STLE members like their local section meetings—that much was more than clear from the 103 responses we received to this month’s query. Some members said the meetings have been so informative for so long that they couldn’t single out one individual session for recognition. “Trying to limit it to one meeting over the past 10-plus years is impossible,” noted one reader. For many members, technical information is the key value for the meetings. Others said the networking value of the meetings is so high that they attend regularly regardless of the topic. When asked to choose which element is most critical, 57% chose “equally important.” We also asked members how their local section leaders could improve their meetings. We’ve included those responses at the end of the article to provide guidance to those who have undertaken the daunting task of planning these meetings each year. To all parties—leaders and members, STLE extends its most heartfelt thanks. Continuing education and camaraderie are at the core of a professional society like ours.

A talk on bearing failure causes and failure modes, a topic I wasn’t familiar with.

A technical presentation about food additives, which I used in my formulations.

A couple years ago we had a speaker discuss microbes and the treatment of metalworking lubricants. While our company does not sell MWFs, the presentation gave me enough information to address some MWF problems.

Our section’s educational session focused on STLE’s Oil Monitoring Analyst I certification and was very well handled and informative. I think most of the 11 that tested passed the test. We also had a dinner meeting with [STLE president] Dr. Edward P. Becker, the best meeting ever with a very dynamic person.

The most valuable meeting I ever attended was when a competitor sitting at the same table dropped the name of one of his largest accounts that I proceeded to call on. We sold hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of products to them.

The ones where I learned something new, which tends to be a lot of them.

The best meeting I attended was not a technical lecture but featured a panel of industry experts discussing oil analysis. It provided views of end-users, commercial labs and oil companies.

The STLE North Texas Section held a lube school last year taught by Dr. Bob Gresham [STLE’s director of professional development]. Bob reinforced the basics and added some new information.

Most of the meetings I have attended are beneficial. I like getting the latest update on a topic of interest. I like meeting with my colleagues. Perhaps the most beneficial meeting was one involving a speaker from STLE national who not only talked about enhancements to STLE but also about the future of automotive propulsion.

Meetings where I met people that led to ongoing mutually beneficial relationships. These relationships have significantly impacted me both professionally and personally.

Had useful information about MWF functionality and failure mechanisms that was not a sales pitch. I was able to apply the information to my job.

The recent session on biodiesel was very informative and pertinent, as my company sells and distributes fuels locally. Biodiesel usage is becoming more prevalent, as there is a tax savings realized with its usage and the
benefit of fewer emissions.

◆ In one meeting the speaker from a major OEM talked about diesel lubricants for the North American market. This was an important piece of information for me because we then knew that OEM’s position, which helped us formulate a strategy for specifying engine oil potential specification. In another meeting the speaker distinguished between soot and sludge, the mechanism of formation and how to quantify them. This provided a better understanding of soot measurements.

◆ All plant tours have been beneficial. It lets us see real-world applications.

◆ Just showing up at any of them is valuable for the networking alone.

◆ Over many years almost all have added to the background and information I have gathered and have helped with many problems and circumstances.

(A.) Central Lubrication System by Paul Conley, Lincoln Industries. (B.) Lubrication Failure by Louis Lanteigne, FAG Bearings. (C.) Near-Dry Machining by Mark Alig, Sandvik. (D.) Biodiesel Fuel by John Taracha, Lubrizol. I call on lube customers and these topics are near and dear to end-users.

◆ The presentation from Joe Cepec of Allegheny Petroleum on cutting-oil formulation. It helped me better understand the application and uses of the products my company manufactures for this application.

◆ A tour of a GM truck and bus plant in Ohio.

◆ Discussion of greases.

◆ The topic that interested me was REACH for lubricant formulators. The reason I attended is that the topic is relevant. We didn’t just see more slides on chemistry.

◆ A training course on the basics of lubrication put on over several weeknights by the STLE Hudson-Mohawk Section. It was very helpful both educationally and with business connections. This introduced me to STLE (at the time ASLE) and bankrolled the chapter for some time.

◆ In 20 years I have been to many beneficial section meetings—they are opportunities to see and hear excellent presentations. I have attended many meetings that may not necessarily be about what I do but where I’ve had opportunities to either share what I know or point someone to a contact regarding a subject that I do not have a command of.

◆ Our local seals vendor put on a session on seal lubrication. It was presented at just the right level and included lots of practical information. I also enjoyed the presentation on nanotribology, although that had no practical application.

◆ Our September 2007 speaker was Curtis Cushman, who discussed the importance of fully documenting lube points/analysis points and equipment notes prior to propagating a CMMS system. Lube surveys have been done by oil companies at accounts, however, many were missing the important survey information that Curtis includes in his audits/surveys. This opened the door for many at the meeting to improve the performance of their lubrication maintenance software, as well as stepping up their lube route coverage and expanding diagnostics while in front of each piece of equipment.

◆ Trying to limit it to one meeting over the past 10-plus years is impossible. There have been many meetings that have been helpful to me in understanding the critical role of lubrication.

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The most beneficial part of any STLE meeting is hearing perspectives of other professionals in facing and solving problems they face in their business. Finding and sharing solutions always provides the opportunity to look for similar situations in your own business obstacles.

At a Toronto section meeting the topic was rust preventives, and I came out with better knowledge that I could use immediately in my formulation work.

Dr. Donald Smolenski of GM discussed the benefits of standardizing and improving the requirements for industrial maintenance lubricants. This continues to be an important driver in improving the performance of industrial fluids.

Try to include more variety of topics with regard to speakers.

Keep the local sections alive! Even though some of us are prevented from attending due to work-related conflicts, local sections are important.

Provide up-to-date information on possible trends in the lubricant world, not just what the major base oil suppliers think, while also providing useful information on products that excel in performance.

Content, content and content!

Figure out a way to increase attendance. I know our leaders are working on this.

Consider scheduling meetings in the evening because I can’t get approvals for taking time off. The lunch hour meetings are convenient for people in the northern area of San Francisco Bay, whereas I am in San Jose and spend three hours traveling through heavy traffic. It becomes an all-day event for me.

Focus on more technical challenges than general talk.

Locate the venue in the most central location for the majority of members.

Speakers with real-world applications expertise.

Gear the topics toward new and innovative tribological information.

The North Texas meetings are high quality. I would not expect them to be of higher quality.

Have an interesting and applicable presentation topic but also provide for input from the members.

More technical and helpful information about the way things work down to the molecular level.

Fewer metalworking presentations.

More metalworking presentations.

Handouts, name tags and introductions.

Consider surveying members about which topics interest them most. This may change year-to-year. The second most important thing is the choice of speaker. The speaker should have in-depth knowledge, excellent presentation skills and should cover a broad range to answer questions from the audience. Lastly, promote the meeting through e-mails, newsletter, etc.

Continue to have them at lunch. Worry less about having a great speaker than having a great topic. Make sure to allow plenty of discussion time. Most of us are there for the networking.

STLE leaders need to attract a diverse group of industry professionals and welcome younger members.
More on basic lubrication knowledge and problems.

- Offer a strong, well-diverse annual program. You have to hit all of your section members’ hot buttons, as well as end-user interests. Being strong in just one area will chase some attendees away. Can’t preach fire all the time, there has to be some brimstone to balance.

- Broaden the topic scope: tax consequences of alternative investment solutions, advertising/dollar advantages of technological advances, evaluating outsourcing alternatives.

- More lead time on meeting announcements.

- Notification when a speaker change happens. At our last section meeting the speaker changed, but participants weren’t given any notification so people drove through bad weather for a topic that wasn’t of interest to them. The substitute did an excellent job filling in, and the presentation had a great energy to it, but it would have been nice to have known about the change ahead of time.

- Ensure presentations are not just information dumping.

- There needs to be two-way dialogues on topics relevant to the industry today. Chemistry lessons are important, but they need to be in a context that impacts business.

- No sales pitches!

- Hold joint meetings with other professional associations! ASME, ASCE, Aeronautical, API, ABS, etc.

- Look for speakers outside your own industry segment to provide a different perspective.

- Give us hands-on information and not just talk.

### Develop topics of current interest with other section members or other speakers from STLE or visitors.

- Make the dinner meeting more affordable by holding it in a less-expensive venue. They could then attract more of the younger, less well-off employees.

- Have more than the once a year meeting.

- More time should be scheduled for the speaker. We meet at lunch. Perhaps members are required to return to work as soon as possible. I am retired, so I have all day.

- As much advanced notice as possible, as members are required to travel a few hours to attend. TLT

Editor’s Note: Sounding Board is based on an e-mail survey of 7,200 TLT readers. Views expressed are those of the respondents and do not reflect the opinions of the Society of Tribologists and Lubrication Engineers. STLE does not vouch for the technical accuracy of opinions expressed in Sounding Board, nor does inclusion of a comment represent an endorsement of the technology by STLE.