

## INCREASING FOCUS ON COMMERCIAL NEGOTIATORS

The AIPN was created in 1981 by a small group of people who were engaged in negotiating international petroleum transactions with host governments and national oil companies. These negotiators wanted to provide a forum for networking and discussing proposed transactions, as well as enhancing the professionalism of negotiators. Membership in the AIPN soon became open not only to those persons directly involved in negotiations but to others who are engaged in providing professional services in support of international negotiations. Over the years, the number of persons in supporting professional positions has increased, and a category of membership for students was established.

Currently, members categorize themselves as follows:

Commercial = 1182; or 46.2 %

Legal = 1172; or 45.8%

Student = 169; or 6.6%

Academic = 30; or 1.2 %

Retired = 7; or .3%

As you can see, the number of commercial and legal members is almost equal. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish whether a person should be categorized as “commercial” or “legal” since a fair percentage of persons who work in commercial positions have legal educations. You can help us track our membership by periodically checking your user profile online at [www.aipn.org](http://www.aipn.org) in the “My Account” section.

The AIPN Board is quite conscious of the diversity among its members and their differing needs. We try to provide services and programs that are of interest to all of our members. Topics at our major conferences, for example, are divided between commercial and legal subjects. The AIPN’s Nomination and Elections Committee is also careful to promote balance within the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors each year. The 2008-2009 Board, for example, is composed of 20 attorneys, 16 commercial personnel and one academic. Since the year 2000, four of the AIPN Presidents have categorized themselves as “commercial” and this year’s Nomination and Elections Committee is again seeking to provide a balanced Board.

While the AIPN Board has been conscious of the differing needs of its members, a few members have indicated that the AIPN may have gotten away from its “roots” and no longer has quite the same commercial focus it once had. To address this issue, the Board of Directors approved the creation of the Commercial Forum in April 2008. The Commercial Forum is a Standing Committee of the AIPN whose purpose is to focus on the needs of the members who categorize themselves as “commercial” and to propose

services that meet their needs. The Commercial Forum is co-chaired by David Davies and Costa Fotopoulos. They are ably assisted by Chris Moyes, the AIPN's Vice President of External Affairs, who has been reaching out to various technical and commercial organizations in order to develop co-sponsorships and synergies among the organizations. Other members of the Commercial Forum include Irena Agalliu, John Bostock, Graham Cooper, Doug De Filippi, Michelle Foss, Victor Obadiah, Deborah Resley and Alberto Tovar.

During the last few months, the Commercial Forum met several times to discuss ways to make the AIPN more interesting and relevant to commercial and other non-legal members and prospective members. The first recommendation was to develop an afternoon of two concurrent tracks of commercial and legal topics at the 2009 Spring Conference. These parallel sessions will give attendees the choice of attending a three to four hour program focused on commercial themes or a legal session which will provide continuing legal education credits for attorneys. The rest of the conference will consist of plenary sessions where all attendees will gather to hear topics of general interest to the industry. The themes for the commercial session at the spring conference in New Orleans on Thursday, April 30, 2009, will be "Valuation" and "Transaction Trends". The session is designed to be very interactive and there will be plenty of opportunity for networking.

Chris Moyes has arranged for a half day Farmout Expo in conjunction with SEAPEX at the 2009 AIPN International Conference to be held in Bangkok in October. This Expo should be of great interest to commercial negotiators representing companies who may want to investigate the opportunities that will be presented. If the Expo is successful, more will be planned in the future.

The AIPN is known for its educational workshops, which provide an interactive learning environment. The Negotiation Skills Workshop has been a very successful workshop designed to help commercial negotiators. Another Workshop is currently being planned that will focus on the commercial aspects of our business. Christopher Moore and Irena Agalliu are co-chairs of the new workshop planning committee which will develop a program devoted to upstream economics and valuation. Our Regional Chapter Directors are also being encouraged to develop more programs of interest to commercial negotiators so we can deliver these services worldwide.

If you have any suggestions about how the AIPN can be more relevant to your practice, whatever your discipline, please let me know. The Board is always interested in hearing your ideas and recommendations and finding ways to implement them.

Best wishes to all of you for a happy and healthy New Year.

All the best,  
Pat Allison