



President's Column

The Value of Professional Society Membership

■ Madhu Gupta

Both the IEEE and the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society (MTT-S) are membership organizations that encourage qualified and interested individuals to join them as members by paying the applicable membership dues. While membership in the IEEE requires attaining some qualifications and experience [1], any member of the IEEE at any grade level (Member, Senior Member, Fellow) can become a member of the MTT-S; the same applies to IEEE Student Members, E-Members, and Associate Members. The annual membership dues of the MTT-S are an order of magnitude smaller than that of the IEEE and have remained relatively flat (between US\$14–17) over the past decade, as has the size of Society membership (between 11,000 and 12,000 members). This membership is, however, not static; there is an on-going attrition and recruitment of new members that exceeds 10% in most years, with a larger attrition rate occurring at lower membership grade levels.

The MTT-S encourages individuals to become members of the Society (along



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with the IEEE) in a variety of ways: by distributing brochures that describe the benefits of MTT-S membership, by posting the procedure for becoming a member on the Society Web page, via membership recruitment booths at our conferences that are staffed by volunteers, by inviting IEEE Members to consider a membership in MTT-S during the annual IEEE membership renewal cycle, and through our student branch Chapters and their faculty advisors. In fact, every activity, product, or service of the Society—such as our journals, standards, conferences, Chapter technical meetings, workshops, etc.—can be viewed as an

inducement and invitation to come join the Society.

The Tangible Benefits

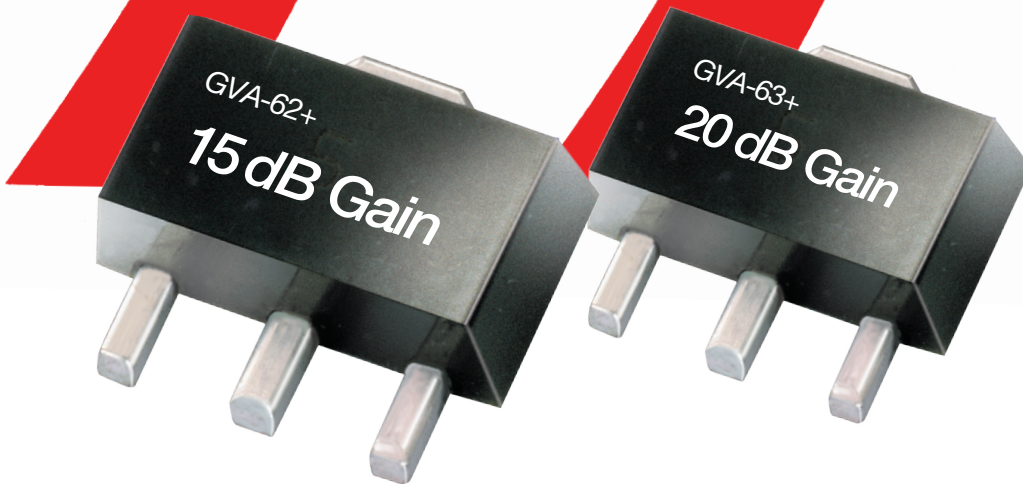
Numerous surveys carried out by the IEEE, and by the MTT-S, have tried to identify and assess the factors that prompt people to join a Society such as MTT-S. The results are hardly surprising; most people join the Society primarily to gain access to technical information—the journals, the conference proceedings, the local technical talks—and only secondarily for other benefits. Since a membership in the MTT-S is open only to IEEE Members (and affiliates), the

benefits of Society membership can be viewed as add-ons to the benefits of IEEE membership. Some of the more tangible, direct, and explicit benefits of membership are listed in Table 1; they are also included in the annual IEEE membership renewal notice.



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Why Become a Member

If the additional benefits of MTT-S membership (listed in the right-hand column of Table 1) pale in comparison to the benefits of IEEE membership (in the left-hand column), there is a reason (apart from the drastically lower Society dues compared to IEEE dues). The MTT-S has indeed considered adding member-exclusive products to our mix of services and activities, for example, educational Webinars, currently under development but not done thus far.

In an attempt to serve the entire MTT profession irrespective of the membership status and to give the newcomers an opportunity to be exposed to the Society, many of the services and products of the Society are open to all. Thus the technical meetings of the Society's local Chapters are open to all—members and nonmembers alike—and therefore do not appear at all in Table 1. The journals published by the Society and the proceedings of the conferences sponsored by the Society can similarly be accessed by anyone with access to IEEE *Xplore*. If so, then what is the incentive for one to become a member of MTT-S? I would like to share my views on that subject with you.

As you might expect, the officers and volunteers of the Society, and indeed of the IEEE, devote a great deal of time and attention to developing their respective memberships. They discuss the growth and decline in membership in different parts of the world, the reasons people join and leave the Society, the incentives for membership and initiatives for attracting members, and the so-called "value proposition" for members—the benefits of being a member of the MTT-S. Clearly, from among the universe of microwave professionals who are potential MTT-S members, the fraction that become MTT-S members (estimated as 25–30%) is a metric of our success in reaching out and communicating to them the value proposition of membership.

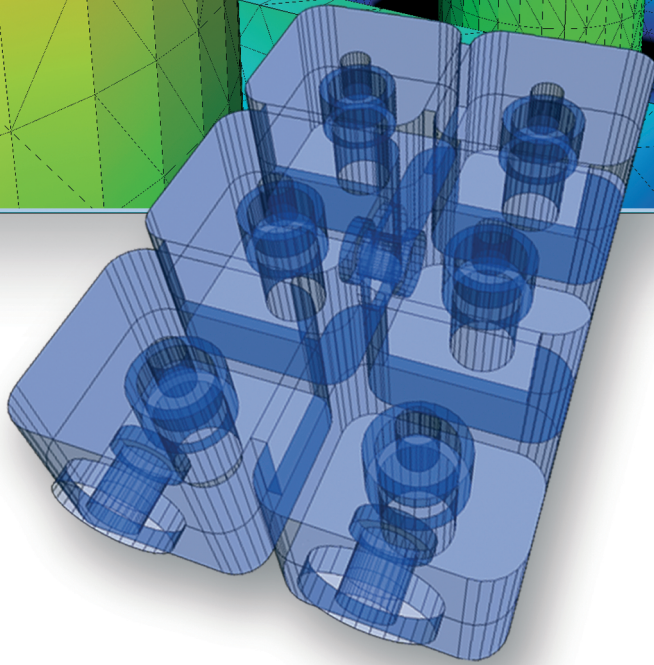
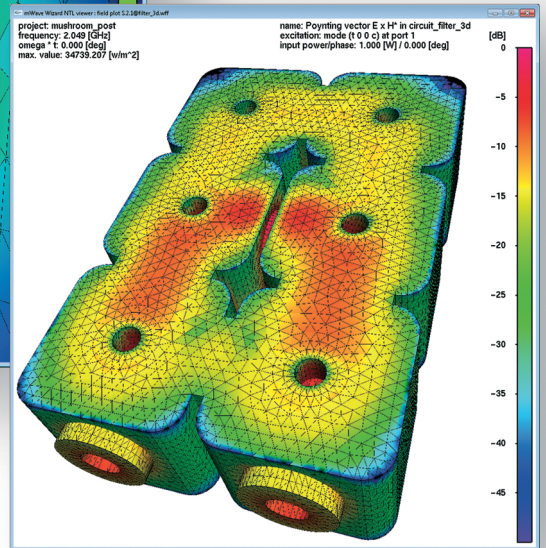
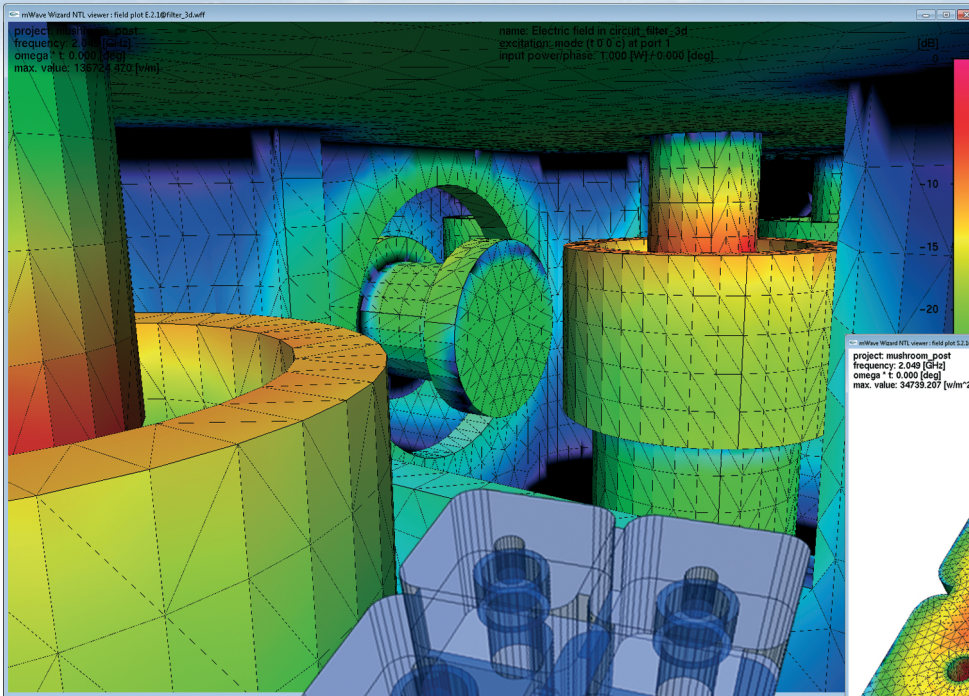
Active Versus Passive Members

In addition to the total membership of the Society (around 11,000–12,000) and the recruited fraction of professionals (perhaps 25–30%), another measure that has lately drawn a great deal of attention in our discussions is the fraction of members that are active in some Society activity. Merely sending in the annual membership dues qualifies you as only a passive member. The active members are those who submit their papers for publication or presentation, carry out peer reviews, volunteer their time in organizational work, attend the events, or otherwise interact with the Society in any of a wide variety of ways [3]. With this definition, the fraction of Society members who are active is perhaps also around 25–30%.

Since the information resources listed in Table 1 as membership benefits are accessible to nonmembers as well, albeit at a higher price, the incentive for membership might appear to be purely financial. But to take the tangible benefits in Table 1 as the sole rationale for membership would be a gross misunderstanding and

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understatement. There do exist many other intangible and indirect benefits of membership, some of them subtle, which are not listed in Table 1, but they are not equally derived by all members, and the most valuable of those benefits accrue only to the active members.

The Intangible Benefits of Membership

The intangible benefits of the Society membership are listed in Table 2, subdivided by the type of members who realize them—active or passive. Not surprisingly, the active members reap the most value from the membership.

A membership in the Society is an eligibility requirement for participating in the affairs of the Society by taking on volunteer and leadership positions, such as serving on its committees, including the Administrative Committee (Adcom) of the Society, as a representative of the Society on the numerous intersocietal councils and committees, holding office in its local Chapters (for joint Chapters, membership in any one of the sponsoring societies), serve on a technical paper review committee, or be selected to serve as a Distinguished Microwave Lecturer or Speakers' Bureau member.

One of the most valuable benefits of a membership in the Society is the ability to meet other professionals with similar interests and to network with the leaders and experts in the field. This in turn leads to life-long relationships and friendships, which is particularly valuable to those who have a long-term, or life-long interest in the field of the Society.

Service to the Society is also the door to many other benefits; perhaps most importantly, a Society volunteer receives mentoring from other Society volunteers and learns from their experience, leading to their own professional development. Other benefits of volunteering have been described in these pages earlier [3].

Serving the Society allows members to have an influence on the evolution of their professional society toward directions in which they believe. The satisfaction of contributing to the profession, like that of contributing to the technology it represents, is a major motivator for the active members.

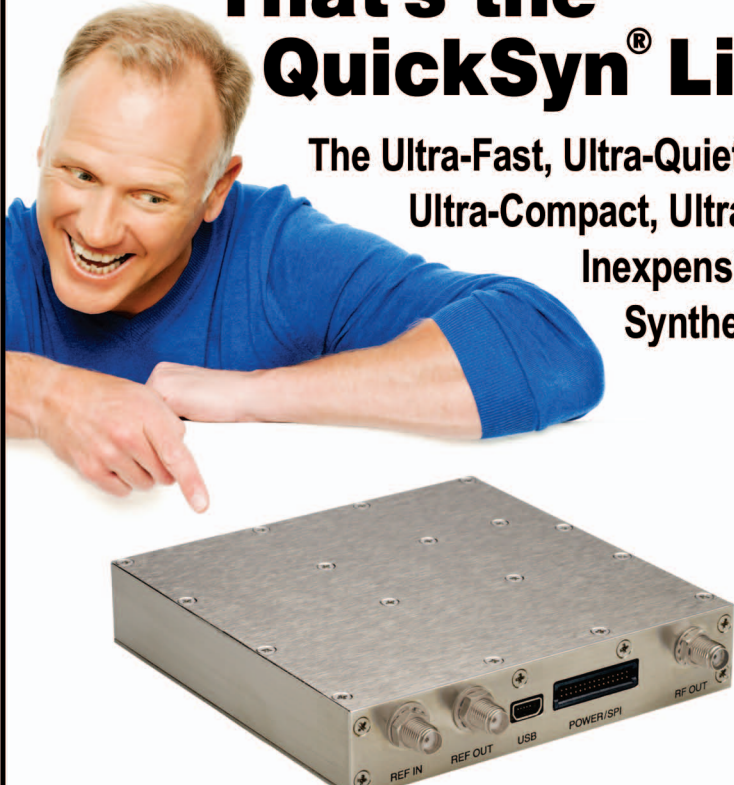
The Broader Responsibility

Finally, the pride of belonging to the premier Society, which is a world-class organization and the most prestigious association of professionals in this field, is in itself a reward. A membership and engagement in such a society is tacitly expected in some roles, such as the academic and leadership positions.

A professional society is a community of people with common interests, in this case professional and technical

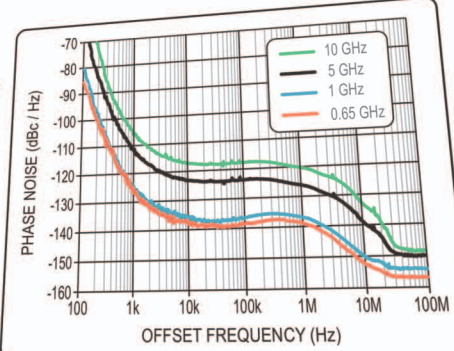
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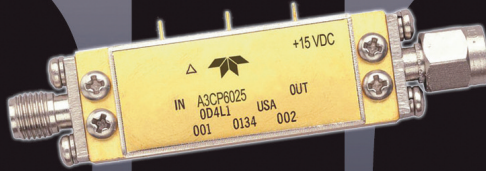
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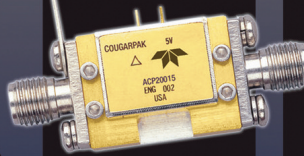
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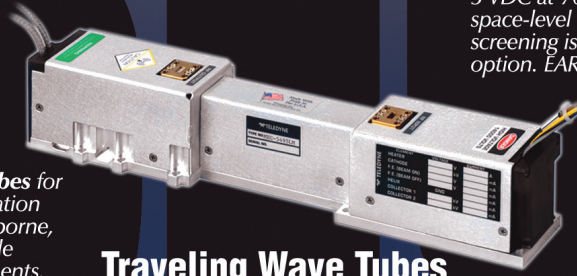


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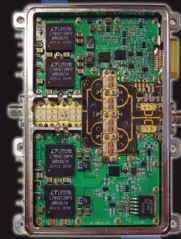
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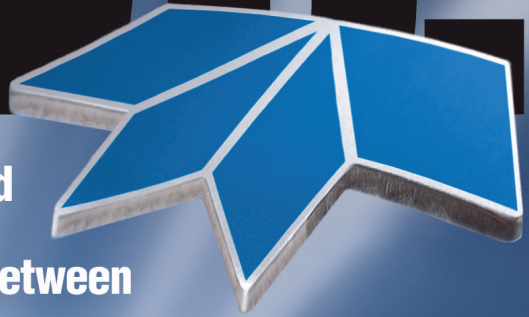
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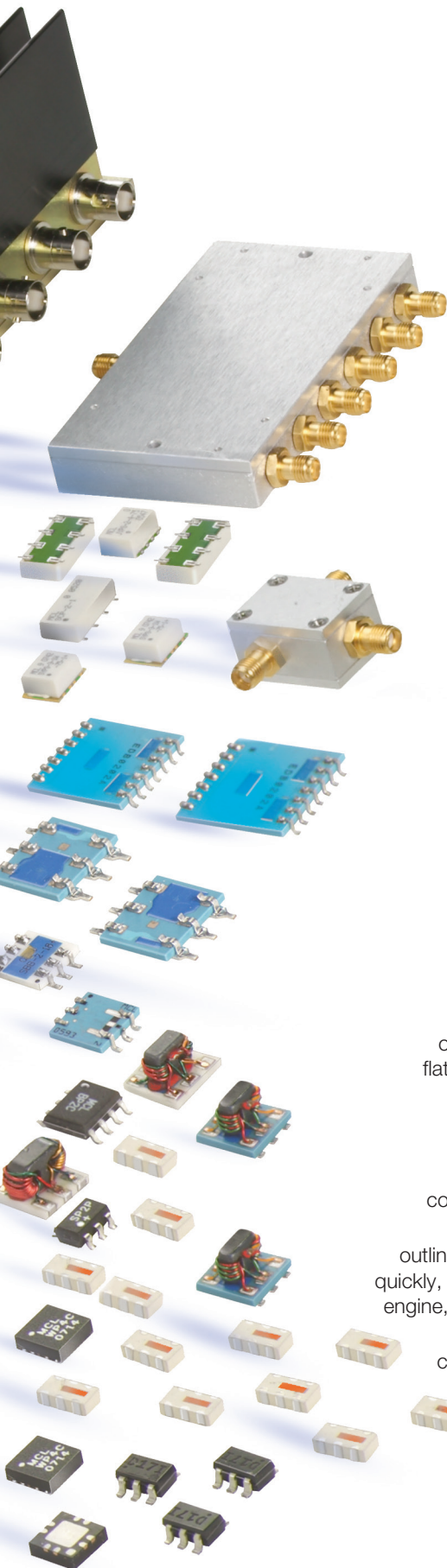
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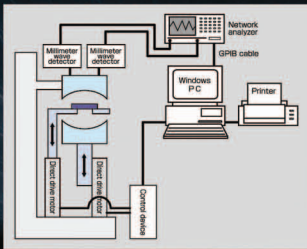
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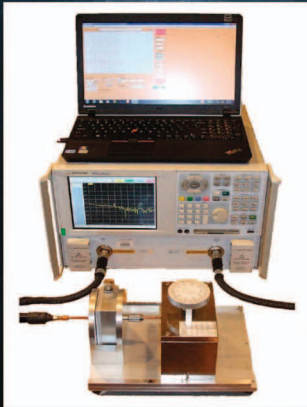
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- Frequency range: 100kHz-14GHz
- Four value measurement: μ_r , $-\text{j}\mu_r$, α , ΔH and $4\pi M_s$



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TABLE 1. The tangible benefits of membership.

Benefits of IEEE Membership	Additional Benefits of Membership in the MTT-S
1) A free subscription to <i>IEEE Spectrum</i> and <i>The Institute</i> newsletter	1) A free subscription to <i>IEEE Microwave Magazine</i>
2) Dramatically discounted prices for virtually all IEEE products, including the journals of all IEEE Societies, standards, and registration fees for IEEE conferences	2) Access to the MTT-S Conference Digital Library
3) Career-related and job search resources	3) Online access to the <i>IEEE/OSA Journal of Lightwave Technology</i>
4) Group life insurance, IEEE e-mail alias, and others listed on the IEEE Web site [2]	4) Reduced rate subscriptions to publications of the MTT-S as well as certain other IEEE Society publications

TABLE 2. The intangible benefits of Society membership.

For Active Members	For Passive and Active Members
1) Ability to participate in societal affairs and hold office in the Society	1) The pride of belonging to an outstanding organization
2) Professional development through networking and mentoring	2) The sense of shouldering their professional responsibility
3) Influence the direction taken by, and evolution of, the Society	3) The satisfaction of reciprocating to the goodwill of those who support the Society and openly share its output with all

interests. This community performs numerous services, such as organizing conferences, conducting peer reviews, developing standards, honoring outstanding accomplishments, supporting students of (and newcomers to) their profession, developing and disseminating materials of educational value, and others. These services can exist only as long as the community members continue to take interest in them. If you like the services delivered by the Society and benefit from them, it becomes one of your professional responsibilities to support the organization that makes them possible. If everyone were to shirk from this common responsibility, the flow of services would stop—something called “The Tragedy of the Commons” by the biologist Garrett Hardin in 1968 [4]. I am confident that professionals in microwave theory and techniques disciplines will continue to come forward to carry their fair share of this professional responsibility.

Those who support the Society, both through their membership and through their active participation, are being altruistic when they share the fruits of the Society’s work with everyone else, irrespective of their membership status. All professionals who work in the microwave theory and techniques discipline benefit from this openmindedness and generosity. Joining the Society as a member is a way to reciprocate to that goodwill.

References

[1] IEEE Member qualifications. [Online]. Available: http://www.ieee.org/membership_services/membership/qualifications.html
 [2] IEEE membership services. [Online]. Available: http://www.ieee.org/membership_services/membership/benefits/index.html
 [3] M. S. Gupta, “Volunteering for a professional society,” *IEEE Microwave Mag.*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 14–22, June 2013.
 [4] G. Hardin, “The tragedy of the commons,” *Science*, vol. 162, no. 3859, pp. 1243–1248, Dec. 13, 1968.

