

Developing the SPE Partnership in Russia

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President's Forum: www.spe.org



After a fascinating trip to China, which I wrote about last month, the next stop on my global travels was Moscow. The local members were looking forward to the forthcoming SPE Russian Oil and Gas Technical Conference and Exhibition, where up to 3,000 delegates were expected, more than double the numbers two years ago when the first event was held.

I am a strong advocate of diversity among SPE members, ultimately to develop a richer and stronger society. We need to be mindful of different cultures and behaviours and discover ways to reach mutually acceptable solutions. For example, it is essential to understand something about the Russian culture in order to engage in a meaningful discussion about SPE, business, or life in general. Certain SPE values and principles, such as volunteerism, impartiality, non-commercialism and free exchange of information, are not as well understood in Russia. Indeed, I have been told that there is no Russian word for volunteerism—just as there is no Dutch word for embarrassment, so I was able happily to continue conversations that others might find awkward.

During my stay, I met with Moscow Section officers and senior personnel at Lukoil (Mr. Ravil Ulfatovich Maganov, First Vice President), Russneft (Mr. Alexander Ledonidovich Korsik, Chairman of the Board), Rosneft (Mr. Alexey Kuznetsov, Vice President of Innovation), Statoil/Hydro (Bengt Lie Hansen, President), Shell (Frank Denelle), Gazprom Academy of Technological Sciences (Prof. Boris Alexandrovich Nikitin, President), Schlumberger (Maurice Dujolle), and Weatherford (Mr. Kamil Zakirov, Vice President for Russia & CIS). All companies welcomed SPE's presence in Russia and promised to support our activities. Lukoil has purchased a subscription to the SPE eLibrary. Some companies plan to award their staff SPE membership in recognition of professional achievement—SPE membership will be seen as a privilege and an honour. It became clear to me that quality rather than quantity is the key to membership recruitment, focusing on people who see the benefits of becoming part of an international organization. These people are likely to be aged 40 and under and are likely to have some fluency in English.

For some Russian members, however, particularly the older ones, SPE really adds value only if everything is translated into Russian. All meetings, workshops, and conferences are equipped with simultaneous translation, which allows for the exchange of information between Russian presenters and their English-speaking counterparts and vice versa. This means that the SPE Russian Oil and Gas Technical Conference and Exhibition, for example, can accommodate an international line-up of speakers. And, SPE has just launched a bi-monthly online Russian-language newsletter, called *SPE Review: Russia and the Caspian*, containing some of the excellent Russian papers presented at various SPE events in recent years. All members in Russia and any Russian-speaking members elsewhere will benefit from access to this information.

Distinguished Lecturer visits to Russia are arranged with the help of the Russian Council, which was formed in 2005 and in September 2008 became the Russia and Caspian Regional Council. This body is also actively involved in

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helping SPE with such issues as bank registration and membership development and retention.

I also held meetings with the Russian professional society Rosing, which was formed seven years ago after a production enhancement conference organized by one of Lukoil's subsidiaries. It has 12,000 members and holds conferences and training sessions and publishes a number of technical publications. Russia also has a Society of Subsurface Experts. I believe we need to develop closer relationships with these organizations and consider working together on events of joint interest.

Since the creation of the SPE Moscow Section in 1992, six more Russian sections are now active. Starting with the Nizhnevartovsk Section in 1994, new sections followed after 2003 in Tomsk, Volga, Western Siberia, and Sakhalin. The Tyumen Section was founded earlier this year. Membership currently totals around 750, about 500 of whom are young professionals (YPs). Since 2003, membership in Russia has grown by more than 300%.

The young members of the Moscow Section established a YP program in April 2006 and continue to engage new recruits in their activities. It is the only official YP program in Russia; however, many of the other sections have YPs as leaders, so they do not develop separate agendas for the younger engineers.

There are 13 SPE student chapters in Russia, centred on the key universities offering courses in geoscience, petroleum engineering, and other scientific and technical disciplines. Membership currently totals just over 250, and each student chapter is sponsored by one of the Russian sections. It is encouraging to see that so many SPE members in Russia are students or YPs and bodes well for the future of SPE in Russia.

Over the coming months I will be visiting Australia and New Zealand, Middle East (Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference), and Malaysia (International Petroleum Technology Conference). I look forward to sharing my experiences with you. In the meantime, please share any of your thoughts and ideas on the President's Forum at www.spe.org. **JPT**

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