IMS A – Being Part of It

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Introduction

As a member of the International Municipal Signal Association (IMSA), you have a unique opportunity to participate and grow both as an individual and as part of an industry association. You are a part of an over 10,000 person strong organization that provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and industry insights. The IMSA, and its multidisciplinary education and certification programs, has established a strong and stable basis for learning, participating, and teaching. Anyone participating with the IMSA, at any level/role, has the distinct ability to walk-away having fulfilled or attained personal and work related goals.

This article is intended to inform the reader of the benefits of partaking in the IMSA, with its many offerings, as well as helping to define the impact that organizations like the IMSA can and do have on your personal life.

The article addresses two basic themes/questions:

• What does the IMSA offer me as a person?
• What roles can I play in the IMSA, and how do I get involved?

What does the IMSA offer me as a person?

The IMSA is an organization with a mission statement of: Dedicated to providing quality certification programs for the safe installation, operation and maintenance of public safety systems; delivering value for members by providing the latest information and education in the industry.

On the premise of that mission statement alone, the IMSA sets itself up as a potential tool for anyone to use and be recognized for their knowledge and/or skills. Your personal knowledge base, derived from your particular combination of experience and education, makes you unique to all those that come in contact with you (your fellow workers, friends, family, boss, community, etc. – in no particular order).

Every time you interact with someone else you are either imparting or gathering knowledge that further makes you special and unique. We all take advantage of this uniqueness in our daily activities.

You may be tempted to say: “There’s nothing special about me, as opposed to everyone else. I have nothing more to offer than my co-workers do.” But, I would beg to differ with you (anyone) on this point – in that you do have a background that only can bring to whatever is happening at a given point in time. Specifically, I would ask you to consider and ask yourself the following questions:

• Where were you born? (what city/town/county)
• Did you come from a small or large family?
• Where did you go to school? (was it a small school, in a small town, in a big City, …)
• Where have you worked, what type of agencies/companies?
• If you had additional education, what did it consist of, what courses have you taken?
• What hobbies have you had in the past?
• What hobbies are you currently enjoying?

These are simple questions, but each will work to further identify your specific skillset for work and life, and each answer is critical to everything ranging from your personality to your ability to succeed in whatever you take on.

So, where does IMSA fit into this? The IMSA as an organization has offerings for you to:

• expand your technical education and knowledge
• meet and converse with your peers, particularly those that aren’t in your immediate work environment
• meet and converse with potential Mentors for you
• express your opinions and insights to others

I personally can vouch for all of the above, and indeed I have been privileged to extend my involvement significantly, beyond my local work environment to the International stage, with IMSA. The intriguing thing that I have perpetually found, with IMSA and its people (Members and the Executive), is that they seem to all have a passion for what they do, no matter what their specific area of expertise or knowledge may be. This makes IMSA fundamentally exciting and presents endless possibilities to anyone willing to step up and partake.

You, as a working person, obviously with an interest in Public Safety (or you wouldn’t be reading this article), have a unique opportunity with IMSA to enhance your work position (skills and money!) by taking a step toward your Certification (essentially a formal recognition of your skills and knowledge) and/or by becoming actively involved in your local IMSA Section or the International Office “Working Groups” or other roles.

Then, once you are involved, you will begin to see that your combination of knowledge and skills are indeed special. With that, you will awaken to see that although your personal growth is integral to your success in life and work, you will also see that expanding into the volunteering to assist your local Section can be both rewarding and addictive. When participating in the local Section activities (organizing, conducting the business of the Section, etc.), opportunities will appear that will allow you to stretch beyond your comfort zone of a work-a-day world, into many aspects of a functional business environment (of the IMSA organization) that will challenge and excite you beyond your expectations.

What roles can I play in IMSA, and how do I get involved?

Hopefully this question is a natural

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evolution from the first one. The enticement of personal growth, discussed above, can materialize in many forms. The IMSA is an organization structured with essentially two key layers of organizational entities: Local Section Volunteers (including Executive positions) The International Office Staff, Executives and Volunteers

Your IMSA Local Section will be the one that geographically encompasses where you live and work. There are 23 Sections of the IMSA throughout the United States and Canada (refer to the IMSA website for the full listing of these – along with contact information for the local representatives).

In each Section the positions available for Volunteers ranges significantly, however here is a list of some likely roles for you to consider:

Section Executive:
• President
• Vice-President
• Secretary
• Treasurer
• International Delegate / Alternative International Delegate
• Director / Board Member-at-Large

Certification Committee:
• Certification Chair
• Certification Moderator
• TARP Representative

Section Technical Conference/Sessions Committee:
• Conference Organizer
• Vendor Representative
• Technical Program Coordinator
• Special Education Coordinator

The formal and informal dynamics of each IMSA Section, and its associated Volunteers, presents significant opportunities to be easily involved while maintaining your “day job”. The following describes a couple of sample scenarios:

1. Joe wants to be involved but has never done anything with the local IMSA Section before:
   a. Take a look in a recent edition of the IMSA Journal for the listing of “Section Secretaries and Council of Delegates” or “Section Certification Contact” and call one of them up to express an interest in participating in the section in some capacity. 
   b. The first person you contact will most likely enthusiastically discuss what goes on in the Section and what upcoming activities that they could use help with. 
   c. START WITH A LITTLE task and see how it goes. Find something you are comfortable with doing – DON’T BE AFRAID to reject doing something you are not comfortable taking on – there are many task/roles in each Section, so talk it over with the Executive.
   d. Attend a Section Executive Meeting, and feel out what goes on – you will be surprised at the potential aspects that you will be able to lend insight to.

2. Sarah is Certified in Traffic Signals Level 1 and is thinking about becoming a moderator:

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a. Contact the person, listed in the IMSA Journal “Section Certification Contact”, and discuss when the next Certification courses are expected to be offered.

b. Arrange to sit in on a session and observe the Moderator in action (not as a student, but from the perspective of an educator – very different).

c. Follow-up afterward with the Certification Chair and discuss what level of organizing the sessions you want to be involved, or maybe just as a Moderator, etc.

A typical Section Volunteer is enthusiastic, involved, and always on the lookout for ways to make the Section more valuable to its members. Partaking in certification or non-certification training can be a very effective way to grow personally and career wise, and challenge yourself on many levels. Frankly, there is no better way to learn than to teach/instruct!

The International Office staff, Executive and Volunteers, are a diverse group of people. The formal staff, and elected Executive Board, operate in a structured environment and deal with the path of IMSA daily and into the future.

Volunteers associated with the International Office typically take on roles relating to the development of Certification and Special Education programs. Within this confine, there are several opportunities to get involved with. One most likely starting point is the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) position.

The TAC personnel work directly with the “Director – Transportation & Traffic Programs Office” with:

- Identification or technical program opportunities;
- Developing outline for program content;
- Developing specifications for tendering program development;
- Program technical content review.

As a TAC member you commit to being available through the process of pro-

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SECTION CERTIFICATION CONTACTS

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gram development, working closely with your peers to create relevant and technically sound content for your fellow IMSA members. Your personal time commitment and availability may vary from others on the Committee – to suit yours and their other personal commitments, but you can be sure that what time you put in will be fulfilling and enjoyable.

There are several other Committees that a member can volunteer for, with the International Office, including being an IMSA Representative to other active industry Committees (like ITS America, etc.).

Closing Thoughts

I hope you have gained some valuable insight into what the IMSA can offer you … and more importantly what you can offer the IMSA organization, and fellow IMSA Members.

I have been actively involved in the IMSA at the local and International level for nearly 20 years now, and have enjoyed the various roles and many projects that I have been involved with.

But, most importantly, the people that I have encountered, and will continue to encounter, within the IMSA organization epitomizes the integrity and dedication that comes from those in our industry. With the IMSA I have been privileged to work with volunteers ranging from very committed people that can only show up at our Technical Session to help with seemingly menial tasks (due to heavy personal and work commitments elsewhere), through to people that are willing to dedicate several weekends and many off-work hours to ensure Certification programs are successful. BOTH, and I emphasize BOTH, types of volunteer are heroes in my mind!

Now go out and use that IMSA Contact list in the IMSA Journal, and start on a Volunteer adventure that will surely enhance your personal and career life! GET INVOLVED.

SAFEWALK

Sensing people, protecting lives

KEY FUNCTIONALITIES
• Intelligent detection at signalized intersections and mid-block crossings
• Detection of stationary pedestrians and bicyclists waiting to cross the road

KEY BENEFITS
• All-in-one-sensor (camera + detector)
• Above-ground sensor
• High detection reliability
• Passive detection. No manual activation
• Large detection coverage area
• IP-addressable
• Direct visual verification (incl. streaming video)
• Field-proven Traficon algorithms
• Unique design – durable materials

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