

Editorial | You Always Have Time If You Make Time

By Carrie Johnson, P.E., SECB, NCSEA President



The most effective people I know always seem to have time to take care of everything. They volunteer, they exercise, they spend quality time with their families, they seem to do it all! When I was in college, I asked one of my teaching assistants how he made time to do everything that was expected. His answer was simple: “You always have time for whatever you make time to do.” I’ve thought a lot about it over the years and often think about how wise that simple statement is. It really is a matter of deciding what you need to prioritize, and the rest should work itself out.

I believe some people are reluctant to volunteer to help because they feel intimidated. No one should ever feel that their voice is not important! I attended several of the committee meetings at the recent NCSEA Annual Conference in Atlanta, and it was amazing how the new committee members sparked new conversations and got everyone excited about ongoing efforts. Being on a committee requires effort and thoughtful work, but when more people get involved, more can be accomplished! The key is finding what you are passionate about, finding something that needs to be done and volunteering to help. If you don’t like the way the code is written – offer to join a code committee. If you are worried about how prepared we are for a major disaster – volunteer for a disaster response committee. It is important not to just sit back and complain about the status quo. Getting involved can make a huge difference and can give you an opportunity to grow as a leader, learn from others, and meet interesting people. It can be as rewarding for you as it is for those you are helping.

For a lot of engineers, their first thought is getting involved on code committees. The individuals who work on code committees are truly heroes in our profession. They spend countless hours pouring over proposed changes, reading opinions, waiting to be heard at hearings, and checking supporting calculations. Maybe this type of work doesn’t quite fit your personality. There are a number of other areas that might fit your interests better. Perhaps you are excited about enhancing the image of structural engineers and would be interested in working with an Advocacy subcommittee. If your interests lie more in influencing what courses universities offer, or you want to make sure that there are quality resources out there for continued learning, you may be interested in working with the Basic Education, Continuing Education, or Publications Committee. If you feel strongly that structural engineers should be licensed as SEs, you may want to join

the Structural Licensure Committee. If you are worried about making sure that we are prepared to respond to disasters, our Structural Engineering Emergency Response Committee may be right for you. For a complete listing, visit NCSEA’s redesigned website, www.ncsea.com, launched in September at the Annual Conference. The bottom quarter of the website has an area that asks “How do I get Involved?” Our hope is that it will make more people stop and think, “I should do that.” There is an old saying that, in any organization, 90% of the work is done by 10% of the people. We are hoping to improve those odds by getting information out there about what people can do.

Another thing I’m very excited about is the effort across the country for NCSEA Member Organizations to start Young Member Groups (YMGs). Many of the Member Organizations have had YMGs for years and the new effort has allowed others to benefit from having one. YMGs can attract, and provide resources specifically designed for, younger engineers, thereby revitalizing the whole organization. During the past year, NCSEA started a YMG Support Subcommittee which falls under NCSEA’s Membership Committee. The main effort has been to provide resources for setting up a YMG, as well as recommendations for events, training sessions, service venues, and study groups.

We also have an upcoming Winter Leadership Forum that I think is very exciting. We started the Winter Leadership Forum last year as a way to provide a resource for principals and leaders from structural engineering firms of all types, sizes, and locations to engage in thought-provoking sessions, meaningful interaction, and networking. The topics selected are ones that provide tools for being a more successful firm. The format includes roundtable discussions that really give the attendees a chance to learn from each other. This year, we will meet in Napa, California on March 20-21 and the following topics will be covered:

- *Three Levels of Ownership Transition: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* with presentations from three different size firms followed by a Roundtable discussion
- *Get the Value You Deserve Without Ruining the Relationship* with Steven J. Isaacs
- *Baby Boomers Delay Retirements – Career Bottleneck at the Top* with Steven J. Isaacs
- *Leadership is a Full-Contact Sport: Dealing with Conflict in the Workplace* with Jennifer Morrow
- *Managing the Cost of Conflict: Mediation, Arbitration, or Litigation?* with Jennifer Morrow and Kevin Sido
- *You’ve Been Sued – Now What? What Engineers Need to Know to Structure Their Defense* with Kevin Sido

A full description of the topics can be found at www.ncsea.com, under Meetings. The event last year was rated a huge success by the attendees, but attendance is limited. Register early to be guaranteed a spot!

