



## President's Column

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### Why does LEOS exist? "It's the quality, stupid!"

*"Quality is the result of a carefully constructed environment. It has to be the fabric of the organization, not part of the fabric." Philip Crosby, Business Consultant.*

Over the years, the governance of LEOS continually struggles with a set of important questions, including: (a) What services should we offer our members?, (b) How do we grow membership?, (c) Why do members join and stay with LEOS?, (d) How can we improve our present member benefits?, and (e) What do we want to be in 5-10 years? The answers might seem random and certainly depend on the particular topic, activity, and era. For example, the emergence of the Web has dramatically shifted our thinking across all activities.

Just like in engineering, it is often useful to deconstruct issues down to their "fundamental and guiding principles." In other words, "Why does LEOS exist?"

My top three reasons are quality, quality, and quality. (Note that the title to this column is a one-word change of a 1992 presidential campaign slogan of U.S. President Bill Clinton.)

Let's start with a simple fact. There are a multitude of publications and conferences in the public domain, even free ones, and yet many thousands of people read our journals and come to our conferences. One of peoples' most valuable assets is their time, and they spend it on LEOS activities.

### What is "Quality?"

*"Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intension, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives." William A. Foster, Author.*

Among many other descriptions, quality is the striving for excellence and the ensuring of intellectual honesty. It is something with which we like to associate ourselves. In fact, all of my mentors throughout my career have shared these basic characteristics, in addition to being very nice, caring, and fair people.

People seek quality, and an organization that can provide an assurance of quality brings great value to a customer. Based on years of striving for excellence, IEEE LEOS has this kind of brand recognition to our community. Engineers proudly display the fact that they have papers published in our journals and conferences, and they are even more proud to say they are LEOS Fellows.

*"Never waiver from (quality). When you compromise, you become a commodity and then you die." Gary Hirshberg, Business.*

Is LEOS more relevant today than in yester-year? Absolutely "yes"!! The Web, for all it's wonders, deluges us in a maelstrom of information. A critical problem for people is discerning the quality material from the junk. LEOS to the rescue! Our excellent members, volunteers, committee members, reviewers, authors and staff ensure a high level of quality that people have come to expect.

I am actually happy when a member gets upset if quality is not up to their standards (i.e., a paper was published that shouldn't have been) since it is the exception that proves the rule – that the community expects nothing less that the highest quality from us!

Do all of LEOS' strategic issues boil down to the pursuit of "quality?" Perhaps. Let's examine some fuzzy concepts, such as the pursuit of more members, or of greater diversity in geography and technical background. Note that LEOS is NOT interested in "social engineering." However, in the long-term, we are certainly stronger as a community if we encourage development across different, broadly-defined interacting segments so that overall quality can flourish.

What about maintaining a balanced budget and a healthy financial reserve? Money is necessary

so that we provide our members with a quality service and, importantly, that we are not forced to base decisions of technical matters on budgetary reasons. For example, a real business might operate by: (i) rejecting a higher percentage of manuscripts because it might cost too much to print them, not because the quality was too low, or (ii) inviting a technical speaker because the person's company gave a hefty amount of money in sponsorship. Our members would rightly not tolerate this.

### **Don't Take Quality for Granted**

*"Quality is not an act, it is a habit." Aristotle.*

When I was in school, many people tried to play match-maker and introduce me to eligible women. The match-maker would always ask me for my list of desired attributes. One time, I went out with a girl who seemed to be down-right unkind to people. I asked the match-maker as to the reason why I was introduced to this person. "Nice wasn't part of your list of attributes," she said. Wow! I had always taken for granted that being nice was the zeroth-order quality that I was looking for, but I had subconsciously taken it for granted.

We should never take quality for granted. As a society, LEOS members must always be vigilant to infuse the highest quality into everything we do. My father was fon of saying that I should "always keep my eye on the ball and not get distracted," and quality is the "ball" for LEOS.

### **Our Most Valuable Asset**

*"Associate yourself with people of good quality, for it is better to be alone than in bad company." Booker T. Washington, Educator and Inventor.*

I want to share a statistic that actually makes me proud. The vast majority of attendees and authors at our conferences, as well as authors and readers of our journals, are NOT LEOS members!! We continually wonder as to various ways to entice these people to become members, but a key point is that our product is of such high quality that there is a significant NEED for LEOS in our broader community.

*"Quality means doing it right when no one is looking." Henry Ford, Industrialist.*

It is written in Ecclesiastes that "a good name is better than expensive oils." LEOS has a great name. Even within IEEE as a whole, our society is known as having a very high percentage of technical stars. I will always be ultimately proud to associate myself with our activities and with our people. As a society, let's always guard our most precious asset, our high-quality reputation. It is the reason that we exist!

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