



# PACE NEWS

Professional  
Activities  
Committee for  
Engineers

By R. Tax

## 1983 IEEE Careers Conference

By ROBERT BRUCE

As a member of the USAB Task Force on Career Maintenance and Development, I attended the 1983 Careers Conference in Palo Alto on October 27 and 28. The Task Force ran the Conference, although one Task Force member, Wally Decker, was the Conference chairman and did 95% of the arranging. Since this was the second Careers Conference that Wally chaired, he received a USAB Citation of Honor. I think he deserved it.

Carole Patton of EE Times also received a USAB award for her outstanding journalistic coverage of IEEE affairs. This award is also well deserved, since many IEEE members declare that they get more and better information from EE Times than from IEEE publications.

About 130 people attended the Conference, of which about 75% were either personnel professionals or sociology professors. The rest were engineers or engineering managers. The Conference contained a wide spectrum of papers and panel discussions about engineering careers and how to preserve them. Gene Dalton and Paul Thompson gave talks at the Conference. You may remember these two professors from Brigham Young University, as the men who popularized the study of engineering careers in 1974 with their (then) shocking article entitled "Accelerating the Obsolescence of Engineers."

Probably the most amusing talk and the one that best contained the viewpoint of the practicing engineer was given by a Long Island engineer named Charles Nicita. You may remember him as the author whose scowling face appeared next to his Viewpoint in the August '83 issue of INSTITUTE. Charlie, also a member of the Career Maintenance Task Force, received an ovation for his talk. His topic was an engineer's reaction to a new publication about professional practices.

Perhaps the most significant event of the Conference was an announcement by Marlin Ristenbatt, 1982 Task Force Chairman, that the Task Force had just published (with USAB approval) a booklet entitled "Professional Practices for Engineers, Scientists, and Their Employers," which was the result of five years work. The booklet describes practices by both employer and employee that enhance careers of employed professionals. I would like to list the practices, to give you the flavor of the booklet. Employer practices come first.

1. Adopt a stable employment policy as a general goal ("no-layoff" policy).
2. Consistently provide for the continuing personal growth and technical development of the professional.
3. Recognize alternate career concepts (allow engineers to stay engineers).
4. Commit to, and promote internal mobility (job transfer and rotation).
5. Improve rewards for technical performance.
6. Increase the scope of assigned responsibility with increasing experience.
7. Increase recognition for technical performance. (Similar to but not identical with item 5).
8. Improve the environment (two-way communication and adequate support).

Next come employee practices.

1. Take responsibility for your own career.
2. Participate in the leadership (whether or not you're a manager).
3. Improve your value.
4. Communicate upward.
5. Perform like a professional.
6. Avoid routine work (utilize paraprofessionals).
7. Be a mature realist.
8. Registration/Certification (back it and do it).

To some readers, these Practices may sound like homilies. To that reaction, I say the Practices assume more substance, when the complete text is read. These are just paragraph headings. The above list is derived from the actual employment practices of successful electronics companies and their employees. The rest of the technical business community can no longer ignore what has been published in this booklet. The "Declaration of the Rights of Man" is not universally adhered to, but its great acceptance is a form of persuasion.

The Task Force is now examining ways of gaining acceptance and endorsement of these Practices by companies that employ engineers and scientists. Readers interested in participating, writing critiques, or puncturing these Practices may communicate with me or with Harry Cronson, Chairman; Career Maintenance Task Force, IEEE/USAB, 1111 - 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 785-0017.

Readers can obtain free single copies of the Practices from the Washington office of IEEE listed above.