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# Working as a solo practitioner: Dealing with professional and trade organizations – A special interest group (SIG) discussion

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**Discussion leader:**

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# Opening remarks

- Recognition of sponsors
  - Division of Small Chemical Business
    - Dr. Ronald J. Versic, Chair
    - Dr. Peter Bonk, Program Chair
  - Committee on Economic and Professional Affairs
    - Dr. Martin Gorbaty, Chair
    - Dr. Sadiq Shah, Chair, Professional Program Dev.
- Discussion topics
  - The solo practitioner and professional and trade organizations
  - Other topics from the audience

# You must pay to play

- If you are an employee, you generally do not worry about professional and trade dues
  - Companies generally pay employee's dues for at least one professional society
  - Companies most always pay dues for corporate memberships in trade organizations
    - US Technical Advisory Group to ISO Technical Committee
    - Industry-based scientific organizations
    - Chambers of Commerce
- When its your company, you need to pay to stay in the game

# If you don't pay, you don't play

- Others expect you to pay for:
  - Contact information with other businesses
  - Information from proprietary databases
  - Participation in specialty meetings
  - Contributions to events in addition to regular fees
- If you don't pay, are you really serious about being in the game or are you just standing on the sidelines?
- Don't expect small company discounts

# When things go wrong, you pay more

- When you are a solo practitioner, there is no big corporation to bail you out when things go wrong
  - ❑ Snow can be costly if your flights are cancelled and you can't get where you need to be
  - ❑ No big company travel departments to help
  - ❑ There is no travel insurance that pays for missed conferences and short courses
- On the other hand, you can set your own travel policies – small benefit when stuck

# Professional organizations

- ACS and similar organizations should be there to help solo practitioner
  - Local, regional, national meetings
  - Short courses and other continuing education
  - Scientific journals and other publications
  - ChemInsight / Expert Services
- However, sometimes other things happen
  - Opposition to “open access” and PubChem
  - Higher costs for continuing education resources than other providers

# Trade organizations

- Trade organizations focus more on business issues instead of scientific issues
  - General business groups such as chambers of commerce
  - Industry-based groups such as American Chemistry Council
  - *Ad hoc* downtown development groups
  - The ACS Division of Small Chemical Businesses but membership is by individual not by company
- Why pay to sit with bankers, insurance agents, lawyers, and other business types?

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# Chambers of commerce

- Cost to join a local chamber of commerce
  - Basic memberships are usually under \$500 per year plus nominal (under \$25) per employee fee
  - Other per event costs such as business-after-hours cocktail parties or cost of committee lunch meetings
- Benefits
  - Listing of other businesses in your area by type, including contact names, phone numbers, etc.
  - Listing of you company's name, contact information, and specialty

# Chambers of commerce – other benefits

- Participation in chemistry-related committees and meetings to meet potential clients
  - Environmental & safety
  - Drugs-of-abuse testing
- Opportunities to meet business, community and government leaders on an informal basis
  - Opportunity to discuss business problems and possibly get better solution (foreign exchange)
  - Get your companies name and services out to decision makers

# The Yellow Pages™

- When you get a business telephone, it often comes with a listing in the Yellow Pages™
  - What listing?
    - Single-line listing in the Yellow Pages™ in addition to white pages listing is generally no charge
    - You are generally listed under consultants
    - There may also be an Internet listing – am I really a “Business Coach”
  - Do you want a Yellow Pages™ listing?
  - Can you get a better listing if you pay more?

# Summary

- Starting your own chemical business as a solo practitioner takes planning, financial resources, and general management skills
- If you are serious about your business, you need to consider joining professional and trade organizations
  - Costs of memberships versus benefits
    - Opportunities for improved client services
    - Opportunities new business
    - Opportunities for reduced costs