

PROMOTING THE AIA SPACE SYSTEMS DIVISION AND SPACE COUNCIL

While the Aerospace Industries Association is a premier aerospace & defense association, when I arrived the Space Systems Division had only just been promoted from a committee to a full council status and it was still seen as a second tier entity in the Washington DC space community. I initiated actions that raised my department to match other divisions. Within two years we were acknowledged as *the* “go to” source on space industry issues. Here are 14 examples of how we expanded the reach and standing of the AIA Space Systems Division.

- Expanded Space Council beyond NASA
- Increased Agency and Congressional Visits
- Annual Member Calls
- National Aerospace Week
- NASA Advisory Council
- Expanded Election Outreach
- Hill Hearing Invitations
- Proactively Pursued Communications Opportunities
- Space Industry Executive Roundtable
- Space History 101 Lectures
- Raised the Seniority of Member Participation
- VIP Speaker Events
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- Annual Space Council Report Out

Expanded Space Council beyond NASA

The Space Council members had become very NASA-centric although their companies had interests in other space areas including the DoD, FAA and NOAA. In turn, members viewed AIA as NASA-centric. Reaching out to members to confirm their wider interests and getting recommendations on the key staff to visit at other agencies rapidly increased the Space Council's portfolio and value to members to the point that we increased our staff.

Increased Agency and Congressional Visits

Asking members to help identify and provide introductions with key staff, we visited agencies and Capitol Hill. After a brief introduction our first question was usually, “How can we help you?” which determined areas of mutual interest and rapidly made allies who were open to speak and work with our council. Access to top people quickly followed along with the opportunities to meet informally and speak candidly.

Annual Member Calls

When I joined AIA the Space Council was experiencing a membership decline. We put into place annual thirty-minute meetings with our member representatives with three questions. 1) What is your company doing that we should know about? 2) What do you want to get out of your membership? 3) How are we doing? This gave us valuable insights, demonstrated our commitment to members, and reversed the membership decline.

National Aerospace Week

When our CEO tasked us to increase AIA's branding, I responded that our industry did not have a signature day aimed at recognition and outreach. I developed a plan including Congressional and White House recognition, a media blitz, Capitol Hill presentations, breakfasts, luncheons, and a Capitol Hill awards dinner. AIA ultimately implemented National Aerospace Day (now expanded to Week). It has now become an annual industry effort.

NASA Advisory Council

After several meetings with the NASA Administrator and other NASA officials, we lobbied for a seat on the NASA Advisory Council and its Aeronautics Committee. Our CEO (who was rapidly promoted to Committee Chair) met with the Administrator and other key officials on a quarterly basis to discuss and shape NASA policy at the highest level, as well as meeting other key decision-makers and regularly visiting NASA and space facilities nation-wide.

Expanded Election Outreach

Campaigns move quickly and may lack expert advice. Once a candidate states a position they are unlikely to alter it. Early information from a credible source, easily found, digested, and repeatable, is highly valued. Preparing information and providing it to a campaign can affect national programs. AIA Space published, issued, and briefed both campaigns and new officials with materials including one page fact sheets, brochures, and 30 page reports.

Hill Hearing Invitations

Nothing raised the bar for the Space Division like speaking before a Congressional Committee. Meetings with Committee, Chair, and Ranking Member staffs helped ensure our CEO was invited to represent industry with testimony. The opportunity to present our view on policy and projects at these hearings increased our value to members, increased membership, and provided us with opportunities to promote AIA on the Hill and to the media.

Proactively Pursued Communications Opportunities

The Space Systems Division took a very proactive role in having our CEO, VP, Chair, and Director speak at events. Working closely with our Space Council Executive Committee and council members, we located and analyzed opportunities, evaluated each audience, and determined what messages best communicated our goals at each event. Within two years, invitations to annual events had become a standard occurrence.

Space Industry Executive Roundtable

The Council used the AIA Board of Governors Meetings to host a bi-annual SIER. These 90-minute events drew 70 CEOs and senior VPs (including many Fortune 100/500 CEOs). Top CEOs chaired the events, “read-ahead” books were issued and council members briefed their CEOs. After a brief summary of recent actions five-year strategies were discussed. With CEOs behind initiatives, resources were available to see our strategies pursued.

Space History 101 Lectures

Congressional staffs are assigned many unfamiliar issues in their portfolio. I prepared and presented a 40-minute lecture with a take-away book entitled *Space History 101: Learning from the Past to Prepare for the Future*. This historical overview also highlighted our current space issues. We included an Apollo astronaut to join my Q&A. Established as an industry expert, we were frequently contacted for information, opinions, and to give testimony.

Raised the Seniority of Member Participation

Initially Space Council members were Managers and Directors. We made a concentrated push to have attendees to our quarterly or bi-annual meetings hold one or two additional steps in seniority. This increased general participation, discussion, the level of speaker guests attending as well as the force behind our action plans. As the seniority of some attendees increased, other companies encouraged more senior attendance as well.

VIP Speaker Events

The Space Systems Division developed a monthly VIP Speaker event bringing in key decision-makers from agencies, the Hill, and other experts for a presentation followed by member Q&A. These were valued by members giving them an “inside track” so they could report back to their offices on potential trends or challenges. It also allowed them to make introductions to the decision-makers and arrange for private visits at a later date.

Annual Executive Committee Off-Site

To increase Council effectiveness we held an annual off-site with our four-member Executive Committee. We elected members of the Council selected for knowledge, industry standing, and trusted ability to represent overall industry interests. We set goals for the next year, determined priorities, and presented the council with a detailed list of top issues to pursue. This also encouraged increased seniority of future committee members.

Annual Space Council Report Out

Each spring the Goddard Dinner attracts two thousand industry and government space leaders from across the nation. I took advantage of the “fly in” and hosted a member breakfast and annual report to visiting executives to hear a progress report, ask questions, and offer strategies. This made AIA a hands-on project to them, increased their networking, and allowed local members to demonstrate their contributions to joint space industry efforts.

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