

Running head: AN EXAMINATION OF ISPI

An Examination of the
International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPI)

Bob Daumer

Nova Southeastern University

Abstract

This examination of ISPI, a professional association of performance improvement professionals, discusses the current demographics, explains its history, relates its annual conference(s), and describes how membership could benefit professional goals.

An Examination of the International Society of Performance Improvement (ISPI)

Professional associations provide practitioners a means to communicate with others of the same field. Every industry offers its practitioners a multitude of professional associations to choose from, each usually having a specialized focus. Understanding the specialized focus is helpful to one seeking the appropriate professional association.

As a means of examining a professional organization, the following will be addressed: (1) a statement regarding its headquarters and membership demographics, (2) an analysis of its stated mission, (3) a review of its offices and current officers, (4) a tracing of its history, (5) a description of its annual conference(s), and (6) an application of the association to professional goals.

Headquarters and Membership

The ISPI headquarters are found in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA (<http://www.ispi.org>, Directory, 2005). According to Francis George of ISPI, there are currently over 10,000 international members, both paying and free. Of specific interest, there are 3,769 members in the United States, and 7 members from Venezuela. There are 4,234 paying members worldwide. (George, summarized from email correspondence, 2005).

ISPI offers both individual and organizational membership categories. The individual categories include Active, Student, and Retired. The association qualifies the Student Membership as individuals enrolled full-time at an accredited college/university, and having an income of less than \$10,000 per year. For those organizations that wish to support ISPI, the association offers three categories: Sustaining, Patron, and Advocate (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, 2005).

Stated Mission

According to the ISPI web site, the mission of the association is “to develop and recognize the proficiency of our members and advocate the use of Human Performance Technology” (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, 2005). To truly understand the mission, Human Performance Technology (HPT) must be explained.

HPT “stresses a rigorous analysis of present and desired levels of performance, identifies the causes for the performance gap, offers a wide range of interventions with which to improve performance, guides the change management process, and evaluates the results” (<http://www.ispi.org>, HPT & HPT Education, 2005). ISPI also describes HPT by defining each word of the concept individually: “Human: the individuals and groups that make up our organizations; Performance: activities and measurable objectives; Technology: a systematic and systemic approach to solve practical problems” (<http://www.ispi.org>, HPT & HPT Education, 2005).

ISPI created seven Professional Communities (ProComms) to support the HPT concept. They are: Analysis, Evaluation, and Measurement (AEM); Instructional Systems (IS); Management of Organizational Performance (MOP); Motivation, Incentives, and Feedback (MIF); Organizational Design/Alignment (OD/A); Process Improvement (PI); and Science and Research (SR). The ProComms are open to all ISPI.org registered users; ISPI membership is not required to join a ProComm (<http://www.ispi.org/proComm/default.htm>, 2005).

The mission relates to instructional technology through its concept of HPT. The technology part of HPT aligns well with AECT’s 1994 definition as it reinforces a process to achieve effective instruction.

Offices and Current Officers

ISPI has six primary offices. They include: President, President-Elect, Treasurer, Director, Immediate Past President, and Executive Director (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, Past/Present Officers PDF file, 2005). The President serves a 3-year term: year 1 as President-Elect, year 2 as President, and year 3 as Immediate Past President. ISPI Directors serve 2-year terms (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, Board Nominations, 2005).

Table 1 identifies the current officers.

Table 1

2005 – 2006 ISPI Officers

Office	Officer
President	Sivasailam Thiagarajan
President-Elect	Clare Elizabeth Carey
Treasurer	Robert L. Bodine
Director	Mariano L. Bernardez
Director	Andrea K. Moore
Director	Marilyn K. Spatz
Director	Matthew T. Peters
Immediate Past President ¹	Vacant
Executive Director	Richard Battaglia

Notes.

1. The first Immediate Past President will take office in 2006.

(<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, Past/Present Officers PDF file, 2005)

History of ISPI

ISPI began as the National Society for Programmed Instruction, founded in 1962. As the membership grew and evolved, the association changed its name to the National Society for Performance and Instruction. The association finally adopted its current name once the association started to have a more global presence and human performance technology became more recognized (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, 2005).

The association was founded with a base “in performance research and instructional design.” After its foundation, the association evolved around “performance and its improvement.” The current evolution of the association is around the “process of selection, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to most cost-effectively influence human behavior and accomplishment” (<http://www.ispi.org>, About ISPI & Membership, 2005).

Annual Conference(s)

Each year ISPI hosts or participates in numerous professional conferences. In 2005, ISPI hosted its 43rd annual conference (April), and will host two additional conferences—Instructional Systems and Management of Organizational Performance—in September (<http://www.ispi.org>, Conferences *Plus*, 2005).

The annual conference is held each April and 2006 brings the 44th annual conference. From April 6 – 11, attendees will travel to the Adam’s Mark hotel in Dallas, Texas. The theme of the 44th conference is “Researching the Radical,” which is meant “to recapture those exciting times when we [NSPI, predecessor to ISPI] were experimenting away from standard operating procedures” (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/>, 2005).

The conference is comprised of three days of HPT institutes and workshops, or focused skill-building sessions; followed by three days of concurrent sessions, evening round-tables, and social events (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/>, 2005). Two 3-day HPT institutes begin on April 6: Principles and Practices of Performance Improvement and Making the Transition to Performance Improvement. The first institute “will teach [attendees] the Human Performance Technology process and the application of performance consulting skills and tools to analyze a workplace performance problem, present solutions, and evaluate your results.” The second institute starts “the process of making the shift to performance improvement” (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/institutes.htm>, 2005).

Multiple workshops are also offered during the conference. Two day and one day workshops will be offered at the 44th annual conference. No information regarding the workshop topics was available at the time this examination was written. Workshop information will be posted to the conference web site (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/workshops.htm>) sometime during September 2005.

After the HPT Institutes and workshops have ended, the conference continues with educational sessions, or conference tracks. The sessions are aligned with ISPI’s seven professional communities. In addition to the many new sessions, former sessions ranked highest by conference attendees are encored. Fifteen encore sessions will be conducted at the 44th conference. The new sessions will be posted to the conference web site (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/sessions.htm>) in December 2005.

James “Amazing” Randi is the keynote speaker for the 44th annual conference. Although Randi is not a learning and development professional, he is a “tireless investigator and demystifier of paranormal and pseudoscientific claims”

(<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/keynote.htm>, 2005). Randi will give his keynote presentation on Sunday, April 9 at the first general session (<http://www.ispi.org/AC2006/quick.htm>, 2005).

The web sites for the 42nd and 43rd annual conferences plus the 2004 Fall conference are still accessible on the world wide web (<http://www.ispi.org>, *Conferences Plus*, 2005). No information was available regarding previous conferences other than these three. It is unknown if ISPI archives conference materials.

ISPI and Professional Goals

For an individual seeking a career within a corporate learning and development organization, ISPI offers near-endless resources. The multiple conferences and the ProComms are ever-growing resources of information, knowledge, and skills. Although membership is not required to participate in conferences and the ProComms, membership includes access to a wide variety of benefits, from free and discounted journal subscriptions, to personal insurance and employment services (<http://www.ispi.org>, *About ISPI & Membership*, 2005).

Staying current with industry trends and practices is a difficult task. ISPI's journal, *Performance Improvement (PI)*, is a complimentary publication for all members. Ten times each year, *PI* is published and includes articles that highlight industry practices, offer techniques, update industry trends, and insight into professional viewpoints (<http://www.ispi.org>, *About ISPI & Membership*, 2005). The material published in *PI* may be directly applicable to a current professional initiative and, therefore, offer a new solution to a performance challenge.

The foremost benefit of ISPI membership is having a network of performance professionals available. Instead of reinventing the wheel and struggling, there is bound to be at least one other member who has encountered the same situation. The sharing of knowledge and experiences progresses everyone's individual knowledge.

Reference

<http://www.ispi.org> (2005). Retrieved September 1-9, 2005.