IET **Communities**
The Institution of
Engineering and Technology

Volunteer Case Study: Richard Tregaskes

Richard Tregaskes from the Southern California Network has spent the past 20 years working as an Consultant helping clients in the UK, Middle East, Far East and now the USA improve their built environment through the appropriate use of technology. If you have travelled out of LAX or HKG airports, or taken high speed rail in the UK then you have probably seen some of the more public examples of Richard's work.
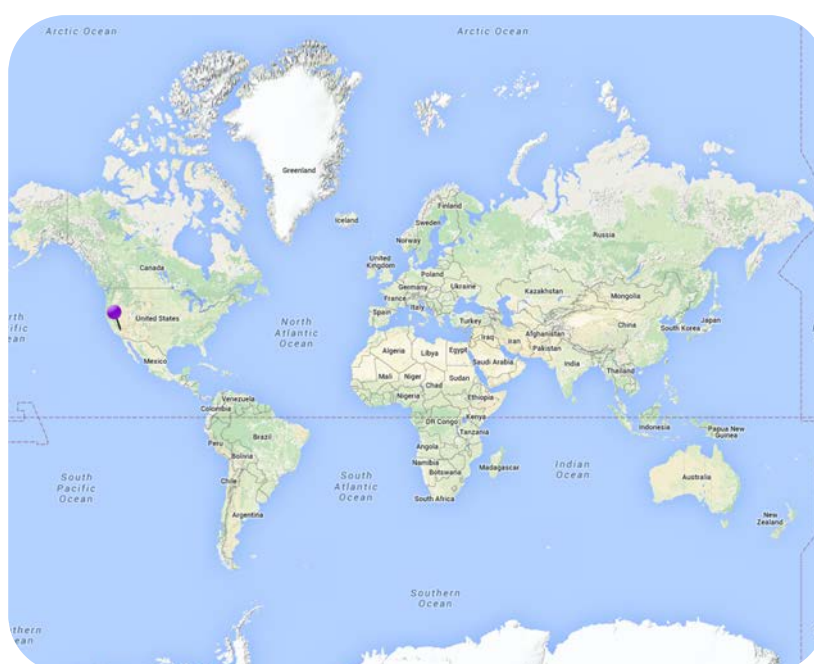
How did you become involved in the Southern California Network?

A number of years back as part of my FIET application process I discussed with my sponsoring local FIET restarting the Local Network (LN) which had been dormant at that point for several years. After a good number of years as Chairman I have recently taken on the role of Secretary.

You have developed a communications plan for your Local Network. What made you realise your LN needed one?

Our Local Network is more than just our local members, it includes the broader community which we live and work in. It is only by engaging with the full breadth of these communities that we as volunteers can help the IET with its mission to Inspire, Influence and Inform.

The IET is not as well-known as more prominent US based professional Engineering organisations so we struggled for many years in Southern California to raise awareness of what the IET can offer and to get any participants for a Present Around The World (PATW). After listening to students and faculty we adjusted our promotional message and held our first successful PATW. As Engineers we know that feedback is important so we reached out to the engineering college where our PATW winner was studying to inform them how well he had done in the hope of influencing them into publicising the PATW for us the next time it was held. The college was so delighted at one of their students out performing students at other local universities that they wrote an article on their website about the competition, which we in turn linked to from the PATW Facebook page.

It was the immediate success of getting somebody else to write about what we had done that led to the germination of the idea of being more disciplined in our communications with our community.

How does the communications matrix assist in your communications to the wider members?

We use our month by month list of Local Events to help identify a possible blog post on our Engineering Communities site. Blog posts are an enduring reminder of what the Local Network has been up to and shows the variety of technical talks and visits that we get up to. If we combine the blog posts with any events that are going to happen in the next month and any IET theme (e.g. Presidents Address or Achievement Awards) it is easy to create a few short paragraphs to put in a monthly Adestra email. Much of the content can be prepared in advance and grouped around the inform, inspire, influence theme and refined nearer to publication. By mixing global and local news and upcoming events and linking to more detailed content on our Engineering Communities site or the wider IET site we hope our audience is influenced to participate locally both by attending and hosting events.

As a Local Network we are not going to grow our sphere of influence in our community if we just rely on emailing those people who have been to events in the past. By creating a matrix of events and topics what we want to talk about, we can identify months in advance the relevant local professional organisation to partner with to mutually publicise events.

Month	IET Events / Focus	SoCal Event	Blog Post / Community Site	Newsletter Contents		
				Inform	Influence	Inspire
January	AF Harvey Research Prize	PATW Prep at LMU (YP)	Newsletter	AF Harvey Research Prize	PATW	FLL Donation
February			Newsletter	Thank PATW Prep Sponsor	Wet Design Promo	Sphero Donation suggestions
March		WET Design, PATW	WET Design	WET Design Blog Post	OC Vital Link	PATW
April		OC Vital Link STEAM	PATW blog	Edwards AFB	CVC feedback to David	PATW
May	LN Budget Prep		FLL and Sphero blog / Photos	California LinkedIn group	SCE Electric Vehicle Technical Centre	FLL and Sphero
June	CVC, Innovation Awards	SCE Electric Vehicle Technical Centre		DR & BCP - A practitioners perspective		Innovation Awards
July		DR & BCP - A Practitioners Perspective	SCE Electric Vehicle Technical Centre	SCE Electric Vehicle Technical Centre Blog post	DR & BCP - A Practitioners Perspective Promo	Volunteering Opportunities
August	Americas PATW		DR & BCP - A Practitioners Perspective	JPL Talk		
September		JPL Talk	JPL Talk	Americas PATW		JPL Talk
October	President's Address					Presidents Address
November	Achievement Awards				Christmas Lunch	
December		Christmas Lunch			Merry Christmas, Advertise 2017 Calendar	

Southern California Communications Matrix

What benefits has it brought to the network and its activities?

The matrix has allowed us locally to have a consistent message where one event (and write-up) can be used as leverage to enable other events. In the 12 months since the PATW win was publicised I understand that our winner (and now IET YP) has now been awarded a scholarship and is being provided assistance in bringing his idea to market, all from taking five minutes to follow up with a tailored message after PATW.

The Faculty also helped enable our first YP event at that University and we were able to persuade a local engineering employer to sponsor the costs of the event in return for a few recruiting slides at the end, all based on the PATW write up showing the potential those students had. That employer was publically thanked for the sponsorship which in turn led to one of their competitors sponsoring the next YP event. Concurrently we were arranging a technical visit and we could use those event sponsorships as leverage for our YP's on the visit to bring in their resumes and talk directly to those involved in recruiting graduates and interns.

These examples can then be used as evidence when talking to YP's to help inspire them to get involved with the IET and its activities in Southern California. We hope this sort of effort is helping our community realise that the IET isn't just something 5500 miles away, but something local too.

Do you think others LNs could benefit from using something similar?

Yes, as this time of year is dedicated to planning for the next year, creating a month by month schedule of what your Local Network is up to and therefore what you could to reach out to your local community about takes next to no effort. As the year progresses and circumstances change the matrix can be updated.

With a bit of forward thinking we can plan our speakers and technical visits to coincide with topics or themes that the IET is promoting at any time of the year such as Awards, the Presidential Address and so forth. Last year at the same time the IET was talking about self-driving cars and we were able to build on that global message by arranging a visit to Google to hear about their self-driving car.

While the theme of the message can remain consistent, the content will need to be adjusted to resonate for each audience, and it is important to remember each audience (blog post reader, Adestra subscriber, twitter follower) is slightly different. For example, the University wanted to publicise the success of their student, the engineering employers were more concerned about getting access to future employees of that calibre, but everything happened by communicating the success of one YP in a way that resonated with each of the target audiences.

If you want to see examples of this in action I suggest subscribing to the Southern California Adestra Newsletter through MyIET or Engineering Communities.

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