

INCOSE Spotlight on Holly Witte

Interviewed by Sandy Young, info@incose.org



Author Note: An excerpt of this profile was featured in the INCOSE newsletter. We customarily profile one of our diverse members; however, this profile is on INCOSE's beloved managing executive, Holly Witte, who is retiring.

Name: Holly Witte

Title/Organization: Managing Executive/INCOSE

Place of Birth: Brooklyn, New York, USA (Brooklyn before it was cool ...)

Current Residence: Cornelius, Oregon, USA

Studied: Theatre and English (Double Major BA), Communications (MA)

Year joined INCOSE: 2008

How would you describe your role with INCOSE?

Part cheerleader, part strategist, part herder of cats. Coming from a different background altogether, I could see how the organization worked from the outside, and I understood its great value to members and the collective power of its resources. My role was to help direct it into a structure where all the moving parts were, at least, aware of all the others and, better yet, able to produce important and valuable work together.

What are the highlights of working with INCOSE members?

Having the chance to meet people doing extraordinary things in their day jobs and work with them across a meeting table, over a meal or a glass of wine, certainly broadened my perspective on how the world works and who makes it go.

Tell us one memory you have about INCOSE.

Yes, there are many from my memorable first interview with Pat Hale, Samantha Robitaille and Ricardo Valerdi conducted over a pitcher of margaritas to an incredible keynote by Michael Chertoff, after which I confessed to him that I had been prepared to dislike him (politics), but was really impressed. He was gracious.

Are there any similarities between owning a winery and systems engineering?

Many. Everything is a system unto itself and part of a system. That bottle of wine I pour from for guests in our A Blooming Hill Vineyard & Winery Tasting Room (and the price we charge for it) is one end result of days of endless pruning for the current vintage, while setting up the cordon system for the next; planning the fertilizing/irrigation schedule; harvesting, fermenting and barreling the wine; ordering the bottles, labels, corks and foils; and making sure there are enough hands to do the work. Every part of the system has to be considered, and coddled, for the whole to work.

What does the future hold for Holly Witte?

Apart from reading the year's worth of New Yorker magazines and the pile of books on my night-table? Seriously, the reason I chose to "retire" now is because our winery and Tasting Room are busy, full-time enterprises of their own. It's a dream and I'm so lucky ... I live in a vineyard.

What do you think the future holds for INCOSE?

INCOSE is a great incubator. I am sure its prominence in the world will increase many fold.

What will you miss most about the organization?

That's easy ... the people.