

# 25th Anniversary of IEEE-IST

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## Learnings Report

**Abstract**—The IEEE-IST Student Branch (IEEE-IST) is one of the most active and awarded student branches in IEEE's Region 8. This year it commemorates 25th anniversary and to celebrate that, the current board organised a three-day event. It had technical lectures, workshops, soft skills training, discussion panels and it also served as a great platform to showcase the student branch's activities and projects. Organising an event such as this one presents a lot of difficulties on a logistical level. As part of the organising committee I was directly involved on the aspects that concerned contacting sponsors, obtaining funding from IEEE, accommodation arrangements and, after the fact, reporting the activity.

**Index Terms**—(IEEE, IEEE-IST, student branch, anniversary, event, sponsors, funding).

*nota summary of the document!*

*do not use contractions in this type of doc*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

ONE of the things I like most about IEEE is the platform it provides to enable one to meet new, inspiring and interesting people. This is accomplished, mostly, by the several congresses it holds. Until now I've been but a participant in the congresses I've attended. This time, however, I'm the one organising it, I'm on the other side of the reception desk, I'm the one making the coffee breaks (as opposed to being the one devouring them), I'm the one who people come to for directions and clarifications.

## 2 BETTER THAN .ZIP THE ULTIMATE COMPRESSION

How do you fit 25 years of history into a three day event? What do we include? Who do we invite? These were the questions we asked ourselves. The answers were not simple. However, we did reach a conclusion. The goal was to have a celebration that could tell the story of our student branch but that also had an interesting technical program. That led us to invite former members of IEEE-IST, as well as technical lecturers from several fields of study.

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## 3 LOOKING BACK

At the time I was organising this event, I had not the knowledge that I would later be reporting about it for this school subject. I didn't take notes. My report is going to be based solely on the memory I have of the event and some reports I wrote for IEEE.

### 3.1 The main quest for this report

How does one accurately transmit the feelings and teachings seized during the organisation of an event such as this one? One we're having meetings, making choices, contacting sponsors and participants it is like the day does not have enough hours. We barely have the time to do what needs to be done, let alone managing to internalize all the emotions. There is no time to take a step back and look at affairs from a distance. There are one thousand and one relevant things that happened and there is no way to transmit them all through this report.

## 4 MY ROLE

I am going to try to focus on objective accomplishments and accolades taken from this activity. So let me start by reciting my tasks and later analyzing them as to understand what I gained from all this.

- Contacting sponsors
- Accommodation arrangements

(1.0) Excellent	LEARNINGS						DOCUMENT						
(0.8) Very Good	Context × 2	Skills × 1	Reflect × 4	Summ × .5	Concl × .5	SCORE	Struct × .25	Ortlog × .25	Exec × 4	Form × .25	Titles × .5	File × .5	SCORE
(0.6) Good	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.4	1.0		0.6	1.0	1.0	0.8	1.0	1.0	
(0.4) Fair													
(0.2) Weak													

- Shopping
- Support during the event
- Presenting the Teacher in Service Program

Let's now proceed towards a more comprehensive analyses.

## 4.1 Contacting sponsors

Two years ago, our IEEE-IST organised the IFISO Autumn Meeting (an event this aims to gather representatives from various international student organisations and have them work on ideas to improve students lives). The team who organised it made a great job at creating a list of corporations who could be open to financially aid us at organising our events. This list at over 250 companies and we made sure to contact all the companies listed on it.

### 4.1.1 The engineering motto

Every engineer (or engineering student) remotely related to computer science has already heard the phrase *divide to conquer*, that is precisely what we did. Working as a team was the only way of ensuring good results. We spited the list into three parts and gave one to each member of the sponsors team.

### 4.1.2 Cold email - The first contact

One of the many things I practiced was *cold calling*, or emailing on this case. That initial contact you have with a company. The age of burst email is gone, one can not simply write one email template and bcc one hundred plus companies. The era of personalised service is back. Companies expect to see their *specific* needs being addressed when receiving and email asking for money for an event.

### 4.1.3 Doing our homework

Before contacting a company I need to see their website, get to know their product, try to understand what they expect to get in return by sponsoring an event. After I have learned that, then it is time to write my email.

### 4.1.4 Not giving up

Most companies are simply going to ignore your emails. Does that mean that,

- 1) You should stop contacting companies because they clearly do not care about you event?
- 2) You should not contact for a second time a company that did not reply to your initial email?

No. To both questions. Not at all. Addressing each one individually,

- 1) *You should stop contacting companies because they clearly do not care about you event?*  
Even if your event seem to not be of interest to any of the companies, you should keep trying, because the reality is that you can not guess what is happening inside a company. What is to not say what they happen to have a significant surplus that they need to spend? Or that for some reason your event lines up perfectly with a new mission they just defined? We should always go for it.
- 2) *You should not contact for a second time a company that did not reply to your initial email?*

Corporations are contacted a lot, by several parties, all asking for sponsorship. Most of the time they simply do not have the human resources necessary to reply to all the emails they receive. The odds are that even if they did not replied, they read them. The best approach is, then, to continue sending emails, keep them updated on the preparations for your event. Show them you are tenacious and devoted to your work. Make them *want* to work with you.

### 4.1.5 Digest

Learning and practicing how to contact a company is a very useful tool. I am very pleased with what I got from that and I believe that I will be enjoying benefits from this skill for a long time.

## 4.2 Accommodation arrangements

Arranging a place for people to stay is a fairly easy task to accomplish, there is not a very

challenging side to it. However I prefer to look at it not as simply booking an hotel, but as contacting a company to learn about what they have to offer and to negotiate conditions with them. That is what we did. We started by contacting a hostel, explaining them the kind of event we where organising and the amount of people we were expecting to have. This resulted on them giving us a discount, which was great. Unfortunately the adhesion of people outside of Lisbon was below our expectations which led us to change the hostel very close to the date. It was an opportunity to test the responsiveness and adaptability of our team, who dealt well with it.

### 4.3 Shopping

We arranged catering for all the congress. The shopping we had to make was related to coffee breaks. We had made some calculations as to how much we would spend on coffee breaks. It is very easy to get away from what you planned and end up being seduced by the sophisticated marketing techniques applied by the supermarkets. Here it was important to know how to follow rules, stick to our plan and buy only what was necessary.

### 4.4 Support during the event

There is only a certain amount of work you can do before the day of the event - a lot of things are going to end up having to be done on the date. Registration desk (handing out badges and Stuff We All Get (SWAG) bags), coffee breaks, IT issues (making sure the speaker's computer works properly), handling lunches and picking up people who have no own means of transportation, it is all part of the package.

#### 4.4.1 Registration desk

I would like to take a minute to emphasize the importance of this duty. For some participants and speakers the registration desk is the first contact they will have with the organisation, ergo it is of the utmost importance to ensure that you have a big smile on your face, establish eye contact with the guest and are as amicable as you can be.

### 4.5 Presenting the Teacher in Service Program

I was very happy to have been given the chance to present one of our student branch's activities, the Teacher in Service Program 2.0. It is a pre-university program designed to motivate high school students into pursuing an engineering degree. I prepared a slide show and presented it, in English, to all of our guests. I had made presentations before, but never anything on this level. By that I mean, among the guests there were representatives from the IEEE Portugal Section, IEEE Region 8 and IEEE board. The stakes were high. Fortunately the presentation was a success and people seemed very interested on learning more about TISP 2.0.



Figure 1. My presentation on the Teacher in Service Program 2.0

*figures MUST be referenced in Text*

## 5 SYNERGIES

It is always hard to organise a conference as big as this one. Apart from the logistical aspects there is also the financial panorama which can make or break an event. Aiming towards producing the best possible event we realised that establishing partnerships with other parties was the way to go.

### 5.1 The STEP Program

IEEE invests a lot on students, both undergraduates and graduates. One of the programs it

has for recently graduate students is Student Transition & Elevation Partnership (STEP). This program's main goal is to soften the transition between the academic and professional life; it serves almost as an induction to the professional world.

Having a good understanding of the STEP program, its benefits and the effect it can have on a recently graduate student, we automatically thought about associating our celebration with a STEP event. What better way to introduce recently graduated students to the professional world then by having past members of IEEE-IST showing them how IEEE influenced their lives and led them to the professional role they play today? Another great thing about merging the anniversary celebration with a STEP event is the funding that comes with the latter. We believe the approach we took with this STEP, which is not the most obvious one, had great results. STEP participants had the great opportunity of networking with people who are in the industrial world and who can provide valuable career advice. We also took advantage of this event to conduct a big membership drive which granted us 8 new members.

## 5.2 SET

Every year, Instituto Superior Técnico organises Semana Empresarial e Tecnológica - Entrepreneurial and Technological Week, in English (SET). An event that aims to bring students and the industry closer. During the course of one week several start ups are given the chance to give technical lectures and present themselves to Instituto Superior Técnico's students.

As the renown institution that is Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), the IEEE-IST as IEEE representative at our college have a lot to offer to an event such as this one. We coordinated with SET's organisation and settled on having the last day of SET being the first day of our 25th anniversary celebration. The one-day overlap resulted not only on IEEE's speakers enriching SET's program, but also on SET's attendants becoming aware of our celebration and attractive program that would take place on the following days.

### 5.2.1 Working with SET

Being a member of an active IEEE student branch, organising activities and events is very frequent. The reason why things *usually* run smoothly is because we are more than a team, we are friends. And friends know each other and know how to communicate. This time a new variable was added to the equation: a third party - SET. This was probably one of the biggest challenges. The core values by which we, as a student branch, live by are not the same ones that SET does. Do not get me wrong, I am not, by any means, stating that ours are the correct ones and that theirs are invalid. All I am saying is that they are different and that generated some friction. This is probably why working with SET was the experience from which I got the most out of. We had meetings with them and had to reach middle ground. We had to learn to commit, to be flexible and adaptive but also to hold our ground on the topics that mattered the most to us and that were key to honor IEEE and what it stands for.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Being a part of the organising committee of the 25th Anniversary of the IEEE-IST Student Branch was definitely a worthwhile experience. Most time on this report the subject on the topics was not just me, it was the team. That might be one of the most important lessons to take from all this, the only way to be great is as a team, not alone. For the first time I was part of the organisation of a large scale event and this change of roles gave me an amazing new perspective on every aspect concerning event organisation. It made me a better staff member, but above all it made me a better participant, for now I know exactly the effort it goes into every single detail of arranging and thus I relish the opportunities being presented to me as opposed to trying to find flaws in them. It was not perfect, there were issues with several individuals but I believe that to be part of it, behind every large event are always hours and hours of painful arguments that usually result on a commitment that improves the final product. I am looking forward for my next opportunity as an event organiser and to what

it can bring me as a person, as a student and  
as an IEEE member.

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