

maximizing membership

I recently read a blog post by a company called 4C Technologies that really hit the mark in terms of describing the “Top 10 Reasons to Join a Professional Organization.” Below, I take those top 10 reasons to join and have tailored them to how ITEEA achieves and exceeds in terms of what members value. And while I hope each of you is familiar with all of the benefits of ITEEA membership detailed below, I suspect you might find a few that you weren’t even aware of.

1. **Broaden your knowledge.** ITEEA is working to create several new avenues for member education in the 2016-17 school year. We’re introducing a webinar series that kicks off in August, which is FREE to ITEEA members. The first in the series, which took place recently, was hosted by Jorge Valenzuela of Richmond Public Schools on the topic “Authentic Project-Based Learning in Technology and Engineering Education.” In addition to the free webinar series is a complete series of PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) on a broad range of topics including “Nature of and Definition of I-STEM Education, Maximizing Your STEM Lab: Best Practices, and Whole School Engagement: Funding Your Integrative STEM Education Initiatives.” PLCs are scheduled for each month from now until June (ITEEA members receive a registration discount).
2. **Take charge of your career.** Did you know that ITEEA has a website area called “Career Connection”? This is a resource dedicated to matching those who are seeking employment with those who are seeking qualified employees. The webpage allows employers to post job opportunities as well as ITEEA members to post resumes.
3. **Build a better resume.** In addition to being able to list your membership in an international professional association on your resume, ITEEA and its Foundation for Technology and Engineering Educators (FTEE) give awards and scholarships to support the advancement of technology and engineering education. Scholarship opportunities exist for members who are current graduate or undergraduate students, teachers, and/or veterans. Literally thousands of dollars are awarded to ITEEA members each year. Members can also apply for—or nominate someone for—awards such as Program and Teacher Excellence, Emerging Leader, and Distinguished Technology and Engineering Educator.
4. **Enhance your network.** I encourage you to flip back to page 5 of this journal, where you will find a terrific list of no fewer than TEN ways you can “up” your networking via ITEEA. Whether you choose to follow ITEEA on Facebook (where you will find resources



and news on an almost daily basis), participate on ITEEA’s IdeaGarden forum (a unique resource where educators can ask—and answer—questions on a variety of topics), or attend an ITEEA conference (which includes the extra networking bonus of taking part in the STEM Showcase), the networking opportunities are numerous and effective!

5. **Be a leader.** Membership in ITEEA offers countless opportunities to develop or enhance leadership skills. ITEEA could not function without the dedication of countless volunteers. The association is regularly looking to add individuals to its standing Committees (e.g., Awards, Conference Programming, Membership), and its Review/Management Boards (e.g., Emerging Leader, Distinguished Technology and Engineering Professional, *Technology and Engineering Teacher*). As a committee member, you have a stronger voice in the future of ITEEA and its membership, awards, publications, and more. You can also hone leadership skills by applying to present as either a session leader or a STEM Showcase participant.

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should consider helping to lead the association as a Board of Directors member.

6. **Become a mentor.** ITEEA has been working to build its Peer Mentoring Taskforce and seeks individuals who are willing to serve as mentors to new members—as well as those who feel they could benefit as mentees. The mentoring program allows current and future ITEEA members to grow and learn through the mentoring process and helps them become key professionals working to make a difference. Mentors and mentees assist one another and the larger profession by becoming involved with the larger picture of education.
7. **Make a new friend.** There are a number of ways to make personal contacts within ITEEA. One great way, albeit electronically, is via the IdeaGarden forum. This tight-knit group of educators get to “know” one another by regularly offering one another information, insights, and support. Each year at the ITEEA conference, the “Gardeners” come together for a special session where they always enjoy putting names to faces. And speaking of the conference, each year we build in plenty of activities geared towards helping people get to know one another, including a networking reception, tours, and food functions.
8. **Give back to the community.** The ITEEA community can always use your talents and experiences. As was stated earlier, we couldn't function without our army of volunteers. These volunteers are the backbone of the association and give freely of their time and talents to assist in numerous ways. Those great articles you read in *Technology and Engineering Teacher* and *Children's Technology and Engineering*? Each one was volunteered. Remember checking in at the ITEEA conference? The vast majority of the folks behind the counters were volunteers. Almost all of the conference presenters are volunteers. Eleven out of twelve members of the Board of Directors are volunteers.
9. **Strength in numbers.** As an ITEEA member, you have access to like-minded individuals with whom you can more easily achieve your shared goals for the profession. ITEEA works tirelessly on your behalf to create partnerships that are intended to benefit both members and the field. Here is a short list of just a few of the partnerships created by ITEEA within the past few years:
 - a. **National Science Teachers Association.** ITEEA has partnered with NSTA on several key initiatives, including the July 2016 STEM Forum and as part of a project to establish top “STEM trade books.” Also, ITEEA's Safety Expert has been named to the NSTA Safety Board, thereby ensuring the appropriate representation of technology and engineering classroom and lab safety.
 - b. **Technology Student Association.** ITEEA has visibly increased its presence at the annual TSA conference, and in July of this year, led the TSA National Problem Solving Event. ITEEA and TSA regularly collaborate on a

variety of efforts that benefit members of both associations.

- c. **LinkEngineering.** ITEEA has partnered with the National Academy of Engineering, NSTA, ASEE, and others in the creation of the LinkEngineering website—an online community of educators interested in providing meaningful engineering experiences to PreK-12 students of all abilities.
 - d. **American Society for Engineering Education.** A reciprocal arrangement in which ITEEA and ASEE support one another's conferences as partners—as exhibitors, advertisers, and via website presence.
 - e. **Society for American Military Engineers.** Through this partnership, SAME helped to add 25 District of Columbia Elementary Schools with limited resources as ITEEA Elementary School Members.
10. **Stay inspired and stay motivated.** It is my hope and goal that each of you will take just a bit of time to DISCOVER some new aspect of your ITEEA membership. There are myriad opportunities and benefits associated with being part of this organization, and it just makes sense to MAXIMIZE what you are paying for. In case you haven't heard, ITEEA launched a completely “re-engineered” website early this year, and it boasts tools that every member should be taking advantage of. I see ITEEA members finding inspiration and motivation every single day—but the key is something I tell my kids about school: “You get out of it what you put into it.” ITEEA has a long and proud history. Just imagine what it can achieve if EVERY member found ways to both support his or her career, and also to contribute to his or her ITEEA colleagues.

It has been an honor and privilege to work on your behalf for nearly two decades. I've said it before but I'll say it again: ITEEA members are my heroes! You are the front line in the effort to make tomorrow's citizens technologically literate—and therefore better positioned to make educated decisions about their (and our) future. If I can ever be of assistance to anyone in any way, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address below. Have a wonderful school year!

Reference

- 4CTechnologies. (2013). *Top 10 reasons to join a professional organization*. Retrieved from <http://blog.cccctech.com/top-10-reasons-to-join-a-professional-organization/>



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