

Why Merge with SCEA

by **Andy Prince**, Chairman, ISPA Board of Directors

Let me start out by saying that I never thought that I would find myself writing an article explaining why we are pursuing a merger with SCEA. I joined ISPA because I believe in and support its mission to promote parametric cost estimating. I also joined because, in my opinion, it is where the best and brightest come together to learn from and challenge each other in professional growth. Finally, I joined because I saw a culture that encourages camaraderie and celebration of our accomplishments – two very important moral building activities for those of us who are often the bearers of bad news and the targets of management ire.

My opinions about ISPA have only been reinforced by my leadership experiences.

However, leadership requires that we, the ISPA Board of Directors, take the big picture view and consider what is best for our members and for the promotion our profession. When we take this “big picture” view and look at what is happening in the professional community, government, and industry the data leads us to the conclusion that a merger is in our best interest.

First of all, from an operations standpoint, many of our functions are already integrated. We have a joint business office, a joint professional journal, an integrated training program, and conduct an annual joint conference. In every case where we have undertaken a joint activity with SCEA, the overwhelming response from the members has been positive. We have received excellent support from the joint business office. The quality of our conferences has improved, with increasing numbers of attendees and papers. The joint journal has also been a success and the two societies have been able to enter into an agreement with a professional publisher to expand the reach of the journal and increase the number of annual issues. A merger will eliminate the inefficient duplication of any remaining stand alone activities, increasing value while reducing cost.

In the area of training and certification, we have found that our existing products are complementary. SCEA has agreed that the new society will continue to advocate for and educate professionals in parametric analysis. The continued advocacy for parametrics is important to ISPA and was a requirement for continued merger discussions. However, when we look at trends in government and industry, we see a movement away from the specialized parametric analyst. This is not to say that parametrics are less important, in fact, I believe that parametrics are more important today than they were 30 years ago. Rather, what we see today is an expectation that a cost estimator have a broad range of skills and abilities that includes parametrics, but also includes EVM, schedule analysis, grass roots estimating, systems engineering, etc. The specialist of the future will need to have a broad range of cost estimating and analysis knowledge and skills, and that kind of specialist is better served by a professional society that can address multiple disciplines.

You, the members, have told us that you want more jointness. The membership survey performed in 2010 indicated that single dues with membership in both societies, along with an expanded joint training program and establishing a joint website were the most valuable actions we could take. This is based on the responses of the people who identified themselves as *ISPA members only!* (Single dues and expanding the joint training program were also identified as important to respondents who are members of both societies.) Another interesting fact from the survey is that 58% of the respondents who identified themselves as ISPA members are also members of SCEA. Since 42% of the ISPA membership responded to the survey, I think it is fair to say that most ISPA members are already SCEA members, which indicates that many of us derive value from both societies.

In summary, let me reiterate that the decision process that has led us to this point has been serious and deliberate. The Board of Directors listened to what the members were telling us, we discussed industry trends, we created and examined alternative strategies for the future, and, once we decided that a merger was in the best interest of the Society, we outlined the conditions under which we were willing to enter into merger talks with SCEA. Prior to the 2011 Joint Conference, both Boards agreed to a framework for merger and we are establishing an integration team to define the details. The actual merger cannot take place until the membership of ISPA agrees. Up until that time, it is just talk and planning.

Andy Prince, Chairman, ISPA Board of Directors