

# Section Programs for New Plastics Professionals



A resource for Sections to promote SPE to New Plastic  
Professionals via targeted programs

Sponsored by the Changing Needs Committee

Society of Plastics Engineers, Inc.

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## INTRODUCTION

The SPE sections are the first point of contact for plastics professionals in any area. Recent studies have shown that the average age of an SPE member is more than forty-five years old, retention of Student Members is less than 10%, and retention of new members is less than 30%. Local sections are in a unique position to increase their base membership and improve retention of the new plastics professionals that will keep the “new blood” that is so valuable to our society.

### Purpose

The purpose of this “manual” is to provide a resource for Section Program or Membership Committees to sponsor meetings or events which are targeted to New Plastics Professionals (NPP’s). We define NPP’s as current or potential SPE members who are new to the workforce, or new to the plastic’s industry. Most NPP’s will likely be in the age range of 18 to 35 years old, are graduating from college, or are changing jobs early in their careers. While the purpose of this manual is to target NPP’s, many of the concepts in this “manual” have broader appeal, applicability and utility beyond NPP’s.

### Objectives

There are several objectives of this program which are summarized as follows:

- Promote the benefits and *value* of SPE membership to existing members and to potential new members
- Increase the number of and participation by the “under 35” population and other professionals that are new to the plastics industry by *retaining* current young members, and *attracting* new members.
- Use *targeted* local section meetings to reach out to the newest population of plastics professionals.

## PLANNING THE MEETING

Planning is critical to achieving a successful meeting. This point cannot be overstated. Several key elements that need to be carefully prepared are outlined in the following sections. A checklist is provided in Appendix A to assist with planning.

In order for this meeting to be a success, it may require more planning and effort than a typical Section meeting. A suggestion is to have one member of the program committee lead the effort, but get two to three other people who are not board members or very active to help plan and execute the meeting. This is a good way to get people involved on a small level, who may not typically be involved in Section activities.

### Select a Program Topic or Event

The fundamental concept of a meeting targeted to NPP’s is to show *existing* young members and potential *new* members the benefits of SPE membership. A presentation is available from the Changing Needs Committee that is tailored to NPP’s and provides an overview of SPE and what SPE has to offer to NPP’s. For a copy of the presentation contact the Field Services Manager at SPE headquarters in Brookfield, Connecticut, 203-740-5431

While technical meetings are the bread and butter of your section’s general membership meetings, for this special meeting, focused on NPPs, you will want to do something a little different. Line up a

speaker or speakers who will offer insights and tools for personal or professional development that crosses all the markets and fields of your section membership.

Some potential program topics that have broad appeal to New Plastics Professionals:

- **Personal Development**
  - Financial Planning
  - Time Management
  - Tax Planning for Singles and Newly Married Couples
  - Home Buying / Mortgage Seminar
  - Path to Simplicity in Your Personal Life
  - Debt-free Living
- **Professional Development:**
  - Project Management
  - Technical Communication (Written or verbal)
  - FE/EIT Preparation
- **Career Planning:**
  - Resume Writing
  - Interviewing Skills
  - Graduate Study Seminars
  - Career Change
  - Networking
- **Fun Stuff:** A fun meeting with a social atmosphere to generate the initial interest in coming to an SPE sponsored event such as:
  - Brewery or Winery tour
  - Sports: i.e. bowling, splat ball, softball game, etc.
  - A trip out to whatever professional sport is available in your area. Ice hockey has a particular appeal to the younger set.
  - Casino night, trade show format
- Sponsor a program on “Establishing Your Own Personal Network.” Networking is one of the key benefits to SPE membership and participation.
- **Miscellaneous**
  - Negotiating for Results
  - How to Chair a Meeting
  - Business Website Creation
  - Fundraising
  - Computer Courses such as MS Project, AutoCAD, ProE, Mold Flow
  - Buzz Word Courses

## **Cost**

It is recommended that costs charged to attendees be kept to a reasonable amount, perhaps less than \$10, so as not to deter NPP's from attending. If the Section is not able to subsidize the cost of the meeting, following are suggestions to help pay for meals:

- Plan a simple meal, i.e. pizza, submarine sandwiches, appetizers, rather than a formal meal
- Corporate sponsorship – contact local companies to contribute towards meal cost and allow the company to advertise on signs or small table displays/cards.
- Seniors bring a NPP: Senior members who pays for three (?) or more NPP's get their dinner at no cost, or some other incentive.

## **Communication**

One critical element of a successful Section program is proper communication of the meeting. Since the target audience here is one that perhaps has not attended Section meetings in the past, extra effort needs to be invested to get the word out. Following are steps, in priority order, that should be taken to communicate the meeting.

1. Publish the meeting in the Section Newsletter
2. **Target** the new professionals in your section and go the extra mile
3. **Targeted** meeting communication to NPP's: Each Section's mailing list and membership demographics is available electronically from SPE Headquarters. It is strongly suggested that the mailing list be obtained, sort out the members who are in the target age or length of membership range, and send them a one-page flier on the meeting. This flier can be sent by email, FAX, or snail mail, but it is *critical* to take this extra step to *get the word out!*
4. Phone campaign: Each board or committee member calls ten members or other people they know in the community in the target group, and asks them to call ten more people.
5. Work with local employers to promote the meeting within their organization.
6. If you are working with an affiliated student section, enlist the aid of the faculty and staff of the school to promote the meeting via announcements in classes, posters, flyers, etc.

## **Meeting Execution**

Proper planning of the meeting is critical to its success. Also critical is execution the night of the meeting. Following are some suggestions to help ensure that the meeting is a success.

- Assign a person or persons to welcome the guests. Introduce them to Board Members.
- Have name tags available on check in
- Provide brochures from SPE Headquarters on what is available for people to take away from the meeting
- Provide a SPE promotional item (pen, tee shirt, baseball hat, etc.) to take away from the meeting.

- Provide the opportunity to sign on to any of the section committees without the threat of having to be the chair of that committee.

**Feedback**

In order to improve programs, weed out what doesn't work and document what does work, the Changing Needs Committee will be contacting you to obtain your feedback on the Program Manual, the Power Point Benefits Presentation, and the results of your NPP Meeting night. We will use the feedback from all of the sections to revise the Program Manual and Power Point Benefits Presentation, and provide you additional ideas on Topics, Program Resources, and Promotion Strategies. We also hope to share with you a summary of the results for each Section. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix B.

**PROGRAM RESOURCES**

- Local colleges, universities and training centers
- Internet - To find resources in different areas of the country:  
[www.trainingregistry.com](http://www.trainingregistry.com)  
[www.acs.org](http://www.acs.org) (ACS has an established program for young people as a resource)
- Solicit Input from Marketing and Management Division on speakers in your geographic area
- Request List of Best Section Programs from the Field Services Manager at SPE Headquarters
- Local Financial Planning, Investment Planning, or Insurance Agencies

Following is a list of potential speakers:

Hank Edwards	How to Benefit from the use of a Recruiter
Advanced Technology Source	214-373-9500 Phone
7557 Rambler Road, Suite 700	214-265-6556 Fax
Dallas, Texas 75231	

Dennis Gros	Impact of Change
Gros Plastics Recruiters	800-283-5643 Phone
155 Franklin Rd, Suite 181	615-370-8512 Fax
Brentwood TN 37027	<a href="http://www.plasticsjobs.com">www.plasticsjobs.com</a>

Nick Fountas	Resume as a Career Development Tool
JLI-Boston	617-227-4030 Phone
230 Commercial Street	617-227-6008 Fax
Boston, MA 02109-1305	<a href="http://www.jli-boston.com">www.jli-boston.com</a>

Joyce Mathey	Top Ten Ways to Land Your Dream Job
Mathey Services	888-895-3846 Phone
15170 Bethany Rd.	815-895-1046 Fax
Sycamore, IL 60178	<a href="http://www.matheyservices.com">www.matheyservices.com</a>
	<a href="mailto:JAM151@aol.com">JAM151@aol.com</a>

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **Eastern New England:**

The Eastern New England section has been holding a "Student Night" in conjunction with their Student Section at University of Massachusetts, Lowell annually in February. In 2000 they were the first section to try out some of the ideas that were just taking shape with the Changing Needs Committee and our efforts to establish a forum for New Plastics Professionals. Jenny Hodge, from our national headquarters, came in and piloted the "Membership Benefits" presentation and brought a good supply of "give aways" and literature. There was an excellent turnout for the meeting and the responses to the follow-up survey indicated a that a program of this type was needed within the SPE and would be supported by new comers as well as the rest of the general membership.

In February of 2001 ENE incorporated the NPP format again, taking it a little further this year and reports the largest turnout they have ever had for a "Student Night". They invited Nick Fountas, a professional recruiter and UMass graduate, who gave a presentation on "Everything You Never Knew About Plastics". The meeting organizers feel that this presentation an excellent draw, as students recognized an opportunity to get some good information about their impending reality and came out to learn about an actual career in the plastics industry.

Another contributor the success of the meeting was choosing a convenient location for the students. In the past years the meeting had been held in a building on the UMass campus that is about a mile away from where most of the plastics programs and classes are going on. This year they moved the meeting to a location next door to the Plastics Dept. making a big difference because students were able to just "drop in" with out having to walk to another part of campus.

There were announcements about the program in the section newsletters, but most of the promotion was done by the faculty of the plastics programs. They all promoted and encouraged participation and let the students know that they (the teachers) would be attending. This appears to be a really good incentive for students to attend.

### **Toledo**

The Toledo Section held a meeting in March of 2001 with a focus on New Plastics Professionals. The topic for the program was financial planning which generated interest among the Toledo membership. The meeting planners followed the format of the program manual and agreed that it added to their success level. Despite the fact that meeting attendance in the Toledo Section has been down for some time now, this meeting attracted 15 attendants, which is a little above average for the section this year. Personal phone calls from the meeting planners had the biggest impact on at tendance.

The Toledo board plans to use this meeting format again in the 2001/2002 meeting year and has noted what worked well and what they need to do differently next year.

### **Connecticut:**

The Connecticut section hosted a section meeting on May 16, 2001, which targeted New Plastic Professionals. This theme was incorporated into their annual Education Night Meeting. During Education Night, several scholarships are awarded to people who are actively enrolled in courses in plastics or engineering related fields. This created a great opportunity to present the benefits of SPE membership to many non-SPE-members.

Kristin Grauer attended this meeting and presented the NPP presentation to this group of 54 attendees. The many benefits of SPE membership were explained and discussed. The Director of

Engineering technology from the local Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College also addressed the group and highlighted the benefits of a career in engineering.

Overall this meeting was a success and future events targeting New Plastic Professionals will be addressed.

## **Appendix A - Meeting Planning Checklist**

- Choose a date, itinerary/program, speaker/s, location, cost  
Plan a date that allows plenty of time to plan and promote this event
- Make reservation for your location.
- Contact SPE Headquarters for membership roster, and electronic copy of SPE/NPP Membership Benefits presentation.
- Identify your target membership.
- Identify non-members to include in notification.
- Design a flyer, e-mail/fax notice, newsletter notice.
- Distribute notice three to four weeks ahead of time and again a few days before the meeting.
- Organize phone campaign, soliciting influential members for their support.
- Solicit support from companies and schools by allowing your flyer to be posted on bulletin boards.
- Re-confirm dates and commitments from speakers.
- Plan to be at your location at least 30 minutes early to set up presentation equipment, literature, name tags, etc.
- Greet people as they enter, mingle with the crowd, have fun!

## Appendix B –Meeting Feedback Survey

Section Program Chair or meeting organizer:

Please complete the following Survey after your Section meeting and return results to the Changing Needs Committee

Your thoughts and ideas are important to the SPE Changing Needs Committee, for they will determine the future programs and services that will be provided for the young people in SPE. Please take some time to fill out the survey below. Please feel free to add any comments/suggestions/ideas you have for making SPE more focused on the changing needs of its membership. Thank you in advance for your time.

1	How many people attended your NPP program meeting?
	<p>General demographic:</p> <p>18-35 _____ Students _____</p> <p>35-50 _____ Student Members _____</p> <p>50- _____ Members _____</p> <p style="padding-left: 300px;">Non-Members _____</p>
3	How does this attendance and demographic compare to other general membership meetings of your section?
4	<p>Did you receive enough support from the Changing Needs Committee to make this program successful in your section?</p> <p><b>Yes</b>                      <b>No</b></p> <p>What could we have done to make it more successful?</p>
5	<p>Could this program have been successful with less support from the Changing Needs Committee and SPE staff.</p> <p><b>Yes</b>                      <b>No</b></p>
6	<p>Could this program and/or format be modified to a broader audience?</p> <p><b>Yes</b>                      <b>No</b></p>
7	<p>Will you offer any other professional development programs at your section meetings?</p> <p><b>Yes</b>                      <b>No</b></p> <p>What subjects?</p>
9	<p>Does your membership consider SPE meetings chiefly as:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social events?</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional development tools? <input type="checkbox"/> Some combination?
10	<p>Are there members in your section that would play an organizing role in developing a New Plastics Professionals Network?</p> <p><b>Yes</b>                      <b>No</b></p>
11	<p>Please add any suggestions, ideas or comments on how the Changing Need Committee can better serve the needs of SPE sections and membership?</p>