

The Advisor

Newsletter of the IEEE Phoenix Area Consultants Network

October 2000, Volume 7, Number 10

IEEE PHOENIX AREA CONSULTANTS NETWORK MEETING NOTICE

NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION! WE'RE GOING BACK TO MONTI'S!

WHEN:

Thursday, October 12th, 2000
Social and check in at 6:30 PM
Dinner at 7 PM (Choice: beef, chicken, fish, vegetarian available)
Business meeting starts about 8 PM

WHERE:

Monti's La Casa Vieja, on Rio Salado Parkway (formerly First Street) and Mill Avenue, Tempe
Phone: (480) 967-7594

COST:

Meal cost is \$18 per person. If you come at 7:30 or so and do not eat, there is no charge. **NOTE:** As of January 2000, each visitor will be allowed three "free" meetings (that is, the same cost as members), after which there will be a \$10.00 surcharge.

PROGRAM:

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN THE ENERGY MARKET Consultants' Network member (and alternative energy expert) Lane Garret will speak on exciting new opportunities for consultants due to utility deregulation.

RESERVATIONS APPRECIATED:

We need to make proper arrangements with the management at Monti's. Therefore, *please call Bruce Johnson at 480-759-2826* (or e-mail bruce.johnson@ieee.org) *if you know you will attend*. If you decide to come at the last minute, please do so. Any restaurant can always serve one more meal.
Please let us know ASAP! Monti's needs a head count to give us a good room!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our last meeting was at Pier d' Orleans Restaurant on September 14th, when we heard from Jean L. Francois of Magusnet and Opnix on the topic of consulting opportunities in Linux. Jean is a successful Linux consultant and computer security expert. He made a very convincing case for the use Linux, and his presentation was very well received by a small, but enthusiastic, group. The key issues surrounding Linux were extensively discussed and debated.

Our next meeting will feature Lane Garret who will speak on utility deregulation opportunities. We are moving our meeting location back to Monti's (for the time being) in an attempt to provide our members with a more central locations

Your executive committee works to offer presentations and develop programs of general interest and usefulness to our members. Somehow we also need to find ways to make our practices more successful. With this in mind, please attend our meetings as an active member, whenever possible, and bring your practice improvement ideas and comments with you to share with the network. To advertise our practices we do have a local web page, with individual member listings. Please come to our meetings prepared to discuss new ideas and approaches for improving the consulting activity for our members

President's Message, Continued from Page 1

As always, all members are encouraged to submit newsworthy items to Vaughn Treude, for inclusion in our newsletter, so please be on the lookout. Humor is welcome as well, especially if it relates to consulting. [Note: Executive Board meetings are usually held at 8:30 am on Saturday mornings 12 days prior to each monthly meeting. These meetings are open to all members. Please contact Bruce Johnson if you wish to attend.]

Our informal meetings are designed for networking, to communicate with each other on a personal and professional level, and to enjoy a program and a meal together as a group with a common interest and dedication to the enterprise of consulting. Summaries of the next few monthly meeting programs are listed separately in this newsletter.

URLs Of Possible Interest

The home of the IEEE's Consultant's Networks, plus resources for entrepreneurs, researchers, and others seeking information on grant and business opportunities: www.ieeeusa.org/business/

A web page for consultants is located at www.consultme.com Services are listed by skill, specialty, name company name or professional title, and by location and availability. There is a fee for this service.

IEEE-USA's Web Employment Services Offered Worldwide: IEEE-USA's benchmark Web-based employment services are being made available and promoted to IEEE members worldwide. A new global employment services Web page describes how job seekers and employers outside the United States can avail themselves of the organization's Job Listing Service, Resume Referral service and consultants database. The site, located at www.ieeeusa.org/employment/global, also contains an invitation for non-U.S. regions and sections to contact IEEE-USA for assistance in promoting these services to their members.

A good general website for all of us in the PACN is www.ieeeusa.org. All IEEE PACN members, who are IEEE members, are strongly encouraged to obtain an IEEE email address, i.e. SMTL. You may do this quickly by starting at this URL.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The September PACN meeting was definitely an interesting one. Our speaker was Jean Francois, a local Linux developer and security guru. He has his own consulting firm, called MagusNet (www.magusnet.com), though he spends most of his time working for Opnix, the new business Internet bandwidth provider in Tempe. The topic was, officially, "Consulting Opportunities in Linux", though as usual we discussed just about everything. Jean is an interesting speaker who has a broad knowledge of Linux and security issues, so those of you that couldn't make it really missed out.

The only unfortunate thing was that our turnout was once again pretty small, which is normal for summer meetings but unusual for the rest of the year. Perhaps the electronic newsletter is not having the impact the paper version had. Or maybe the current meeting location is just not central enough. We have had complaints that central Mesa is just too far away for many people. (It's quite far for me, too.) We have decided to move the location back to Monti's for the next meeting. Hopefully, Monti's will have resolved their problems with service, and will be able to consistently get us rooms with sufficient space and ventilation. If they haven't, we will again be seeking a new venue. We (the Executive Board) would definitely appreciate any suggestions for an alternate meeting location. Ideally, it would be a place where we can have a nice dinner in a room without excessive noise, where we can schedule regular meetings, and which doesn't charge us any major fees above and beyond our food. Some place in Tempe or downtown Scottsdale would be a good central location. If it's not too far west for our Mesa members, something in the Phoenix Central Corridor or near the Squaw Peak Parkway might also be OK.

UCITA in the Crosshairs (Again)

One of the topics that came up at the September meeting was UCITA, the Uniform Computer Information Transactions Act. I hadn't heard much about this since the initial furor that accompanied its proposal a year or so ago, but it is still very much alive. For those that haven't been following it, UCITA is not a Federal law, but a model state law, one of many churned out each year by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws. UCITA proposes to clarify existing law that relates to the licensing of software and other information products. Its chief proponent is the Software and Information Industry Association (www.siiia.net), an industry group that includes many leading software and information companies such as Sun, Sybase, Motorola and America Online. (No, I couldn't find Microsoft in the list. By the way, the Arizona Software and Internet Association, of which I am a member, is an associate member of the SIIA.)

Editor's Notes, continued from Page 2

UCITA has many critics, that say it tips the scales too far toward software vendors and deprives consumers of their rights. One of the most active anti-UCITA groups is called "For a Competitive Information and Technology Economy" (www.4CITE.org). The IEEE also opposes the law (see www.ieeeusa.org/grassroots/ucita), as does the Arizona Attorney General's office. So far, Virginia and Maryland have adopted the law, but I don't think anyone else has.

This law is a difficult issue for me. As a libertarian, I support complete freedom of contract, as long as force and fraud are not involved. That doesn't mean I like or approve of all the activities I'd allow. If a software vendor has a very obnoxious shrink-wrap license, and the customers knowingly accept it, I think that's bad, but I have no right to interfere. On the other hand, maybe we shouldn't make things easier for these obnoxious companies by providing government support for their bad policies. To me, the most odious restriction in shrink-wrap licenses is the prohibition against "reverse engineering." This is merely a ploy to restrict competition and to prevent other developers (especially independent developers like myself) from creating products that are compatible with popular suites like, for example, Microsoft Office. I always click the "accept" button anyway, *because I know this provision isn't really enforceable*. If it was, I might think twice.

In the discussion at the September meeting, Jean Francois was vigorously opposed to UCITA, but also pointed out that it might indirectly aid the Open Source movement. If customers know that they have no legal recourse for buggy software, that the vendor can change the terms of the contract at will and even prohibit them from discussing the product publicly, they may decide to forego commercial software entirely. After all, one of the biggest problems preventing the expansion of Open Source software such as Linux and the GNU releases is a *perceived* lack of reliability and/or support. (That's isn't entirely true, but it's a hard perception to overcome.) If corporate IT managers see that expensive commercial software comes with absolutely no enforceable warranties, they may want to consider the alternatives.

I'm personally not going to lose sleep over UCITA, because I think the market will punish companies that misbehave, as Microsoft will soon learn. (I'm convinced that the government had to rush its anti-trust case against MS because they knew that the alleged "monopoly" would soon encounter the same rude awakening that IBM got back in the 1980's. The greatest fear of governments is that problems will be solved without their "help.") But I am going to keep my eye on UCITA, and if anybody asks, I'm *not* supporting it.

Note on Newsletter Format: I was going to try sending this out in PDF format this month, but due to a tight schedule and an eleventh-hour change of meeting location, I decided to keep it in RTF. Look for a possible PDF version this November.

Vaughn L. Treude, Editor

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The September Executive Board meeting was replaced by a telephone conference. We had originally planned to use an Internet-based conferencing product, but scratched that plan due to one of our member's PC hardware problems. The telephone conference proved to be no less of an adventure. Bruce Johnson attempted to augment Qwest's "three-way calling" feature with the use of a two-line speakerphone that supports conference calling through hardware. The plan worked, almost—everyone was connected, but for some reason, some of the participants had difficulty hearing other participants.

We discussed several topics. Foremost among them was the need to get our membership database in order. Vaughn Treude had inherited the database from Henry Burger, but hadn't had time to keep it sufficiently up to date. Paul Everett was put in charge of membership issues, and was charged with getting the database updated and producing a list to be distributed to members. We discussed converting the newsletter to PDF format (Vaughn will try a conversion product to accomplish this.) We talked about future meeting topics and possibly doing a consultant's workshop in 2001. Bruce also provided us with a list of video and audio tapes that are available for borrowing from the IEEE Region 6 library.

The October meeting was postponed due to scheduling conflicts, and will probably also be replaced by a short telephone conference. **Note:** Regularly scheduled meetings are normally held (almost) monthly at 8:30 AM on Saturdays, at Bruce Johnson's residence in Ahwatukee. These meetings are open to all members. Please contact Bruce Johnson if you wish to attend.

MEETING NOTICES

OCTOBER 12th MEETING

Consultants' Network member (and alternative energy expert) Lane Garret will speak on exciting new opportunities for consultants due to utility deregulation.

NOVEMBER 9th MEETING

The topic for this meeting will be the Palm Pilot and other Personal Digital Assistants. No speaker has yet been assigned; a round table discussion is a possibility.

DECEMBER 14th MEETING

As always, we will have our annual business meeting in December. Members will vote to select executive committee members for the following years, and accept or reject changes to the by-laws (if any.) There will be other program or guest speaker, but non-members are still welcome to attend.

OTHER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

We will gladly list other meetings of interest in this space. Contact the editor of this newsletter. We only ask that the meetings be of professional interest to our members. They do not have to be IEEE meetings.

The IEEE Phoenix Section Executive Committee usually meets on the first Monday of each month at 6 PM, and all IEEE members are welcome to attend. These meetings are currently being held at the SRP facility on Priest Road, between Washington and Van Buren.

The Phoenix Chapter of the **Independent Computer Consultants Association (ICCA)** meets the second Tuesday of each month with programs of interest to computer consultants, programming contractors, and others in the computer industry. Meetings are held at the West Coast Executive Park Hotel, 1100 North Central Avenue (just south of the Deck Park over I-10.) Meetings start at 6 PM for cocktails, 6:45 for dinner and 7:15 for the program (usually a guest speaker.) The cost of dinner is \$20 for members and \$25 for guests. Attending the meeting only is free for members and \$5 for guests. Call the ICCA hotline at 602-942-0667 for more information.

Tempe Tech Oasis "Techie Tuesday" – What is a Techie Tuesday? It's a chance to get together with friends and colleagues, talk business, talk shop, whatever you like... They are held at 6 PM on the second Tuesday of each and every month at different locations throughout Downtown Tempe. The next scheduled meeting is September 12th, at The Owl's Nest Saloon at 501 S. Mill Avenue, Ste. 301 (the S.E. corner of Fifth and Mill - right above Hooters.) The sponsor of this event is the Tempe Tech Oasis Alliance. Founding members: The Arizona Internet Professionals Association (www.azipa.org), the Arizona Software & Internet Association (www.azsoft.net) and the City of Tempe (www.tempe.gov.)

INTERNET TOPICS

The IEEE Phoenix Area Consultants Network maintains a web site with resumes of all members who wish to post one. It is a member benefit that is paid for in your membership fees. In addition there is a national directory of consultants and a national web site maintained by IEEE. The Phoenix network web site is:

www.amug.org/~lanegarr/ieeephx.html
www.etaengineering.com/ieeephx.html
www.accessarizona.com (select from groups menu)

MEMBER WEB SITES

Several members have given us their URL's. If we have omitted anyone, please let us know. The "http://" prefix is implied for all addresses below. For non-standard URL's (those not beginning with "www") this may need to be entered explicitly.

Paul M. Everett	www.everettinfrared.com
Lane S. Garret	www.etaengineering.com
Daryl Gerke	www.emiguru.com
Mark A. Goldstein	www.researchedge.com
C. Bruce Johnson	www.JohnsonScientificGroupInc.com
Andrew J. Maltenfort	www.arowave.com
William D. Morgan	www.amug.org/~bmorgan
Robert C. Rose	www.gshelp4u.com
Arthur H. M. Ross	www.cdg.org/tech/a_ross
Richard L. Tannehill	members.firstinter.net/rickw7rt
Vaughn L. Treude	www.nakota-software.com
Stan Vollertsen	www.stantronix.com
Walt White	www.southwestsoftware.com

The Advisor

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Member:	Paul Everett	(480) 706-4753
Member:	Vaughn Treude	(602) 750-3662

ADVISOR MEMBER LIST**October 2000**

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Craig, Howard	480-964-7996		howardCraig@earthlink.net	Labview programming, test engineering
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Fry, George	623-825-1645	623-825-6624	gfry@primenet.com	Semiconductor process, facilities, market research
Garrett, Lane S., PE, CEM	480-966-1380	480-966-1516	lanegarret@aol.com	New product development, alternative energy
Gerke, Daryl, PE	888-364-4878	480-838-9605	dgerke@emiguru.com	Electromagnetic interference and compatibility
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Goldstein, Mark A.	602-470-0389	602-470-0389	markg@xroads.com	Information brokering, market research
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Johnson, Dr. C. Bruce	480-759-2826	480-759-2826	bruce.johnson@ieee.org	New product development, night vision, optical sensors
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Koch, Edward, Jr.	602-953-2111	602-953-2111	ekochjr@worldnet.att.net	SW Project / program mgmt, embedded systems
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White, Walt	602-791-8029	602-494-3585	walt_white@southwestsoftware.com	DSP and embedded systems.
