

1984 Luncheon Meetings

SAVIT, CARL H., Western Geophysical Co.

Where Are The Experts?

Since seismic exploration began more than sixty years

Abstracts of Papers

ago, speakers and writers have been urging us to improve the level of training, education or skill throughout our profession. To them and to us who read and listened, our need was obvious. But what has happened with the passing years? The proportion of people working in the geophysical industry that can understand our processes and their pitfalls, and then make intelligent use of the data we produce, has declined steadily.

Two trends have combined to prevent us from heeding the advice we have received, bringing us to our present state. First and foremost, virtually every activity of our modern society has become more complex so that the demand for highly skilled and educated people has increased across the board, and has left a shrinking pool of talent to be tapped by the long-term growth of exploration. That we continue to do more and better work despite the relative shortage of higher skills is due to a steady improvement of techniques and the introduction of automation that more and more frees the skilled person from a host of less productive tasks. In fifty years, we have improved our signal-to-noise ratio more than a hundred fold. These trends continue today at an accelerating pace.

A growing force of innovators is devising techniques to make our output clearer and more understandable. Increasingly, the users of our results will not need to know how those results were obtained and will not be faced with ambiguities in the data or doubts about their validity.

What we can realistically hope for in the future is not more or better people, but more good, clear results that can be used by ordinary people and fewer difficult cases that need expert attention.