

Opening New Doors

Creating a path of opportunity in challenging times

BY ZACK DARRAGH



Recently, while driving to a project site in northern Alberta, I reflected on how my involvement in the Association has influenced positive career growth, particularly within the last year during a tough economic climate in Canada.

As a relative newcomer to the IRWA in 2013, several colleagues encouraged me to attend the Chapter’s monthly meeting in Calgary, Alberta. Some of them had been involved in Chapter leadership and convinced me that the meetings would be beneficial to my growth. And they were right. Listening to the initiatives being discussed at a Chapter and Region level, it was clear that this was something that I wanted to be a part of. Before long, I was offered the opportunity to take on the Chapter Membership Chair position.

The Opportunities Evolve

As I assumed my duties serving our dedicated membership in Calgary, I also became interested in the 2014 Annual

International Education Conference in Hartford, Connecticut, which happened to include a precursor event that intrigued me—the Young Professionals Symposium. It was a full day of educational sessions held on the day prior to the conference, so I decided to register for it.

The Young Professionals Symposium proved to be a tremendous learning experience. The content we covered over various sessions was both relevant and engaging. More importantly, this became a new conduit for my future involvement in the Association.

Following the conference, I knew I wanted to pursue a role with the YP Group. Through the support of then Region Representative Brodie Allen, SR/WA, I began participating in monthly conference calls leading up to the next YP Symposium in 2015. Looking back, those initial meetings were great building blocks. I quickly learned the role that clear communications would play in executing on goals and strategies.

Being part of the planning committee for the next symposium really helped me understand what goes into organizing an event with many moving parts. One of our primary goals was to grow the YP contingent region-by-region and ensure that the next event would have geographical representation. Through remarkable teamwork, everything came together for what proved to be another successful event—one that celebrated our past successes and reinforced the YP’s future plans. The group has continued its momentum through ongoing brainstorming sessions, and many ideas have taken shape. It’s been validating to see such a positive outcome from our monthly meetings and what each representative is able to accomplish at the local level.

Invaluable Lessons Learned

Through my involvement with the YP Group, I have gained a deeper understanding of how a dynamic working group can exist and prosper, especially when many of us only interact face-to-face once a year. Specifically, I have found that:

- 1 | The organizational awareness of being part of a dedicated group like the YPs offers invaluable skills and perspective that can be applied in the workplace.
- 2 | Being responsive to new ideas and concepts, such as those introduced by each Region Representative throughout the year, correlates to that of an ever changing business environment.
- 3 | Consistency and commitment—adopted by each YP Group Chair and Region Representative—are crucial stepping stones to the start of a long and successful career.

The collaborative strategy that the YP Group has in place will continue to serve as a strong foundation for a group that has even bigger plans ahead! 🌟



Zack is a Consulting Right of Way Agent and serves as Co-Chair for the YP Group and Membership Chair for Chapter 48. He was recently nominated as the Region 10 Young Professional of the Year.