



CONSULTANTS  
NETWORK

BOSTON SECTION

# Consulting News

## Inaugural Edition

June 1, 2007

Beginning with this issue, CNet brings you monthly updates on our chapter events, presentations and highlights of our members' noteworthy accomplishments. In this edition:

- ☛ *A review of and interviews with our speakers for the May 2007 presentation*
- ☛ *What's up-and-coming for June, including a preview of our June 27th presentation*
- ☛ *An overview of recent CNet consultant achievements, including patents, awards, speaking engagements and publications.*
- ☛ *Don't miss the Boston Harbor Cruise and Networking Evening July 10th, hosted by the IEEE Boston Entrepreneurs' Network ([www.boston-enet.org/cruise\\_pay.html](http://www.boston-enet.org/cruise_pay.html))*

## Helping Consultants Get Paid

Our May presentation with Nathan Sokal and Robert Adelson

For independent consultants, getting a contract signed may seem like the final hurdle in finding work. After all, once the customer has agreed to a price and delivery date, all you have to do is complete the work and submit an invoice, right? In an ideal world, the answer is yes, but in reality, the real work can start once it's time for you to get paid. On May 23rd, Nathan Sokal shared



Nathan Sokal



Robert Adelson

his experience from 47 years of independent consulting to educate consultants about avoiding potentially unethical clients and maximizing the chances of getting paid. Robert Adelson, a corporate and tax attorney with Engel and Schultz LLP, joined Nathan to offer his insight into the legal avenues consultants can pursue in the event of payment default, as well as proactive steps to ensure payment.

Like many consultants, Nathan launched his independent engineering practice

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## Consulting Highlights

It's been a busy spring for our consultants, starting with **Larry Nelson**, who was presented a Region 1 Award at the Worcester County Section IEEE Awards Banquet on April 11th. He's also been awarded his third patent as co-inventor of a precision pyrotechnic display system. **Nathan Sokal** presented a two-day seminar, "RF Power Amplifiers, Classes A through S: How the Circuits

Operate, How to Design Them, and When to Use Each" in Arizona on May 9th. Nathan will receive the 2007 Microwave Pioneer Award of the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society in Honolulu on June 6th. **Marc Thompson** recently published "Intuitive Analog Circuit Design," with Elsevier Science, and looks forward to the upcoming publication of "Power Quality in Electrical

Systems," co-authored with Dr. Alex Kusko. **Robin Goldsmith** was the featured speaker at the International Institute for Software Testing conference in Las Vegas, NV and the Project Management Institute in Hartford, CT.

To learn more about these and other CNet consultants, visit the CNet web site at <http://www.boston-consult.com>.

# Helping Consultants Get Paid (cont'd)

from a highly successful career in the employment of an established engineering firm. As a manager of research and development working on computer simulation of electronic circuits, Nathan had the expertise to strike out on his own, but lacked many of the business skills and knowledge necessary to manage an independent practice. Nathan says he, like many independent consultants, “learned the hard way” about unscrupulous and non-paying clients. He developed a set of guidelines to protect himself from unethical clients and ensure payment, including:

- Protect your up-front work before the customer issues a purchase order by specifying in writing who retains the rights to your work.
- Check your client’s references and be wary of any client who is reluctant to provide a list of companies with whom he/she has done business.
- Collect an advance payment equal to about one month of charges, in case the customer doesn’t pay your initial invoices.

Nathan emphasized the importance of being proactive to prevent non-payment, particularly since the legal system in this country is ineffective for collecting amounts above the small claims limit. Considering the high cost of taking legal action, “It’s far better to prevent the problem from occurring than to be forced to try to cure the problem after it has occurred.”

With 30 years in practice, including the representation of consultants and service providers in the areas of intellectual property and contracting, Robert

Adelson is keenly aware of the importance of taking steps to ensure payment and avoid legal measures against a client. He emphasized the importance of a comprehensive contract, both as a means for consultants to protect their intellectual property and guarantee payment, and as a key component for making a case when seeking legal recourse for non-payment. Robert outlined a number of innovative

billing strategies to help guarantee compensation for your services and listed several pro-active steps to improve the chances of payment, reiterating Nathan’s advice to collect an advance from the customer before starting work. He highlighted the tactic of collecting an advance as a method to “eliminate window

shoppers and establish an expectation of payment”. In describing the various legal strategies a consultant can follow to collect payment, Robert underscored the expense of legal action, warning consultants that a prerequisite to hiring a collection attorney is generally proof of a “deep pocket” to pay the verdict for the plaintiff. The key to winning a case is not only evidence of a solid contract, but also evidence of the consultant’s work completed and proof (through email messages, letters or conversations) of the consultant’s right to collect and efforts to collect a debt. As an attorney who has served the interests of consultants and corporations, Robert echoed Nathan’s emphasis on the importance of taking action to ensure payment and avoid the expense of legal action.

For the complete text of Nathan Sokal’s and Robert Adelson’s presentations, and to learn more about our presenters, visit the CNet web site at <http://www.boston-consult.com/calendar/67.html>.

**If you fail to get paid for your work, you are worse off than if you had failed to get the business...**

*Nathan Sokal*

## Minimizing Time to Volume

*Coming in June with Jim Goell*

Our June presentation will feature Jim Goell, an independent management consultant and former Vice President, Director and Managing Director of numerous companies large and small. Jim will speak about planning and execution of approaches to reduce time to volume, including risk mitigation and pitfalls to guard against. Shorter product lives, longer supply lines and more competitive markets are making it more challenging to bring innovative products to market. Don’t miss this timely and informative discussion.