

Technical Programming

The Best Practices noted on this page deal with the area of Technical Programming

One of the basic tenets of the SPE is to be the premier and primary provider of technical information to the plastics industry. The following offers a list of ideas and resources available to help Divisions (and Sections) further this objective. These ideas include:

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A. Technical Focus Groups

Plastics technology is continually evolving. Management groups such as Division Boards of Directors can become so involved with administrative tasks that new technologies and developments may, at times, be overlooked. Technical Focus Groups (TFG's) can be formed to help minimize the chance of this happening.

- At least one Division uses TFG's to identify and then track emerging or non-mainstream technologies that fall under or parallel to the overall umbrella of the Division's interests. One version of this involves: identification of new technologies that may impact the Division's industry; assigning a coordinator to track these technologies; and scheduling periodic updates by the coordinator to the Membership. (Extrusion.)
- Another Division uses TFG's to identify and track technologies within the mainstream of the Division's interests. (Polymer Analysis.)
- One Division recommends that TFG's should, within a reasonable period of time, lead to a Division- or jointly-sponsored technical session at ANTEC. If this does not occur, then the technology might not be worth following.(Extrusion.)

B. MiniTech's

Provide technical information to the SPE membership through a local, inexpensive, half-day (or day-long) forum, called a "MiniTech". For example, the Extrusion Division has established the following guidelines for MiniTech's:

- Identify key topics of relevance to the membership by consulting with Board Members, industry contacts, and interested local Sections with "concentrated" Division membership.
- Develop presentations that span introductory basics to advanced subject matter.
- Advertise the developed list of topics to SPE Sections.
- Coordinate with local Sections to identify subject areas of interest and presentation "level" for the audience.
- Local sections are responsible for all administrative tasks.
- Program is typically held in conjunction with a Section meeting to promote attendance.
- Many (most) presenters are members of the Division's Board of Directors.
- Program is typically held in conjunction with a scheduled Division Board meeting to minimize travel costs and maximize scheduling efficiency for presenters.

C. Organizing a Conference

The "how to's" of organizing a successful conference can be daunting. Following are some tips, as well as some groups your Division should consult.

- The SPE's "Conference Manual" offers a great deal for sound advice on site selection, hotel negotiation, and local logistics. Contact Julieann Shaker, Event Coordinator for a copy.
- Several Divisions run successful annual conferences that might serve as models. (Color & Appearance, Thermoforming.)
- The Thermoforming Division has developed a conference manual which may also offer other Divisions ideas and guidance. (Thermoforming.)
- One smaller Division "piggy-backs" onto an existing conference of a sister Division and offers a one-day session of its own. (Decorating & Assembly with Thermoforming.)

D. ANTEC Technical Program Framework/Timeline

As they say, the Devil is in the details. Following are a few ideas from successful Divisions:

- The job of ANTEC Technical Program Chair (TPC) is a significant time commitment. Ideally, this person does not have additional technical programming responsibilities. (Extrusion.)
- A detailed timeline of ANTEC Technical Program Chair and Paper Review Committee tasks has been developed. (Extrusion.)
- A set of Technical Program Chair and Paper Review related procedures and forms has also been developed, including paper review guidelines, paper review scoring forms, timelines, and a condensed checklist of TPC member responsibilities. (Injection Molding.)
- At least four Divisions routinely schedule a face-to-face TPC Paper Review Meeting to review and select papers. (Injection Molding; Extrusion; Polymer Modifiers & Additives; Vinyl.)
- At least one Division presents mostly invited papers. The benefit to this approach is that the program has a design with quality papers and presenters. (Marketing & Management.)

E. Technical Program Structure/Committee

- Technical programming extends well-beyond just ANTEC in some Divisions.
- At least two Divisions maintain extensive, detailed, active Technical Programming committees. (Color & Appearance; Vinyl.)
- Color and Appearance Division has an extensive 14-person Committee (some appointed, some elected), while other Divisions have a single person Committee.
- Consequently, the specific responsibilities of the TPC can also vary. Primarily, the TPC is responsible for all technical programming including ANTEC and any Division Conferences.
- The TPC can assign Board Members to monitor long-range or emerging technical trends to guide future technical programming. At least one Division uses "Technical Focus Groups" to monitor embryonic technologies and to provide exception reporting to its Board. (Extrusion Div. "TFG's Report to Chair-Elect")

F. Intra-Society Programs

Many technical programs are presented each year through the mutual cooperation of various SPE Divisions, Sections, Special Interest Groups, and Student Chapters. Specific examples are listed below:

- Division/Section MiniTech's (Extrusion Division + Sections)

- Division/Section Awards Night (Automotive Division + Detroit Section)
- Division/Section Meetings (Plastic Design & Development Division + Rochester Section)
- Division Speakers List

G. Inter-Society Programs

Many technical programs are presented each year through the cooperation of various SPE Divisions and other non-SPE professional organizations. Some examples are listed below:

- Best Paper Exchange. At ANTEC, the Extrusion Division and TAPPI hold a joint session where 5 or 6 of the best papers from TAPPI are presented. An equal number of ANTEC film-related papers are presented at the annual TAPPI meeting. This exchange has existed since the '80's.
- In 2001, the Automotive Division held its second annual "Global Automotive Safety Conference", aimed at a broad audience of both plastics and non-plastics professionals in the automotive community. (Automotive.)
- In 2000, the Polymer Analysis Division held a joint technical conference on "Thermal Mechanical Testing of Polymers" with SPE's Philadelphia Section, two ASTM Committees, and the Thermal Analysis Society. (Polymer Analysis Division.)
- The Polymer Analysis Division has organized a joint conference with TMS (The Materials, Metals, and Minerals Society).

For further information about this example and how your SPE Division or Section can adapt this Best Practice, contact Tricia McKnight