

Chapter Leader *Newsletter*

The newsletter for IECA Chapter leaders

Volume 1, Number 3

Survey Results

We recently completed an association-wide survey about member benefits (look for your Chapter's results in the mail). The top things members requested from Chapters:

1. Conduct more educational events on a consistent basis – diversify topics, hold shorter one day classes, explore web-based training, partner with other groups
2. Tighten up requirements for Board service
3. More consistent, personal contact and communication with members – phone calls, better notification of meetings, notice of who leaders are
4. Grow Chapter membership
5. Grow volunteer base and ensure leadership transition
6. Provide consistent updates on local and state regulations
7. Publish regular newsletters
8. Hire an administrative person to provide operational assistance to run the Chapter
9. More chances to network
10. Increase ability to earn certification credentials and CEU's/PDH's
11. Better recognition of member achievements

Next Issue

Your insurance questions answered — if you have questions, please send them to Becky Milot-Bradford at becky@ieca.org.

Taking the Plunge

Hiring Your Chapter's First Employee

One of the biggest things a Chapter can do to make things run more smoothly and reduce the load on its officers is to hire a paid staff person. And one of IECA's goals in implementing the automatic Chapter dues program was to provide Chapters with the funds that would enable them to have paid employees.

We interviewed Southeast Chapter President Beth Chesson about her experience hiring a part-time employee for the Chapter.

1 How did you decide to hire an employee for your Chapter? What was your criteria for deciding it was doable?

Beth: We decided to hire when we found ourselves getting burned out and we had a little financial buffer. We discussed it for months before actually reviewing any resumes. A couple of us drafted the job description and expectations (hours, pay) and then presented it to the board. When Joni [Tanner] submitted her resume, it sealed the deal. She has experience in event management and an understanding of erosion and sediment control.

2 What tasks does your employee handle?

Beth: So far, Joni has handled research for us on new topics (like advertising in our newsletter) and coordinates our newsletter production/editing. Future tasks include a membership questionnaire to identify training needs, meeting coordination, and, hopefully, workshop management.

3 How did you go about finding an employee?

Beth: A member of the board recommended her.

4 What is your employee's work schedule? (i.e. part time every week, as-needed, etc.)

Beth: Joni has a flexible schedule. She works full-time at another job so she works on the Chapter tasks around her full-time job. We have agreed that she will work no more than 30 hours a month, on an as needed basis.

5 What was involved in hiring an employee?

Beth: We developed a job description and expectations and began circulating it around to people we felt might be interested. I reviewed a number of resumes. We were fortunate that a very qualified individual was interested. Once the resumes were reviewed, we voted on hiring Joni during a conference call.

6 What issues cropped up that you weren't expecting?

Beth: I'm not sure we've had any real issues crop up at all. Our expectations have

Continued on page 2

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Taking the Plunge, continued from page 1

been more than met. Our employee is very responsive, a self-starter and works well with minimal oversight from the board.

7 What advice do you have for other Chapters that may consider hiring an employee?

Beth: I think our experience has highlighted the fact that it is much easier to hire someone that you know or have experience with professionally. Joni is located in North Carolina and she works mostly with me in Tennessee. I was concerned initially that the separation might hamper communication or effectiveness. One of the board members knew Joni, knew her work ethic and her capabilities so we were able to take a “leap of faith” in hiring her, and it has worked well. Another piece of advice for Chapters hiring staff: Stipulate in hiring staff that the board will review the Chapter budget and position annually to determine the need and ability to continue funding the position.

Final comments:

Beth: It was a tough but necessary decision for us to hire -- we were on the verge of becoming burned out so having someone who can handle the peripheral tasks allows us to keep moving forward at a faster pace than if just the volunteer board had to undertake them. There are many risks to hiring someone -- how will they fit in, how much ramp-up will be required, what is their work ethic, how will you communicate over distances, will the budget continue to support the person -- but the benefits of having someone help carry the load outweigh the risks. And risks can be minimized.

Association Management Companies

In addition to hiring staff or individual outside contractors, associations have the option of contracting with an association management company (AMC) to provide a number of useful services. An AMC is a business that provides management and specialized administrative services to associations.

AMCs can be especially useful for small organizations (such as an IECA Chapter) by providing experienced staff and shared resources at a reasonable cost.

An AMC can provide general and specialized areas of expertise including:

- Financial Management
- Membership Development
- Marketing & Public Relations
- Educational & Professional Development
- Communication Services
- Meeting & Event Planning
- Administrative Tasks

You can learn more about AMCs on the AMC Institute web site at <http://www.iamc.org/>.

Tapping Headquarters Resources

The World Wide Web recently celebrated its fifteenth birthday. In honor of the occasion, writer John Naughton published a list of 15 web sites that have changed the world. (If you're interested, you can read the list at <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/review/story/0,,1843263,00.html>.) The question we have been pondering at IECA headquarters is “how can the IECA web site change the world?” I think you will be pleasantly surprised by some of the changes we have in the works, and we would love to hear your ideas about what else we can do.

One of the changes that has already been made is to the online version of *News To Use*. In order to make the articles accessible to our international members, they are now available online in a searchable and printable format. The new system also allows us to publish multiple language versions of articles. Now we need help translating articles. If you see articles that you would like to help us translate, please contact Becky Milot-Bradford at becky@ieca.org. You can access *News To Use* online by logging in to www.ieca.org, then clicking on “News To Use” under the “Member Info” tab.

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