



Poised FOR GROWTH

Attracting like-minded young professionals

BY COURTNEY OTTO

As a young professional, one of my greatest job challenges has been in connecting to the large number of “seasoned veterans” in the profession and finding my place as a new person in the business. Fortunately, the Young Professionals groups being formed at the Chapter level have helped to bridge this gap, and are encouraging new professionals to get involved.

I attended my first Young Professionals Symposium in March 2011. Since then, I have benefited greatly from meeting other young professionals in the organization. The Young Professionals Symposiums that are held every year in conjunction with the Annual Conference have been invaluable. Attending the symposium has enabled me to connect with peers from other Chapters, while attending educational sessions that have been specially

designed for young professionals. And serving on the International Young Professionals Committee has helped me to expand my connections within the Association, giving me a good understanding of the value of networking. Not only have I have gained confidence in developing my career, I have become more inspired to learn, grow and get involved with IRWA.

Focused on a Vision

The initiative to create the group started in February 2013 when the Chapter 8 leadership reached out to local younger professionals to gauge their level of interest. With about 20 email contacts, the group began gathering ideas for networking and educational events. The first event was held in April 2013, and within just two

years, we have experienced successful growth, both in membership and involvement. We currently have over 100 active “Yo-Pro” members.

The group’s founders had a vision—to identify those young professionals with fewer years of overall work experience and provide them with a comfortable landing place. The support from the Chapter and Region inspired the organizers to continue planning events and developing the group. In creating a formal structure, we enacted an age limit of 35 to ensure the young professionals had their own identity within the Chapter. Every month, we host a social or educational event and encourage participation and committee involvement at all levels of the Association. The IRWA Member Network has proven to be a great outlet for promoting our events. Young



In 2014, young professionals from IRWA’s Chapter 8 in Houston, Texas attended an educational session and luncheon.

professionals are also encouraged to attend the monthly Chapter meetings, and their presence has increased there as well.

Growth Opportunities

Most recently, we collaborated with the young professionals from Chapter 75 to create a “Young Professionals Kick Start Package.” It includes a set of bylaws that



At a recent Chapter event, Young Professionals Group Co-Chair Kasy Chambers (left), guest speaker Danny Vu, Esq. and Co-Chair Taylor Sass.

outlines an organizational structure and respective roles, as well as best practices for organizing events and growing the membership. The Chapter 8 Board voted to pass these bylaws, and we plan to make these available to other chapters for use in establishing their own groups.

Since some Chapters have experience funding challenges, we suggest they try and seek out young professionals that have their employer’s support. Some regions have organized fundraisers at Region Forums and solicited sponsorships to assist with event and marketing costs. As these groups continue to grow, we hope that more employers will see the value in sending their younger employees to these events, not only for networking, but also for professional growth. For those who are new to the industry, we need to reinforce the importance of building relationships, especially since there are so many seasoned members to call on.

We hope to see more young professionals involved in Chapter roles and activities, and believe that the structure we created provides the right environment. As more young people join the organization, ensuring they have a place to learn more about getting involved and meeting their peers becomes crucial for keeping them engaged in the organization. 🌟

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