

Building a Young Surveyors Network – A Way to Rejuvenate the Profession?

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SUMMARY

In the creation of a Young Surveyors Network within FIG a lot of experience and input have been gathered throughout the four year period that have passed since 2006. We are on the way of creating a global network, and there are so many young surveyors out there who want to take part in this. The aim of this paper is to share some of the experiences that I have gathered as the chair of this network with the rest of the surveying community.

In the western world the average age of a surveyor is quite high, e.g. USA 57 years. It is about the same in large parts of Europe, this is a great problem as there are not enough new surveyors to fill up the gap that will come out of the upcoming retirements. Can something be done about this, and what can be done? Is this a global problem or specific for some parts of the world? The intention was to do a survey and try to find out what the surveying community, via the chairs and presidents of FIG's member organizations think about Young Surveyors involvement in FIG. This because I believe that we can help out, but in order to do so we need to find our place within the organization and know that we have the support of doing so. Another impression so far is that young surveyors are keen to get involved but the older generation doubts this, could it just be miscommunication? But I wonder how many of the doubters have ever tried to get a young surveyor involved on a national level? I believe that this is a key way to keep young people involved within the national organizations. Who would turn down ones national president if he or she comes and ask for help?

In the creation of this network one of our key topics have been networking and getting to know more people in order extend our personal networks as well as the networks of people who wants to get involved. And looking on where we have gotten so far, this is a pretty strong motivation of the people that we have involved. The world is shrinking with new communication tools made available, and I feel connected to the people in my group despite the distance both spatially and culturally. Skype, chats, various groups on the internet and of course emails have made it possible for all of us to keep a daily contact. And I hope to share some of these experiences when it comes to communication. There is so much that can be done with so little.

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1. BACKGROUND

The working group 1.2 Young Surveyor was created after the Congress in Munich in 2006. The reason that this working group later on network was started in the first place was to bring more young surveyors in to the network if FIG and because of the age structure within the surveying community in the western world. Rome was not built in one day and neither was this working group. But since 2006 we have come quite a long way and in 2009 the working group was upgraded to a Young Surveyors Network in Eilat, Israel.

2. THE PROBLEM

The first task when it comes to solving a problem is to admit to one self that it actually exists. And in the upcoming years the surveying industry will have to face the task of rejuvenating the profession. In many countries, not all, the industry is having trouble attracting young people to get in to surveying. If this is because the profession itself is hard to market or if the image of the profession is not really reflecting all the things it contains I will leave to the reader to reflect about. So what is being done about this? How is the industry planning on revising the status of the profession and is anyone taking an overall looks at this problem?

2.1 The Young Surveyors Network

Since the working group was created and then later on in 2009 became a network, the core group have had a lot of support from the FIG organization. But after a while one starts to think about the fact that there is usually the same people that show up to our sessions during working weeks and they are all so enthusiastic about our work. But all the people that do not show up and does not connect with our initiative, do they all believe that what we are doing is unnecessary?

In order to try and get some input from not all FIG members but from the ones who are chairing or being national presidents in the FIG member organizations I decided to do a survey.

3. THE SURVEY

The survey was made online in order to get the input from National Chairs/Presidents on Young Surveyors involvement in FIG. It went out via the FIG office in Denmark the first time in mid December but the response rate was very low due to the upcoming Christmas. So a reminder came out in January and the responses started to come in. All in all there were 34 people who started the survey and out of these 22 that is 64,7 % completed the survey. So out

of FIG's total number of 102 member organizations 34 answered that gives a response rate within the target group of 33 %

3.1 Questions

1. In what part of the world do you live?
2. What is the average age of a surveyor in your country?
3. How long have you been the chair/president of your national organization?
4. What is your gender?
5. In your personal opinion, is the young Surveyors Network of importance to FIG?
6. Is it of importance to your national organization to have a working Young Surveyors organization within your country?
7. Do you as a national chair/president work actively to involve young surveyors in your organization?
8. Do you have a working young surveyors organization in your country? (A young surveyors organization might be an organization at the university/-ties or a subgroup to the national surveying body.)
9. Would your organization be willing to support a young surveyor delegate from your country to be active within FIG?
10. Comments, suggestions and input to the Young Surveyors Network

3.2 Responses

The responses to this survey

1. In what part of the world do you live?

Africa	4	11,8 %
Asia	1	2,9 %
Europe	23	67,6 %
North America	3	8,8 %
Oceania Australia	1	2,9 %
South America	2	5,9 %

2. What is the average age of a surveyor in your country?

45, 40, 45, 40, 65, 40, 30, 45, 50, 40, 45, 35, 45, 38, 45, 45, 50, 38, 47, 58, 47, 45, 35

Average age within the response group: 44,04

3. How long have you been the chair/president of your national organization?

0-5 years	22	66,7 %
5-10 years	7	21,2 %
10-15 years	3	9,1 %
15-20 years	1	3,0 %
More	0	0,0 %

4. What is your gender?

Male	28	84,8 %
Female	5	15,2 %

5. In your personal opinion, is the young Surveyors Network of importance to FIG?

Yes	22	91,7 %
No	2	8,3 %

Comments:

To involve young surveyors is an issue on long-term survival of FIG!

We must be an organisation that attracts young surveyors - the best way to achieve this is to involve them as soon as possible.

That is also our national experience from Sweden!

Yes, giving input and feedback to Commission 2 work in close cooperation in organizing events for young professionals (e.g. summer schools)

I believe that a young surveyors' network is beneficial to the entire international surveying industry, not only to FIG.

They are the future of our profession; without them not future at all.

The Young Surveyors group can help pave the way for the next generation of surveyors in the market. It can show the current surveyors what the next generation is thinking, and what directions they wish to go. This is something that is easy to forget for those of us with decades of experience.

Because they are the future for our profession and country

Young professionals are escaping traditional organizations leaving them to "old farts". This development should be slowed and turned.

Without such a network, the membership and leadership of FIG, as well as the individual national organizations, the link to our future is diminished.

It is important for any organisation to have members from different age groups!
It is a must for the survival of the organisation.

6. Is it of importance to your national organization to have a working Young Surveyors organization within your country?

Yes	21	91,3 %
No	2	8,7 %

Comments:

Yes, to motivate them to build international contacts and collect experiences

In our country there is a students organization (which has organized the 2009 World Student Congress. We have contacts with this body and we are trying to motivate the young surveyors to join the organization, when they have finished their studies. Many of them join, but it is difficult to engage them in the organization's work, because they are all very busy to find their final profile. This takes some time but I can say that after having got the license (in the age of about 29 years) all join.

In the South African context, which is where my organisation is based, there are two Professional bodies. The FIG membership is through my organisation, which is the statutory registration body (South African Council of Surveyors). The other body is the voluntary organisation (The South African Geomatics Institute), it is this body that would be much more conducive to young land surveyors. The voluntary body is in fact fairly active in encouraging the participation and involvement of young land surveyors.

In our country there are organisations working on the base of profession or specialism in the profession, not on the base of age. Otherwise in universities the young people have a lot of possibilities to create their own organisation if they want. But there is not a big interest.

They should know the inner of the profession to defend and work for it.

Discussions on how to interest more young folk in the industry is discussed regularly.

They are already working in our Country, in many different areas, and that has a very special meaning for us.

I think so, but at the moment there are many difficulties..

7. Do you as a national chair/president work actively to involve young surveyors in your organization?

Yes	18	75,0 %
No	6	25,0 %

Comments:

We have an annual information meeting with the students in their last semester, explaining them the step into the professional life. This is rather successful. We know each other and this is a reason for joining the organization

The statutory body is a State appointed body. The Council is however made up largely of members who are nominated by the voluntary body.

He is very likely more interested and engaged with bigger more pressing problems right now. As I imagine most leaders are.

We have a younger meeting with them, every year. Where we analyze plenty of aspects of our profession, and the future of it.

The work is under way but it is demanding does not seem to bring any quick results. One problem is possibly that we older ones do not quite understand what makes the young to tick.

Part of my job is to travel across our country meeting with surveyor organizations and universities. During those visits, I speak with students about their importance to the future of our profession, and our organization. During the meetings I attend, I promote the Young Surveyor initiated "Speed mentoring" concept. We are also working on a relationship with a company whose purpose is to facilitate the documentation and arrangements necessary for young surveyors to travel to and from our country for internship.

Very much so! We have contact persons on universities graduating land surveyors

I hope so

8. Do you have a working young surveyors organization in your country? (A young surveyors organization might be an organization at the university/-ties or a subgroup to the national surveying body.)

There are no formations of young surveyors in my country

11 47,8 %

There are formations but not working that well

2 8,7 %

There are formations but they are not connected to the national organization

2 8,7 %

There are formations and they are connected to the national organization

8 34,8 %

Comments:

There is a sub-committee on "Education and Young professionals"

There were in the period 1980 to about 1989 at least three active young land surveyor organisations. In the late 80's there was a significant drop-off of graduates from the universities and most of the members of these organisations had moved on from falling into the definition of "young land surveyor" and had become active in the voluntary organization.

There are probably some but I have not heard of them.

These are mainly/maybe only student organizations.

In Australia there is the Young Professionals within the Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute (SSSI). They have representation on the Consultative Council and the Board. They are made up of surveyors and other spatial professionals.

We have individual student members in our organization, and Student Chapters within several universities

9. Would your organization be willing to support a young surveyor delegate from your country to be active within FIG?

Yes	17	73,9 %
No	6	26,1 %

Comments:

Not financially but otherwise

One person will be supported her participation in Sydney

If we find an interested person

Within limits - because of its statutory nature budgeting to cover an expense of this nature would fall outside of the mandate of the council.

It is difficult question, because our organisations don't have enough funding for our members. But we support young surveyors in the other way. (The price of Chamber for the best student in the Universities and so on)

Money is tight now and budgets are too. This will probably stay in force for the next couple of years before things loosen up.

We are new members of the FIG, so we have to work that issue in a better way

Within our economic possibilities, yes. Involving the young is something we have tried to keep going on.

Needs discussion and budget implications

We are sponsoring a surveying/geomatics student to attend the 2010 Congress in Sydney to help establish a link between the young surveyors in our country and the Young Surveyors group in FIG.

Financial reasons. But other ways - yes.

10. Comments, suggestions and input to the Young Surveyors Network

It is a good idea and would allow young surveyors to feel involved and to be motivated to get involved with the professions in surveying. Funding active involvement would be difficult so other mechanisms for interaction should be investigated such as online conferencing.

Please pay attention to the lessons learnt by Cecilia Lindén on her work establishing a network for young surveyors!

Go on with your work, but take into consideration, that the situation is differing over the world.

A Young Surveyors Network is certainly worthy of support - I will happily make available whatever information could be of use in contacting young land surveyors currently doing their articles as well as those recently registered with the Council. I will also happily endeavour to obtain and make available similar information pertaining to students currently studying at the universities should you request it.

Good luck

Paul Marshall - President South African Council for Professional and Technical Surveyors (PLATO)

To be in better connection with the older generations.

Young Surveyors Network, as every organization, should be constant in its work, solid before a problem and generous in time and effort with profession.

Well, I am interested in getting my daughter to join and she might come to Sydney. Possibly going after the children of the existing members would give you a boost over the next several tough years.

We have to encourage the FIG to work with this new Young Surveyors

3.3 Results

The response rate to the survey as a whole out of the number of member organizations was disappointingly low. If this was due to bad timing or a lack of interest I leave up to the reader to think about but it was still so low that it is hard to draw any big conclusions from the responses for the industry as a whole.

3.1 In what part of the world do you live?

This question was in the survey to pinpoint the origin of the respondents without revealing their exact home country. This shows that Europe chairs have been the most active to reply with Africa second.

3.2 What is the average age of a surveyor in your country?

This is a really interesting question and the outcome of an average of 44 years is not that bad for an average age. But this average age is not reflected within FIG as an organization and that's interesting.

3.3 How long have you been the chair/president of your national organization?

The majority, 66,7 % of the chairs/national presidents have only been so for a maximum of 5 years. This shows a good renewal within the organizations on a national level, even if there are chairs that have held their position for more than 10 years and up to 20.

3.4 What is your gender?

The outcome of this question actually came out better than expected when the survey was started but it shows that there is still a lot of work to do when it comes to female representation within FIG.

3.5 In your personal opinion, is the young Surveyors Network of importance to FIG?

This shows that a majority thinks that what we are doing is of importance to the future of FIG. And one really good comment to express this question would be "It is important to any organization to have members from different age groups! It is a must for the survival of the organization."

3.6 Is it of importance to your national organization to have a working Young Surveyors organization within your country?

This question shows the difficulty to get a working connection between the people in training at the universities and the ones out in working life. There should be an interest from the universities to know more from people in working life otherwise they would probably not have chosen to study surveying in the first place. Could new ways of interconnections be tried out in the countries where this is not working satisfactorily?

3.7 Do you as a national chair/president work actively to involve young surveyors in your organization?

The outcome of this question shows that there are meetings but very often just once a year a mostly in the form of a lecture, this does not create the possibility to interact with people in the business. Even if one of the respondents have been practicing speed mentoring.

3.8 Do you have a working young surveyors organization in your country? (A young surveyors organization might be an organization university/-ties or a subgroup to the national surveying body.)

The responses to this question shows that it is difficult to form lasting formations within student communities as people move on. And if there was a group of active people one year there is no guarantee that there will be the following year. Here the national organizations could do a lot by supporting such formations and involving them in their continuous work. Myself I was the student representative within the board of the Swedish Association of Chartered Surveyors, this meant that I was invited to all meetings and this because they wanted to know what was buzzing at the university.

3.9 Would your organization be willing to support a young surveyor delegate from your country to be active within FIG?

The big question here is of course the finances for travelling to FIG events. But I believe that this question should be turned around, in order for FIG to market itself perhaps part of fees could be financed to market the network to younger people if the national organization is willing to take one part. This would also make the membership in the national organizations more attractive as there could be an international twist to the membership.

3.10 Comments, suggestions and input to the Young Surveyors Network

An important aspect here is that the situation differs all over the world and this aspects requires that we have representatives within the network from all over the world. One comment was to be in better connection with the older generations, well we want nothing but that so please be in better connection with us and tell us how to achieve that.

4 THE CONTINUATION

The Young Surveyors Network is not all the pieces to the puzzle but we are a few of them. We know more about how younger people think and prioritize and the hope in the upcoming years it so intensify the work within FIG and get Young Surveyors delegates from as many countries as possible to become active within the different commissions.

4.1 Creating awareness

One big task for the FIG Young Surveyors Network is to really get out to students and young surveyors nationally and tell them that we exist. But in order to achieve this help from the national organizations will be required. And means of communication needs to be refined. And the task of creating awareness within FIG also continues, as the response rate to this survey was weak. This might be a sad outcome due to the holiday season but I believe that this is the reason together with disinterest for our work. Or maybe people just hates surveys?

4.2 Connecting generations

This is the key task to the success of this network and what we want to build, we want to take part of the experiences of older generations, you built this business to what it is today and we have to learn from you in order to bring it forward in a good sense. Or let me rephrase that we need to get the input from each other in order to bring our industry forward in the best possible sense.

4.3 Creating a way in to FIG for young surveyors

And this is the way to connect generations within our industry on a global level. We need to create possibilities for young surveyors to take part in the work of FIG by being part of the different working groups and task forces. But this needs to start on a national level; there is a need to have a national organization behind every involved young surveyor so that the person can bring his or her experiences back home as well. There is so much that can be done with today's techniques and I hope that we can help the older generations to get in to using this more as well.

CONTACTS

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