

AICN Newsletter

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GET TO KNOW THE NEW IEEE-USA CONSULTANT FINDER: WHAT IS IT? HOW DOES IT HELP ME?

The IEEE-USA Consultants Database recently became the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder, powered by IEEE Collabratec](#). This redesigned service will maintain all the key features of its predecessor: simple and advanced search features, an assignment placement portal, and a full consultant profile for paid subscribers.

IEEE-USA's Consultant Finder comes with a new visual update, making it easier to use than ever before. It is also now searchable by web crawlers, so even more potential clients will be able to find your consultant profile. In addition, this service will continue to be free for clients, project managers and HR professionals to search for consultants like you to hire, or to [post a consulting or contract assignment](#).

“People associate quality and respect with the IEEE brand name,” said Gary Blank, IEEE-USA's 2014 President. “That's a big advantage for the IEEE-USA Consultant Finder. Since only IEEE members can post profiles, project managers

searching the database know they're getting a certain level of excellence.”

Blank, a long-time subscriber, has personally seen the success the database brings. “I've gotten a lot of consulting business from the platform,” said Blank. “More people ought to take advantage of it, because it really works!”

If you are already a consultant, or are curious about getting started in the gig economy, the IEEE-USA Consultant Finder is a very handy tool. Invest in yourself—subscribe today for just \$49.50. Sign into your IEEE account, and add the [IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium](#). If you are already a subscriber, just log in via [IEEE Collabratec](#) (or the IEEE Collabratec App) to review and update your profile. You can also take advantage of new features—like adding a photo; uploading a short biography; and listing your desired salary, or hourly rate.

For a closer look at the new features of the new Consultant Finder; and to find out how to get started, check out IEEE IT Manager Karen McLean's [free webinar](#). ■

For questions, comments or submissions
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<https://ieeeusa.org/careers/consultants/>

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UPWORK RANKS IN DEMAND SKILLS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER 2019

In April, Upwork—the largest global freelancing website—released its [Quarterly Skills Index](#) that ranks the fastest-growing freelance skills in the first quarter 2019. While most of the skills listed are not directly related to the engineering profession, IEEE consultants may want to take note of one or two of the items listed. ■



IEEE AND AMAZON WEB SERVICES OFFER NEW GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES TO IEEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

New benefits include \$10,000 in AWS promotional credit, AWS business support and training

On June 17, 2019, IEEE signed an agreement with Amazon Web Services (AWS). Under the agreement, Amazon will provide IEEE members currently building their own businesses with complimentary service credits to the AWS Activate program. This collaboration will provide tools to help members launch and grow their entrepreneurial ventures.

“Through the AWS Activate program, AWS provides access to the cloud resources that are fueling the growth of exciting startups and global enterprises alike,” said Troy Bertram, Director, Business Development, Amazon Web Services, Inc. “We look forward to working with IEEE to put the full potential of the cloud into the hands of builders so that they can scale and thrive.”

In addition to sponsoring the activities of the IEEE Entrepreneurship Community, the AWS Activate program will provide IEEE Entrepreneurship Community members with access to cloud computing resources including \$10,000 in AWS Promotional Credit, one year of AWS Business Support and access to Self-Paced Labs for training. All IEEE members are able to join the IEEE Entrepreneurship Community and participate in the program.

“IEEE and AWS share a common commitment to support engineering-driven startups and to encourage their growth and expansion,” said Stephen Welby, IEEE Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer. “We look forward to working together with Amazon as an anchor sponsor of the IEEE Entrepreneurship Community’s programs and services, to identify opportunities to help our IEEE members create successful enterprises.”

For detailed information, visit https://entrepreneurship.ieee.org/aws_activate/. ■

IEEE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES THAT BENEFIT INDEPENDENT IEEE CONSULTANTS

IEEE and IEEE-USA are always working to provide products and services to its members deciding to branch out on their own, and start their own consulting practices. As you know, the Alliance of IEEE Consultants Networks Coordinating Committee (AICNCC) has been traveling throughout the United States, and has observed that many IEEE members are unaware of the products and services available to them.

Following are some of the IEEE-USA products and services you should take advantage of:

The [Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Network Coordinating Committee \(AICNCC\)](#): The AICNCC is a standing committee IEEE-USA created to support U.S. IEEE self-employed members' career interests. For the past several years, this committee has traveled throughout the United States—collaborating with local consultants networks—to hold in-person workshops on all topics covering what it takes to become a full-time, independent consultant.

In addition, the AICNCC's objectives include fostering the growth of local consultants' networks in the United States; encouraging consultants to join existing local networks, or form new ones; promoting the use of independent technical and engineering consultants by industry and business; and providing educational activities for self-employed members.

Through this committee, IEEE-USA also provides consultants:

- A quarterly [AICNCC Consultants Newsletter](#)
- The annual IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey and [IEEE-USA Consultants Fee Survey Report](#)
- [eBooks](#) on consulting
- Instructions on [how to start an IEEE local consultants network](#)
- A [Sample Consultant Agreement](#)
- Timely live and archived [webinars](#) on a variety of consultant topics

A brand new highlight of IEEE-USA's products and services for consultants is the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder](#). The IEEE-USA Consultant Finder is a central location, where consultants can create public profiles containing their expertise and contact information. Clients and businesses searching for electrical engineering consultants are able to access this public site, and use different search features to find the right consultant.

IEEE Services

IEEE members can also access other services through other platforms, such as the [IEEE Consultants Network](#). Through this subscription, IEEE members will automatically get a copy of the IEEE-USA AICN Quarterly

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Newsletter; be alerted to webinars addressing consultants' issues; and subscribers will be eligible to join the IEEE [Consultants Exchange online community](#) in IEEE Collabratec. Subscribing to this service is free of charge.

IEEE also offers members a fee-based subscription, the [IEEE Consultants Network Membership Premium](#). Through this subscription, members receive everything that IEEE Consultant Network subscribers receive; and in addition, these subscribers can place their profiles in the [IEEE-USA Consultant Finder](#).

Also – the IEEE Member Discounts team program information is located in our newly formatted web page at www.ieee.org/discounts. IEEE members can find group insurance for home and small business use. Consultants also may be interested in the attractive group rates of IEEE Member Group Term Life insurance, 10-Year Level Term insurance, 20-Year Level Term Insurance, or Disability Insurance.

Note some special benefits of IEEE Life and Disability Insurance Plans:

- Critical Illness Rider for the Term Life Plan
- Buy-up Benefit for the Disability Income Insurance Plan

Other products for the self-employed include:

- Professional Liability insurance
- General Liability (for certain circumstances)
- Small Employer Group Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Long-Term Care Insurance

[The IEEE Professional Liability Program](#)* for IEEE members counters risks you face and protects you from negligent acts, errors and omissions in your consulting jobs and contracts. In addition, the IEEE Member Professional Liability Insurance Program now offers IEEE members' access to a Choice Platform, which provides them with a choice of coverage options from leading IEEE-approved insurers, such as Certain Underwriters at Lloyd's of London and/or Beazley Insurance Company.

Consultants may also find it interesting that IEEE's Member Discounts team also offers great savings on:

- Dell Small Business Systems and personal computing machines
- UPS discounts for shipping and freight

New to the Member Discount offerings is the "Member Discounts Marketplace." Currently featured discounts include R&D tax credit services; Cyber security webcams and microphone blockers; visual productivity software

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for individuals and teams; and cyber security training courses. Consultants can login with your IEEE Web account to unlock exclusive discounts that reveal the brand names of these products.

For entrepreneurs, IEEE has created the [InnovationQ Plus](#). This new product is a patent discovery and analytics platform that combines the power of a machine, learning-based search engine, with a global patent database and critical IEEE content to quickly sift through millions of complex documents—to find relevant prior articles, and uncover powerful insights. InnovationQ Plus enables IP discovery, analysis, and mapping of patent and non-patent material in one easy-to-use, highly accurate search tool. ■



THE GIG ECONOMY

As a companion piece to the 19 July IEEE-USA webinar, "[Gig Economy - How to Keep Your Day Job and Your Side Hustle](#)," this newsletter has linked to an article from the American Marketing Association. The title of the article is "[Going Solo: The Rise of the Gig Economy](#)." While the article focuses on the marketing industry, it provides a great overview of what is happening in the world of consulting and freelancers. It makes the point that the marketing landscape is evolving, and companies are increasingly engaging highly skilled freelance marketers to support a multitude of projects and global campaigns. IEEE-USA believes the field of engineering has always had that strong segment of companies looking to hire highly skilled consultants and freelancers, to solve problems and support large-scale projects. ■



SIMPLIFY YOUR EXPERTISE...

IEEE-USA's [Alliance of IEEE Consultants' Networks Coordinating Committee \(AICNCC\)](#) member Daryl Gerke, P.E., often shares his musing and advice to the world through his website: www.jumptoconsulting.com.

IEEE-USA found this blog post interesting, and is reprinting it for your reading pleasure:

This post was inspired by another recent [post from fellow AZ blogger](#) (and a person I have long admired) Pamela Slim. She started off with this quote, which I borrowed:

"In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's there are few." – Shunryu Suzuki

It got me thinking about our roles as consultants. Most of us have wide knowledge and experience in our areas of expertise. As such, we could offer many possible solutions to the problems our clients face.

But our real value is the ability to winnow those possibilities down to a select few, and then make recommendations. Much like a doctor (also a professional consultant) who makes a diagnosis, followed by a prescription, or recommended course of action.

So how do you do this? You begin by asking questions, and then carefully listening to those answers.

Those answers may lead to more questions, so you dig deeper.

As a consulting engineer, I've long followed a methodology used by medical doctors known as *differential diagnosis*. I first heard this term from a client whose brother was an MD. As we were troubleshooting his problem, he shared this approach he had learned from his brother.

Later, I had a chance to expand my understanding, thanks to an MD from the Mayo Clinic. An airplane seat mate, I asked about the term. As a teaching doctor, he broke into a big smile and shared his knowledge (and wisdom) as

we flew across the country. The flight was most memorable, and has since influenced my consulting approach.

The goal is to "rule things in – rule things out." For example, the Mayo MD said, "If a patient presents with a red rash, there may be a hundred possible causes. However, with some additional information (such as vital signs, or simple questions) one may be able to quickly reduce this to but a few possibilities.

Based on that, you begin by treating the most likely cause. Even then, you are playing the probabilities, so if the initial treatment does not solve the problem, move to the next most likely solution. Or, as mom and dad used to say, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again..."

I have since modified the approach. Rather than prioritizing solely on probabilities, I first try the very simple solutions. I learned this after spending several days trying most likely solutions, while ignoring an easy low probability solution that worked. A bit embarrassing.

Doing this also gives rise to an occasional consulting miracle. For example, even if the simple solution has a 1% probability of success, that still means that one out of a hundred times, it works. And when it does, everyone thinks you are a genius.

Finally, don't just treat the symptoms – seek to treat the cause. The goal is to not only understand the problem, but to identify the underlying root cause of the problem. Asking questions, digging deeper, and using differential diagnosis all help. ■

Daryl Gerke, P.E., is the co-founder and surviving partner of Kimmel Gerke Associates, an electrical engineering consulting firm focused on EMI/EMC (electromagnetic interference and compatibility) design issues. Gerke is an IEEE Senior Life Member, and a long-time member of the IEEE EMC Society. Daryl can be reached at daryl@jumptoconsulting.com. You can visit his consulting site at www.emiguru.com.