they could move to become a client or join your firm as a colleague. You never know how your relationships will evolve as your careers progress.

Career Progression: Industry participation can help progress your career. Both of the factors discussed above will make you an excellent candidate to transition into the next role in your career. Industry participation is also a great indicator of a positive work ethic and passion for your career and the knowledge gained will help you be successful in your new role.

Personal Life

The benefits of industry participation extend beyond just your professional career and extend into your personal life. Through my years of industry participation, I have developed some lifelong friends from all over the world. I have also had the opportunity to travel to some amazing international destinations to participate in conferences and meetings. The experience

of volunteering is also very rewarding and has given me the feeling that I am participating in my career, rather than just having a job.

Corporate

Your involvement in industry associations can be a great benefit to your firm. It can be particularly useful when seeking new recruits. Through your industry involvement, you will develop a good understanding of the skills and reputations of others in the industry. Your relationships with others can also make a convincing reason why they would want to join your firm when looking for new opportunities.

I have had tremendous success hiring individuals that I have met through industry participation as I was already aware of their strengths and likelihood for success. This may not seem relevant in the earlier stages of your career, but as your career develops you may take on the role of hiring team members, or at least having a say in who would be a good candidate. Your success will likely be tied to the success of your team, so it is in your best interest to help build the best team possible.



Another benefit for the firm is retention. By supporting individuals in their roles with industry associations, it shows respect and appreciation. That goes a long way towards job satisfaction and dedication to the firm, something that is hard to match through salary or other employee benefits. Finding and replacing good employees is very costly and could ultimately have an impact on the firm's success.