

Self promotion by Technical and Professional Network volunteers

Data has shown us that many of the IET's best-attended events have been those where the speakers and volunteers have leveraged their own professional networks and social media profiles to provide promotional support.

Of course IET staff support is there to help by providing marketing emails, however, attendance can be dramatically bolstered by promotion from those personally involved. This is particularly important in areas across the globe where the IET may have a smaller presence, as a recent event in France shows.

In June 2015 the IET co-hosted an event in Paris entitled 'Autonomous Vehicles: from theory to full-scale applications', aimed at both industry and academia.

"It was developed to let industry know the results in academia from the non-traditional domains such as robotics, and for industry to create awareness that this is advancing very fast," notes Javier Ibanez-Guzman from Renault, who initiated the development of this event.

Many of the 70 delegates did not come from usual IET marketing routes, but rather because the speakers and volunteers pushed the promotion out themselves.

"I provided a list of professional contacts to the IET plus I also sent out messages to most people I know," says Javier. "I contacted people who had attended similar national events, those on the GDR Robotique (which co-hosted the event) mailing list and I also left messages on the GDR Robotique and IET websites. My aim was to target the people I knew were working in this field.



"In my messages I introduced the event, provided a programme of the day and then highlighted the contributions of our plenary speakers. They are working in areas that are very important right now [providing a lot of pull]. The fact that autonomous vehicles is a hot topic right now really helped, but also our social group of the GDR Robotique really helped get the message out there too," he adds.

Fellow volunteer Roland Lenain believes that by reaching out to your own professional network, more people are likely to respond.

"There's a personalisation of contact that increases confidence in the event," he says. "I believe this increases motivation to participate in such workshops and allows you to reach more people," he adds.

All those involved feel that self-promotion can really boost attendance figures for events in regions without a large IET presence.

"You have to understand the IET's mailing list is limited to our local network," says Javier. "It's important to reach out to that base but to also gain the support of institutions and organisations in the host country.

"In my opinion the support of IET staff is very important but as the event was very specialised for the IET staff to promote this alone it would have been very difficult. Thanks to the support of the volunteers and speakers we had a great sample of industry and academia attend. The volunteers have the active networks in their domains of expertise and so the organising committee should be the voice of the event," he concludes.