

## How to Start and Maintain a Young Professional (YP) group - Summary

- I. Reasons why to start a YP group
  - a. Networking
  - b. To help Young Professionals build a community of peers under the guidance of AIChE – social networking
  - c. Career building –
  - d. Leadership Development
  - e. Mentoring
  - f. Provide input to your local section about the needs of young professionals, increase relevancy of topics and events
- II. Help from Local Section
  - a. [www.aiche.org/sections](http://www.aiche.org/sections) - find out where the local section is in your area
  - b. Work in conjunction with section
    - i. From a committee to establish a YP group
      - 1. Does not have to be under 35 at first, but eventually should be
      - 2. Should meet on a standard basis to discuss current status of YP – attend local section committee meetings and talk to section coordinators
      - 3. Work in cooperation with the local section leadership and let them decide how involved to be in the YP group whether they want to be very involved or mostly hands-off
- III. Committee
  - a. Members
    - i. 4 to 5 people on startup committee, as few as 2 can plan a few events per year
    - ii. Establish jobs/roles for each person
    - iii. Example of Specific Jobs – note these are suggestions. If a section's population is small, one or two people could do several of these jobs.
      - 1. Chair/Co-chair – answers to local section leadership and oversees the health of the YP group. Co-chair is the Chair's backup in case the Chair is unavailable or unable to fulfill his/her duties.
      - 2. Social Events Coordinator – plans social events like Happy Hours, field trips, etc. The coordinator can delegate these events to others and make sure that those events get the resources they require
      - 3. Technical Events Coordinator – plans events that are technical in nature like speakers on engineering topics as well as organizing training seminars or hours for local YP members. They may delegate these events to others and make sure that they get the resources they require.
      - 4. Outreach events coordinator – plans events for outreach to college students, K-12 students and the local community to

spread knowledge of AIChE and chemical engineering.  
Should work closely with marketing.

5. Advertising/Marketing – manages how events are advertised to members and non-members via website or email. Advertising consists of website, emails, newsletters and other methods to reach current members and those already on your mailing list. Marketing includes contacting companies, other technical societies and local colleges to promote participation in YP.
6. Treasurer (if working with a budget) – makes sure any costs associated with events are within their budget or how much to charge for certain (usually large) events. Treasurer also should be responsible for grant applications, reimbursements and submitting an annual budget to the local section.
7. College Liaison – to keep in contact with local universities and update the YP group on changes in student chapter leadership
8. National Liaison- keep up to date with national events and requests, bring opportunities to local yp group (e.g. conferences, seminars, open volunteer positions, resources)

b. Start establishing a contact list

- i. Advertise at local section meetings – try to recruit current section members
- ii. Talk with younger co-workers and try to get one to be a contact/rep at each local company who will share YP news and upcoming events
- iii. Try to set up a meeting with mid-level managers in local companies/corporations to explain the benefits of AIChE so they will let you contact their YP/new hires
- iv. Advertise at non AIChE meetings (ex. ASME)
- v. Visit local colleges

c. Build a budget

- i. Determine what your current available budget is and what events you would like to complete within the timeframe of your budget. Keep in mind that many events can be completed with little to no budget.
- ii. Allocate money to go toward “recruiting events”, possibly get this money from local section or corporate fundraising
- iii. See whether events can be sponsored by grants offered by AIChE.
- iv. In some communities, discounts are given to non-profit societies for using their facilities. Also look into local industry about donating space or volunteers.
- v. For some large, extravagant events consider charging a very nominal fee. Or run a few events where non-local section members must pay.

- d. Develop event schedules
  - i. Space events evenly throughout year
    - 1. Initially, plan 2-4 YP events a year (maybe one each quarter). Initially, the number of events held is not as important as their success. If the events that you run leave people with a positive impression, that is what will be passed along to their peers and will result in greater numbers for your next event
  - ii. Suggested Events – Many YP groups rotate through these
    - 1. Social events
    - 2. Technical events
    - 3. Half social half technical events
    - 4. Speaking to Student Chapters
    - 5. Events with other groups
    - 6. Volunteer events
  - iii. Specific Examples of events that have succeeded – caveat, what works for one section might not work or even be feasible for another. Figure out what your members are interested in and cater to their interests.
    - 1. Happy Hour at centrally located bar after work. Both YPs and students from local universities were invited.
    - 2. Technical event for YPs held in conjuncture with local section monthly meeting
    - 3. A YP seminar held during a weekend with complimentary social hour afterwards to those who registered for the event.
    - 4. A social hour put together by another engineering society in which the YP group was asked if they wanted to co-sponsor and advertise.
    - 5. Sending YP volunteers to a local Science Fair to judge or host a booth.
    - 6. Don't let this list of examples limit ideas. Please feel free to think outside the box and do something 'untraditional'

#### IV. Advertise

- a. Local section meetings
  - i. Some young people usually show up to these when no YP is established
  - ii. When attending local section meetings be sure to make YP reps are visible
  - iii. At the meeting, have YP reps interact with any young engineers, retrieving their contact info and advertising upcoming YP events.
  - iv. Giving goodie bags to new young engineers with the YP groups upcoming events and (if one is established) link to website
- b. Work
  - i. At local section meetings, make the more experienced engineers (sometimes managers) aware of the local YP group, convince them

- of the benefits of having a local YP group, and have them encourage their young engineers to participate.
- ii. Some companies have YP groups within themselves – when a company has organized YP groups it makes advertising local section YP events easier and more effective. Other than company groups, the local YP group has to depend upon the contact list from the local section which may not have as many YP contacts as the local companies.
- iii. Encourage members to advertise at their offices and bring a friend to aiche events
- c. Facebook / Myspace
  - i. Setup Facebook group – be sure to maintain it and utilize it.
- d. Make web page – an example of a good design for a webpage is the YP-STs group website: <http://yp.sts-aiche.org/>
  - i. Automated calendar for future events
  - ii. For each event utilize some kind of reservation system (Evite, etc or your own system)
  - iii. Pictures of past events
  - iv. Contact emails for YP leadership easy to find and visible
  - v. Establish stable webmaster who can post meeting/event notices
- e. Local Universities
  - i. AIChE Meetings
  - ii. Establish contact with local Student Chapter Leadership. Contact info can be found online at <https://www.aiche.org/apps/students/chapters/index.asp>
  - iii. Send representatives to nearest Student Regional Conference held in different regions across the United States during March-April.

## V. Events

- a. Advertise events well in advance and in multiple forms
  - i. Facebook Events
  - ii. Web Page
  - iii. E-vite / Email – most important (move to top), with good timing (2+ weeks, 1 or less weeks, day before reminder)
  - iv. Work / Post fliers in break room
- b. Have sign in sheet on day of event
  - i. Name
  - ii. Email
  - iii. Company
  - iv. How did you hear about YP
  - v. Permission to post photos online
  - vi. Are they a member of the Local Section?
- c. Identify who is a member/officer (name tag, shirts)
- d. Talk and find out what each attendee is looking for
  - i. Job?
  - ii. Resume building?
  - iii. Getting involved?

- e. Be able to give opportunities for him/her to get involved or opportunities to find a job
- f. Identify Metrics for Success.
  - i. Increases the local section membership – can be seen when monitoring membership numbers from month to month
  - ii. Number of participants benefited from the content of the event (if it was a technical event) – can be identified via surveys
  - iii. Number of people who felt the event benefited their social network (like finding a job or using their contacts to find information, etc) – via survey perhaps given annually of the general membership
  - iv. The number of attendants for volunteer functions – sign up sheets will document this. Monitor numbers with a spreadsheet and share results with local section

#### VI. Post Events

- a. Follow up with attendee
  - i. Email
  - ii. Ask to join Facebook group
- b. Invite / re-invite to next meeting or event
- c. Committee members should talk to each other about who they met and their views on the events
  - i. Make sure each member knows about each attendee a bit

#### VII. Other ideas to keep in mind

- a. Keep full Local Section involved with YP section
  - i. Don't break them off completely
  - ii. Take advantage of their resources
  - iii. Report to the local section leadership once a month or quarter
- b. Stay on top of scheduling events, keep people posted
  - i. Try not to schedule events at the last minute
- c. Young Professional Advisory Board (YPAB)
  - i. Works with the National AIChE staff for activities that cover the entire United States.
    - 1. Spring and Fall Meetings – attend committee meetings representing YP interests
    - 2. Student National Conference
    - 3. Student Regional Conferences
    - 4. New Horizons Program – Training program held during the Spring Meeting geared toward YPs.
  - ii. Hold monthly teleconferences to discuss national volunteer opportunities – they are usually announced to all local section leaders and student chapter presidents
  - iii. The teleconferences also allows different local YP groups to communicate and share ideas with each other

# **How to Start and Maintain a Young Professional Group in a Local Section**

Presented by AIChE's Young Professional Advisory Board

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Many local AIChE sections are composed of members from ages as young as 18 to members who have spent over 30 years in engineering. These sections provide professionals the opportunity to network, stay up-to-date with industry, advise/mentor, and socialize. However, most of these local sections have a limited number of younger professionals under the age of 35. Many young professionals do not think to join AIChE after graduating college. This may be due to several reasons.

- Lack of time
- No knowledge that a local AIChE section exists
- Disinterested
- “What can AIChE do for me?”
- Relevance of AIChE to their current job
- View that AIChE is for researchers or upper level managers

The last few points are probably the biggest turnoff for young professionals at most sections. In college, AIChE was utilized for career fairs, resume building, workshops, and networking to help find a job or receive a letter of recommendation for graduate school. Once this is achieved, a lot of students don't know what else AIChE can offer them. The truth is, AIChE can continue to offer these same benefits and then some.

- Networking
- Job opportunities
- Staying up-to-date with industry
- Resume building
- Advising

- Help build a network of peers under the guise of AIChE

Having a young professional group can help a local section appeal to a younger crowd.

A group focused on professionals under 35 can help appeal to the fresh graduates and the younger side of the industry. It can also help younger professionals become more versed in today's technology and hence help them be better prepared for their job.

This document should not be taken as a stringent step-by-step manual.

Depending on where the local section is located or what major industries exist in the area, some of the ideas here may need to be changed. This document should be used more like a "back-pocket" guide. Keep this guide in mind when starting up a Young Professionals group, but don't limit any ideas because they are not listed in this guide.



Before starting up a Young Professionals (YP) group, locate the local AIChE section and speak with them. The YP section is meant to work in tandem with the local AIChE section, so any ideas should go through them first. Most likely, the local section will also be the main source of capital for the YP group. A nearby local section can be found at [www.aiche.org/sections](http://www.aiche.org/sections). Once a local section is found, speak with them about the interest in starting up a YP group to work in conjunction with the local section. Tell them about some of the benefits that could be reaped not only for any young professional that decides to join, but also for the local section.

- Increase membership for ages 35 and under
- Networking
- Increase technological know-how of professionals at a younger age
- Job opportunities

It is also up to the local section to decide how involved it wants to get with a young professionals group.

If they deem the idea beneficial, the next step would be to establish a committee to help organize the YP group. If possible members of this committee should be under the age of 35, but this should not be a strict limitation. The committee should consist of at least 4 people and jobs should be established for each person. A sample job list is given below along with a description.

- Head of Committee: keep committee organized, schedule monthly meetings, provide meeting locations, itemize discussions at the meetings, provide help with other committee member's responsibilities

- Committee Treasurer: establish and organize a budget (budget discussed later) – more times than not this position is optional, as it's very simple task and the chair could do it easily. About the only time a treasurer would be needed is if there are a lot of events and reimbursement occurring with the YP section.
- Committee Outreach: find ways to reach out to young professionals
- Committee Secretary: take notes at each meeting, historian – also optional, can be assigned at each meeting

Other positions that could be placed under those four could be the following:

- Webmaster – if the local YP group decides to run its own website or interacts with the webmaster of the local section to post up events or news.
- Event Planner – this person could coordinate (not necessarily plan) both technical and social meetings specifically aimed at the young professionals in the local section. This position is not so optional, and it's really critical to have someone to plan events however it can be run easily by two people.
- National Liaison – it is suggested that there be a liaison between the local young professional group and YPAB in case there are any needs YPAB can assist with.
- College Liaison – in the case that there are several universities in the local section, it would be wise to assign a person to handle any interaction between the YP group and the student chapter.

Meetings should be held consistently. The frequency often depends on how active the local section or the YP section is. Whether it is once a month (very active) to once every six months (inactive) it is recommended that a schedule be kept to in order to sustain some stability. At the meetings discuss the progress of the YP group establishment as

well as any future plans or immediate needs. Agendas should be drawn up to help the meeting flow. A sample agenda is listed below.

- 1) Announcements
- 2) Committee Reports
  - a) Each committee member gives a brief overview of what he or she has done or is doing
  - b) Updates from National or Local Section that are of concern to YP group
- 3) Old business
  - a) Items put on hold from last meeting
  - b) Action Items from last meeting
  - c) Ongoing issues
- 4) New business
  - a) New ideas
    - i) Events
    - ii) Future goals
    - iii) Problems
- 5) Closure – review new action items

A good way to accommodate everyone's schedule is to hold monthly meetings via teleconference or online during the day. Rotating moderators and note takers for these meetings is suggested to deal with the fact that no one can make every single meeting. On top of these meetings, it is also recommended to have a face-to-face meeting at a physical location during one weekend a year if possible.

Once a committee has been organized and a systematic method has been setup so that the committee can meet consistently, the committee should then determine how to attract young professionals. One of the ways to do this is to first establish a contact list. This would generally fall under the Committee Outreach position, but it is everyone's job to help network. Some of the ways to do this are listed below.

- Announce event dates at the local section meetings – this is probably the most effective and important
- Advertise on the local AIChE website
- Establish a YP group website
- Talk with young coworkers and share YP group news and events
- Try to set up meetings with mid level managers to discuss the benefits of a YP group so that they may contact their new hires
- Visit local colleges – can recruit potential young professionals
- Advertise at other technical groups meetings (ex. ASME)

Each of these points is discussed in more detail under the advertising section. Methods of advertising and setting up a contact list should be similar.

An event list and budget should also be drawn up so that prospective young members will have an idea of what goes on. This will most likely be done by the Head of Committee and Committee Treasurer positions. Budget money will most likely be allocated from the AIChE local section. If they are unwilling to fund the development of this YP group, then other sources of capital must be found. National AIChE offers grants to local sections to run events that involve connecting young professionals and students and local sections. One of these grants is called the John J. McKetta

ProjectConnect Grant. Corporate sponsorship of events is another source of funding. Fortunately a lot of YP events can be run with very little budget if need be. Otherwise, without any financial support, charging a very small nominal fee for events or having the attendees pay their way into a place (i.e. museum or theater) would be advised.

With these funds, an event list for the next 6 to 12 months should be drawn up to help entice new members. Dates for later events aren't necessary, just a general idea of what's planned would be beneficial. These events should be spaced evenly throughout the year and be held from as seldom as once a year (especially if the YP group is brand new, one event for the year would be a good start) to every month, or more if possible. The idea behind these events is to leave people with a positive impression about the YP group so that they may pass the word along to their peers. It is also important to keep a somewhat technical basis behind each event, even if this is just discussing where members work or what members do. Some event themes along with successful events within the YP group in the South Texas Section (STS) include the following.

- Social
  - Happy Hours – they can range from very informal show up and socialize to more organized events where a place at a bar or restaurant is reserved for those who RSVP.
  - Athletic Activities – some suggestions: flag football, baseball, pickup basketball, rock climbing, cycling, running clubs in a park, marathons, ice skating, and hockey (if applicable). Don't limit your creativity. Many people enjoy doing a great variety of activities.
- Technical

- Workshops – it is encouraged that topics be short and to the point and the subject matter be directly applicable to young professionals on a technical level. Professionals with a little experience can facilitate these workshops, even young professionals. Depending upon the topic, experts or researchers may be called upon. Fortunately, many local sections have members who fit that criteria and it is possible to have instructors who will volunteer enabling the workshop to be run for free if there is no food involved. It is highly recommended to run these workshops in conjunction of the monthly local section meeting if possible. Otherwise, try to run the workshops at a time that is most convenient for YPs to attend at a location that is centralized to the region or rotate it if run monthly or semi-monthly.
- Seminars – a much longer version of a workshop that goes into further depth on a topic. Still topics themselves don't need to be very complicated but focusing on teaching the basics, (i.e. review of refining processes, best practices in operating and designing columns, the ins and outs of batch processes, etc). Since the topic will be much longer than a workshop and it would be recommended to run these seminars over the weekend to make it more appealing to YPs and their supervisors who may not want their engineers to take time off from work. Consult with local businesses what is preferable to them. In addition, it is recommended to serve food at these seminars which would mean that attendees pay for the seminar. If serving food isn't economically feasible, then make sure that there are breaks long enough for attendees to get food or snacks.

- Half social / half technical
  - Workshops with a social hour afterwards for attendees
  - Visits to plant sites, tours, museum visits
- Events with other societies
  - Happy Hours – be sure that when working with other societies for these events that it is in the best interest of the local section to advertise another societies events. Sometimes other societies will request that the YP group chip in for costs of food and drinks for those who RSVP and the YP group must see if it has the budget to participate.
  - Field Trips – local parks, historical landmarks, museums, art galleries, beach, boat trips, bakeries, breweries, etc
  - Sporting events – attend games or participate in tournaments with other societies

- Volunteer events

After setting up an event list, it is beneficial to advertise and let others know what's going on. This would fall under the job of Advertising, but it is again everyone's job to do this in order for it to be a success. Any way to get the word out about the YP group would be beneficial. The more forms of communication used, the better.

- Flyers
  - Event flyers can easily be drawn up and placed in company break rooms or passed out to interested young individuals at committee members companies
- Networking tools

- Facebook / Myspace is an excellent tool to utilize. AIChE YP groups can easily be established. These online groups can help keep members up to date and reminders can be sent out via Facebook.
- Email
  - By setting up an email listing of all the contacts, reminders of upcoming events and dates can easily be sent out. E-vites are also a handy, free tool to use when getting ready for an event.
- Phone calls
  - Phone calls can be a useful tool, but precaution should be taken. They can sometimes come off as a sign of desperation or an annoyance if at an inappropriate time.
- Word of mouth
  - Work
    - New hires come into the working environment all the time. A short 5 minute conversation getting to know the new hire with an invitation to the next AIChE group meeting can be a great way to advertise local events
    - Non YP group members (local section members) can also help out this effort by talking to younger new hires at their work place
  - Some companies also have their own YP groups. By using current YP committee members or YP group members to tap these resources in their own companies, many more contacts can be made.



- Local Universities - Making short presentations at local university's AIChE meetings about what is available after graduation can be very beneficial. Information about the local student chapter leadership can be found online at <https://www.aiche.org/apps/students/chapters/index.asp>.
- Other technical groups
  - Speaking with other technical groups (ex. ASME) can be beneficial. Also having events and inviting more than one technical group can be beneficial and bring in a larger crowd
- Web Pages
  - Having an established webpage is also very helpfully. It is important to keep it up to date so that people can know what is going on. Here is an example of a current YP website for the South Texas Section: <http://yp.sts-aiche.org>

Once contacts have been established and an event list is setup, it's time to prepare for the first event. Whether your first event is a happy hour or a technical event, one of the most important things to remember is to be social. Talk with new people that show up, and not just with current acquaintances. It is very uninviting to come to a new organization and just stand around with no one to talk to. A simple hello with a few questions getting to know the person could make all the difference. Having a good social environment is what truly makes these events a success.

It is also helpful to identify the current members or current officers. This can be done with something as easy as nametags, pins, or shirts. This way, prospective members

will be able to identify who they can talk to for more information and remember names more easily. It is also helpful to have everyone that walks in the door wear name tags.

A sign in sheet should also be available to everyone that comes in. This can help give more depth to the current contact list and provide more information on who is coming to the events. Items that should be included on the sign in sheet are listed below.

- Name
- Company
- Email
- How did you hear about YP
- Permission to post photos
- Are they a member of the local section?

When talking to attendees, try to find out what they are looking for in AIChE. Are they looking for volunteer opportunities, resume building, active involvement in the chapter, social interaction, or do they just want to attend the meetings? By knowing what they are looking for, the prospective members can be forwarded to someone who will be of best use to them. This should help increase their personal interest and make them want to come back.

When running an event is also good to bear in mind what's the YP group's ultimate goal. Obviously, an event is typically considered successful by the number of attendees but there are other metrics that the YP group must track in order to prove to the local section that the budget for the YP group is justified. One thing the group would be wise to monitor is the increases of local section membership. Request to see the membership list for the local section every month (which is updated by National AIChE

every month) and see if there is a jump in membership of engineers who had graduated less than 5 years ago. This is perhaps the most important measurable to monitor and the ultimate key to stabilizing the YP group and making it succeed.

Another metric is the number of participants benefited from the content of the technical events. This can be monitored through the use of surveys that can be prepared and handed out before technical events. Then present the results of these surveys to the local section leadership to show that YPs feel there is a benefit from the YP group's programs (it can also show which programs aren't popular with YPs).

Other than surveying technical events, surveys documenting the number of people who felt the event benefited their social network (like finding a job or using their contacts to find information, etc) would be wise. However, a survey like this would need to be given annually probably and through the local section if the resources are there to do so.

Finally, the most obvious measurable of a successful event is the number of attendees for volunteer functions. Sign up sheets will document this. Once an event is finished make sure to compile the number of attendees at each event (like in a spreadsheet) to monitor numbers and share results with local section patterns as well as success rate and progress.

The follow up to the event is just as important to the event itself. Be sure to follow up with each attendee in some manner. A couple of easy ways to do this is to invite them to be a friend on Facebook or Myspace, and then ask the attendee to join the group you have already created, or add them to an email list and forward them event dates. It may also be beneficial to have a short meeting after each event to discuss the turn out and exchange names of people each member met.

The first event is probably the hardest to organize since the contact list might be small, but this is only the starting point. After the first event, attendees should begin to increase. By continuing this process of reaching out to other young professionals and keeping in contact with current young professionals, the YP group should begin to see results.

Here are a few other things to keep in mind. Remember not to cut off the local AIChE section. This YP group is meant to work together with the current local section. Most likely the local section is also funding the YP group. It may be beneficial to schedule some events on the calendar that allow interaction between local members and YP group members. Some ideas may include:

- Family picnics
- BBQ's where YP group members cook
- Social hours
- Sporting events such as golf tournaments

It is also important to stay up to date with the events and remind people when and where they are. This will give them enough time to make plans to attend the event.

In addition to the local section, the YP group can also depend upon AIChE National for support via the Young Professional Advisory Board (YPAB). The YPAB is an organized group that represents the interests of YPs nationally as well as actively organizing events and programs for YPs. They are heavily involved in the Student National Conference, the National Fall Meeting, the National Spring Meeting, and the various Student Regional Conferences. The YPAB is also involved with the New Horizons Program which is a training program aimed specifically at YPs run during the

Spring Meeting. The YPAB usually has a monthly teleconference that all local sections and student chapters are welcomed to participate in. These teleconferences update the local sections on national activities and volunteer opportunities. In addition, it gives the other organized local YP groups to share and communicate with each other. Please let your local section leadership know that you'd like them to forward any announcements from YPAB along to your YP group.

Again, this is not a complete walkthrough on how to start up a YP group. It should only be used as a guide that is derived from other successful YP groups. There are many other event ideas and methods of communication that may be more efficient depending on the location of the section. Also remember that results don't happen overnight; they take time. With patience and a dedicated group of individuals to makeup the committee, great results can be expected. Good Luck!