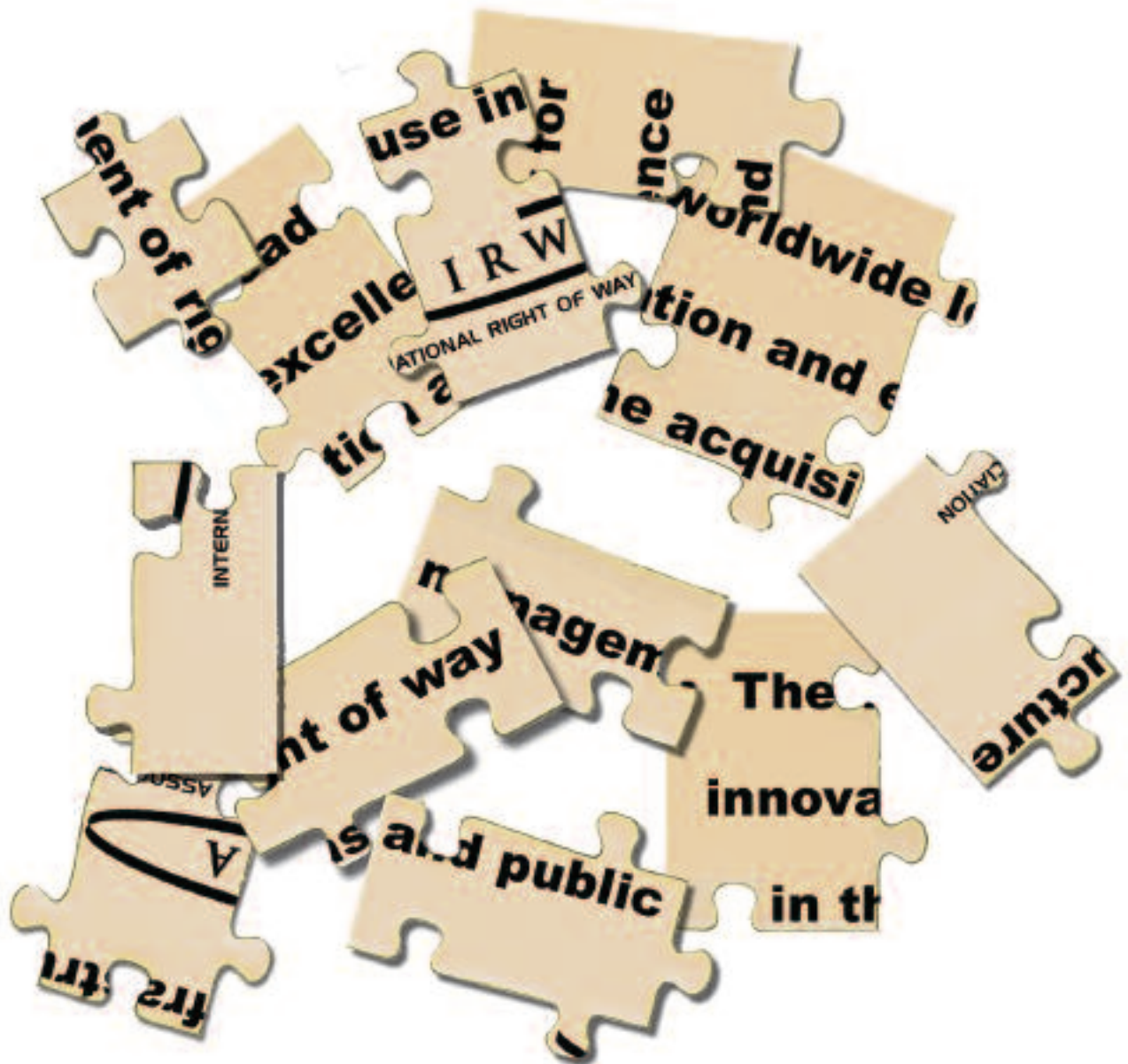


IRWA Transforms its Education and Professional Mission

Improving the careers and professional opportunities available to IRWA members

During the past year, IRWA convened an Educational Summit representing Association leaders, major federal and state/provincial partners and other stakeholders in the right of way profession. The task: to develop a strategic plan to transform IRWA's education and professional development program.

Funded through the generous support of the Right of Way International Education Foundation (RWIEF) and the Canadian Right of Way Education Foundation (CRWEF), the Education Summit has paved the way for transforming the Association's education and professional mission.



12 Strategies Designed to Transform IRWA's Education and Professional Development Program

From their deliberations emerged 12 strategies that have been identified and recommended by the International Executive Committee for integration into the IRWA strategic plan.



Strategy 1:

Revamp all IRWA classroom courses into an effective adult learning format with updated content, improved graphics and more technology integrated into the curriculum

The IRWA course revamping project is well under way and scheduled to be completed by October 1, 2007. Layne Consulting Services, Inc., is revamping all IRWA courses per an August 2005 contract. Funded by generous grants from the RWIEF and CRWEF, the extensive course revamping project includes adapting all IRWA instructor/facilitator and student/participant manuals into a standardized format for educational elements such as design, key learning objectives and examination questions. This long overdue effort will form the foundation on which IRWA will build for the future.

As part of this strategy, IRWA will modify its headquarters staff capabilities to provide greater support of the long-term integration of technology into our courses and to assure that courses are maintained at the new standards established by the revamp project. To assure courses are well maintained and kept current, each IRWA course will be reviewed for relevance and techniques every five years beginning with the first wave of reviews in 2007-2008. IRWA will rely heavily upon an expanded role for its industry committees to act as subject matter experts in this review process.



Strategy 2:

Create a comprehensive inventory control and updating system that integrates appropriate approved changes into course curriculum

IRWA currently has more than 11,000 pages of participant and instructor/facilitator manual written material that must be maintained and updated. Until now, the Association grossly underestimated the difficulty and time required to maintain the quality and accuracy of that extensive curriculum content. IRWA will devote a full-time staff position to assure the quality and accuracy of the curriculum material is kept up to date after the course is revamped.



Strategy 3:

Review all instructors/facilitators and ensure an appropriate certification program is in place

One unifying theme within the Educational Summit discussions was the importance of quality instructor/facilitators. IRWA will review the development program for new instructor/facilitators to assure it accomplishes the desired results. IRWA will research alternate "train the trainer" programs that may supplement IRWA's training. IRWA will offer instructor/facilitator training sessions twice per year — at the Annual International Education Conference and at the new Public Real Estate Education Symposium.

IRWA will investigate the feasibility of creating a certification program for existing instructors/facilitators that confirms they are familiar with current adult learning techniques as well as the subject matter they are approved to teach. An IPDC recommendation is expected by July 1, 2007.

It has become evident that IRWA needs a larger pool of qualified instructors from which to select. To that end, IRWA will formulate a comprehensive communication program to identify and recruit potential instructors/facilitators. The "career path" for instructors/facilitators will be clearly delineated as will the step-by-step process to become qualified to instruct IRWA courses.

As part of the revamping process, we will place greater emphasis on standardization of the instructor/facilitator manual, relying more heavily on the core curriculum to structure and enrich the course rather than rely upon the instructor's individual experience. The IPDC will continue to have responsibility for recommending to the IEC the qualifications for all instructor/facilitators. The IPDC will develop a plan to assure that all instructors are in compliance with established instructor qualifications within three years.



Strategy 4:

Create a valid and secure testing program for each course

Concerns about the rigor and security of IRWA tests have been expressed by employers and other interested parties. Our course questions form the basis for the SR/WA designation and other certificate examinations, so it is critical

that IRWA assures that the questions measure competency and comprehension of the curriculum presented.

Recently, IRWA purchased a more efficient and effective scanning hardware and more powerful software that will grade and analyze student test scores as well as instructor evaluations in ways our previous system could not. To assure objectivity in grading, all appropriate IRWA course examinations will be scanned at headquarters without instructors/facilitators reviewing them in advance. We will also provide multiple versions of tests for all IRWA courses by the end of 2007. Effective January 1, 2007, all IRWA course examinations will be reviewed at least once every two years to identify questions that are answered incorrectly more frequently by students to determine if the questions are a fair and accurate assessment of the subject matter.



Strategy 7:

Develop a portfolio of courses designed for a web-based delivery system to supplement the current classroom delivery system

While IRWA's primary educational delivery system will continue to be chapter-based classrooms, we must also respond to the growing demand for web-based education. IRWA will convert selected courses that lend themselves to web-based delivery as our courses are revamped and standardized to acceptable standards as outlined. These courses will be presented using a blend of web-based asynchronous and synchronous learning techniques to provide a quality online experience for right of way professionals.

An appropriate web-based delivery platform will be selected by IRWA no later than December 1, 2006. At that point, all new courses will be developed as web-based and traditional classroom delivery simultaneously.



Strategy 5:

Create a chapter course coordinator certification program to assure standardization of the classroom delivery function

The chapter course coordinator is a crucial part of the IRWA course delivery process. Because of the complex nature of our delivery process, it is essential that course coordinators understand and appreciate their role within the chapter as well as how they relate to the region and IRWA headquarters. IRWA will introduce a course coordinator certification program by October 1, 2006. The web-based program, which is estimated to be a 90-minute course, will cover all aspects of the course coordinator's responsibility. While certification will be optional, it will be strongly encouraged by IRWA with financial incentives for chapters to designate course coordinators who have completed the online training before being appointed.



Strategy 8:

Offer sufficient courses to complete the SR/WA designation within a three-year period and within a reasonable distance of most members

In order to assure that IRWA members may earn the SR/WA designation in a timely and cost-effective manner, the Association will present the core courses required for the SR/WA in a minimum of four major geographic regions, such as Canada, Eastern U.S., Midwestern U.S. and Western U.S. every three years. IRWA encourages chapters and regions to offer the core courses and will coordinate the scheduling of core courses with Region Vice Chairs and chapters to reduce potential conflict with chapter offerings.

As part of this process, the Region Vice Chairs will assume a more proactive role in promoting and organizing classes within their respective regions. They will be responsible for reviewing annually the recommended SR/WA class locations and monitoring the effectiveness of the program in creating new designees.



Strategy 6:

Ensure accurate and timely delivery of the course materials in a cost-effective manner

The accurate and timely delivery of course materials in a cost-effective manner is an essential function which affects the success of all classroom-based courses. To increase the quality of print production, reduce errors and ensure the correct materials are shipped, IRWA required a stronger outsource partner. Effective June 2006, IRWA completed its move from Kinko's to Relizon as its outsource partner for the print production and shipping of course materials. Relizon was selected for their unparalleled capabilities in offering quality print services on demand and their exceptional quality control expertise.



Strategy 9:

Create a library of audio and video resources available online with appropriate written support material

A major refrain among agency and private sector employers has been the growing need for "just-in-time" training that can be provided to

right of way professionals at the student's convenience, not IRWA's. IRWA has responded to this market demand by creating a library of audio and visual resources designed to meet highly targeted education and training needs that may not require a full course. At the 2006 annual conference, for example, more than 50 of our workshop sessions were recorded and are now available as audio downloads from our website at a nominal fee. We anticipate that some of this training will be integrated into future courses and other education and training materials in the future.

As part of this strategy, IRWA will expand the web-based e-Seminars introduced on its website in January 2006. IRWA will video existing IRWA events or create specific programs for target audiences as needed. The web-based e-Seminars may be viewed by any member at any time, and represents a major new membership benefit.



Strategy 10:

Create a robust, effective communication and marketing effort for all Association products and services, including education

Effective with the 2006-2007 fiscal year, IRWA President Jim Finnegan, SR/WA, appointed a newly formed International Communications and Marketing Committee (ICMC) chaired by IRWA Past President Don Marx, SR/WA. The ICMC will be responsible for working with IRWA staff to create an annual detailed communication and marketing plan to accomplish the following goals and objectives:

- Market IRWA membership among appropriate right of way stakeholders with a special emphasis on recruiting new members and retaining existing members
- Market IRWA courses, seminars and other educational programs among appropriate right of way stakeholders
- Market the Public Real Estate Education Symposium, Annual International Education Conference, and other educational events among appropriate right of way stakeholders
- Market IRWA designations and certificate programs among appropriate right of way stakeholders
- Communicate the value of IRWA membership to existing members, potential members and key decision makers in the right of way profession
- Communicate the achievements and activities of IRWA and its members to appropriate right of way stakeholders

One of the first projects assigned to the ICMC will be to commission a comprehensive marketing plan to make the SR/WA and certificate programs more widely recognized. IRWA needs an effective promotion to create awareness and enhance recognition of the SR/WA designation and certificate programs among employers and supervisors making hiring and promotion decisions within the right of way profession.



Strategy 11:

Make the organizational structure more responsive to educational needs

In good design, form follows function, so the Association should be structured to support our functions. Because of the multiple disciplines involved in the right of way process, IRWA needs to leverage the volunteer resources in its committee structure for their input as subject matter experts for IRWA courses and other professional development programs. As the first step toward that goal, effective with the 2007-2008 fiscal year, appointments to the IPDC will be made along professional disciplines rather than by region. Region Vice Chairs will be charged with primary oversight of course delivery issues while the IPDC will focus on curriculum and instructor issues.

In the next phase, the IEC will conduct a comprehensive review of its committee structure to determine the most effective way of organizing committees in support of the Association's mission and core education purpose. This review will be completed by June 2007.



Strategy 12:

Commission a comprehensive market analysis of education and skill development needs among major right of way and public infrastructure employers in the U. S. and Canada

IRWA courses have evolved over decades in a general and rather random response to perceived needs within the right of way profession. During the Education Summit, a consensus emerged that the needs of major right of way employers have shifted in the past several years. IRWA leadership is concerned that IRWA's portfolio of courses have not kept pace with these changing needs, especially in such areas as project management, management of professional teams and technology.

As a result, IRWA will commission a comprehensive market needs assessment among major employers to assess the skill sets, training needs and learning preferences required by major employers as well as our members. The study will address the "career cycle" needs of

right of way practitioners at various stages of their careers. In order to be successful, this analysis will require the cooperation and endorsement of major stakeholders within the right of way profession, including federal and state/provincial agencies as well as right of way consulting firms in the private sector.

Upon completion of the marketing study, IRWA will analyze its current courses and educational offerings and identify those areas where gaps exist between IRWA's existing portfolio of courses and the current/future needs of employers and practitioners. This gap analysis, along with the marketing information, will be used to assess the priorities for future courses and/or development of other educational programs. This assessment will be assigned to the IPDC upon completion of the study. The IPDC will then provide specific recommendations as to the most effective way of addressing the identified gaps, including developing new IRWA courses, partnering with other professional organizations and employing non-traditional educational and training solutions to the needs.

The Commitment Has Been Made

This comprehensive approach addresses most of the key concerns facing major employers and stakeholders as well as those issues most commonly expressed by students/participants and instructors/facilitators. And while the solutions offered may not be completely new or revolutionary, what is new is the willingness of IRWA's leadership to commit the volunteer and staff resources necessary to address the challenges in a comprehensive manner.

A major financial, volunteer and staff commitment will be needed from IRWA and our Education Foundations to move these strategies from paper to improving the careers and lives of our members.

These 12 strategies were the focus of IRWA President Dan Beardsley's State of the Profession address at the 2006 Annual International Education Conference in Denver, CO. The entire address may be viewed at the IRWA website at www.irwaonline.org.

