2012 Event Partner Summit Questions & Answers

The following questions were asked during the 2012 Event Partner Summit held in Garland, Texas. The questions and answers are being recorded here so that Event Partners who were unable to attend the Summit can have access to the information that was exchanged. If there are any questions about the information listed below, please contact your Regional Support Manager.

Robot Events & Tournament Manager & Software Questions:

Q: Can the VRC Q & A Forum Export, located at http://content.vexrobotics.com/vrcqa/VRC-QA-Export.pdf, be written better? Can it be organized better?
A: We realize that there is a lot of information in the Forum export. We are currently working on a way to improve the presentation of the material. We are going to start by trying to organize the posts by topic. Once we are able to organize the posts by topic, we will review other ways to streamline the export.

Q: VEX Forum is great but could the rules section be updated/released on some sort of schedule, i.e. on set dates like Oct 1st, Nov 1st?
A: We are looking at more efficient ways to update the rules. We will look into a periodic update system.

Q: Would it be possible to register for the next year's season before the current year ends?
Teams have the ability to register for the new season beginning at World championship and any time after that point.

Q: Is it possible to have text updates (VEXTEXT) for every competition?
While VEXTEXT is a great tool and may be available at more events held during the 2012-2013 VEX Robotics Competition (VRC) season, caution is needed as VEXTEXT should not be the sole notification during a tournament. Read more about VEXTEXT at http://content.vexrobotics.com/epdocs/VEX_TEXT_Instructions_ver2.pdf

Q: Is it possible to have multiple administrators on Robot Events?
It is possible to have more than one administrator for an event listed on Robot Events. If you would like to have more than one person listed as an administrator for your event, please contact your Regional Support Manager. If there is more than one person listed as the administrator, please use caution to avoid unnecessary loss of information.

Q: Can Tournament Manager create a judging schedule for teams that will take into account their match schedule? Can this schedule be on the pit display?
A: This feature will be considered as it may be valuable. As with all Tournament Manager requests, it takes time to review the feasibility of the request and to complete the request. We hope to continually update all Event Partners on Tournament Manager improvements.

Q: Will a version of Tournament Manager be released for Mac?
Sorry, but at this time there are no plans for the development of a Mac version.

Q: Is it possible to tie Robot Events to a volunteer database? A great idea is to mandate that all teams MUST provide a volunteer at events.
A: Currently, there are no plans to create a volunteer database that will be linked to Robot Events. The REC Foundation does have plans to release a national volunteer registration system that will be

used to connect Event Partners with volunteers in their area. Asking all teams to provide a volunteer at an event is a great idea that is already being used by many Event partners.

Q: Can we use Robot Events to track and recruit judges, refs, and score keepers from neighboring events?
A: At this time, Robot Events does not have this capability. We will take this under consideration for future features. The REC Foundation is launching a National Volunteer Database that Regional Support Managers can access to share volunteer contact information with Event Partners.

Q: Is it possible to add a feature to Robot Events that will allow a user to search for events within a specified geographic distance of an entered address?
A: This sounds like a great feature to add. We will consult with our developers to see if implementation is possible.

Q: Why is it not possible for Event Partners to delete teams from an event? Event Partners want this capability.
A: Your Regional Support Manager has this ability to delete teams. For many reasons, we need to limit the functionality to delete teams from events.

Q: Can you describe the firmware release process? What Quality Assurance & testing methods are involved?
A: VEX keeps a running log of all potential firmware enhancements, user suggested improvements, and bug fixes. At the beginning of each firmware development, the VEX engineering team goes through this list and highlights the features for inclusion, then discusses this list with our software partners. Extensive testing of individual features is done during the software development process. At the "completion" of development, the firmware goes through full regressing testing at VEX. Once the VEX development team approves the firmware, beta versions are sent to our software partners for review. Once the VEX software partners have approved it, the firmware is released to the public and integrated into new versions of the VEX programming software options (i.e. easyC & ROBOTC).

Q: Do VEX, Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) or intelitek have unit integration or regression test suites?
A: See the above response. VEX, CMU, and intelitek all do extensive regression testing of the full VEX system with each update. The VEX firmware test matrix takes an engineer 3 full work days to complete, and involves testing every feature of the VEX system in all possible configurations. This test matrix is a living document and has been continually enhanced and expanded since the creation of the VEX system. As with all software, it is helpful to communicate your needs with the developers. If you encounter any possible issues, please pass them along to the proper software developer. All of our software partners are very responsive to the needs and concerns of teams.

Q: Is it possible to have a more visible list of software changes and addressed problems?
A: VEX has recently begun publishing a firmware & Bootloader change log. This is a direct response to user requests for more transparency in the firmware development process.
http://www.vexforum.com/wiki/index.php/Bootloader_%26_Firmware_Change_Log_for_the_VEX_Cortex_Microcontroller_%26_VEXnet_Joystick
Questions regarding the list of easyC or ROBOT changes need to be directed to the respective software developer.

Q: Will the robot programming software be available for Droid or iPads?
A: VEX and the REC Foundation don't develop the programming software so we cannot answer this question directly. This is a market driven question and there is probably a need for a Droid or iPad

version of the software, but the third-party software developers would need to answer this question. VEX will pass this request along directly to their software partners.

Q: Could CMU be persuaded to release accurate and complete documentation of RobotC?
A: Please make contact with CMU about this request.

Q: How do we use VEX Via? Can this be added to Robot Events and used for all events?
A: We will consult with our software developers and see if this is possible for all events regardless of size. Once we are able to get a concrete answer, we will publish the answer in the Event Partner newsletter and the VEX Forum.

Q: Can we have remote scoring app that communicates with the software? (Clarification: It was asked whether an app could be developed to communicate with Tournament Manager so that the referees could score a match on an iPad and simply send the results to the scoring table.)
A: This is a very complex technological issue that will need additional research. We will consider a development path to make this possible.

Q: How do I run more than two fields with the Tournament Manager software?
A: The Tournament Manager Software has a very detailed user's manual that can be found in the software. In addition, you should consult with your Regional Support Manager to decide how many fields you need for your event. If your goal is to increase the number teams at your event, you can achieve this in many different ways including adding an additional field to your existing "field set", adding an additional field set with more fields, or adding an additional division to your event. Your Regional Support Manager can assist you with deciding which solution would work best for your set-up.

Q: How do I split a tournament into 2 parts and use the field control software so that I have "A" Tournament and "B" Tournament?
A: Instructions for creating a tournament with two or more divisions can be found in the Tournament Manager user's manual. In addition, you should consult with your Regional Support Manager for process and application to you event.

Q: In the Tournament Manager software, is it possible to lock out the pit display and make it secure from tampering?
A: The best way to do this is to use a password protected screensaver. Please remember that outsiders should not be able to connect to your Tournament Manager network as long as you assign a secure password during Tournament Manager setup.

Q: Can Robot Events have a feature that allows the registration fee to be different for early registration and late registration?
A: While on the surface this seems like a great feature, this is a really complex request. In order to reward teams for registering early, you might consider an alternative like offering an on-site incentive to the teams that register early. An on-site incentive can be a VEX part, food coupon for the concession stand, or something similar.

Q: Is there a consolidated list of teams and contacts so that event partners can contact other schools and teams?
A: Event partners can access the contact information for the teams in their state. If there are teams outside your state that you would like to contact, your Regional Support Manager can assist you with obtaining the contact information for additional teams.

Q: Can Robot Events include Bios for teams and other like information for each registered team like what was input for the Worlds Championship this year?
A: This suggestion has been forwarded to the website support staff for consideration.

Q: Is there a way to use Robot Events to send out an e-mail with attachments to people that sign up for workshops as individuals?
A: Sending out attachments directly from Robot Events creates issues within the software. We are in the process of looking at this feature for use by Event Partners.

Q: Can you make the events searchable by distance or by zip code?
A: This feature is on a wish list for developers. We hope to have this capability soon.

Q: Can we get a checklist of field faults?
A: The troubleshooting chart for VEXnet can be found here
http://content.vexrobotics.com/docs/Cortex_UserGuide_1010.pdf We are also in the process of creating a troubleshooting document for event controls. Once complete the document will be loaded to the EP docs page (www.vexrobotics.com/vrc_epcdocs).

Q: What was the reason for shortening the Autonomous Mode? This does not allow much time for sensor programming.
A: This decision was based on our observations that many teams either did not have an autonomous mode or finished early. In an effort to keep the event action level high and allow teams to use sensors, the VRC GDC on behalf of the REC Foundation made the decision to shorten the autonomous mode.

Events

Q: We would really be interested in League play if we knew more. How do we get more information about VRC leagues?
A: We encourage you to attend the League Play presentation here at the summit. You can also contact Mike Martus mike_martus@roboticseducation.com for more information.

Q: Is the REC Foundation producing the Disney All-Star Challenge or another large event in FL this fall?
A: At this time there are no plans to hold the Disney All-Star Challenge this fall.

Q: Do you plan to move worlds from CA soon?
A: The World Championship will be in CA next year (2013). The event will be held April 17 – 20, 2013. As far as future years, no decisions have been made and the planning team is working on plans now.

Q: Are you considering a cheaper location for World Championship?
A: Anaheim, CA location was, and still is, the most affordable location. The REC Foundation is very mindful of costs that teams incur to attend the World Championship. The foundation always seeks to find a location that will make the event as affordable as possible for teams.

Q: What is the best way to ensure that the true winner of the Excellence Award receives the award?

A: All events should use the Excellence Award rubic that is provided in the judges handbook. Using this rubric will ensure that the judges understand the process and that the correct team is recognized.

Q: Can we have a detailed Excellence awards score sheet?
A: The Excellence Award rubric is available on EP docs website, www.vexrobotics.com/vrc_epdocs

Q: Can you create a guide for judges and students to show "good," "average," and "weak" student presentations?
A: There are no plans at the current moment to create these models or examples. The judging rubrics, when used properly, will allow judges to tier the various presentations and select the winners.

Q: What is the plan that RECF has for keeping the structure of events & costs manageable?
A: RECF is concerned with keeping VRC affordable and attainable, as well as sustainable. We are always mindful about looking for ways to minimize costs to all parties while maintaining quality.

Q: Discuss judges please.
A: RECF has an extensive judges handbook and scoring rubric as well as training calls available. Please visit the EP docs website for links to the information.

Q: We need a judging training video.
A: A judging training video is under consideration. Referee training videos will be released before September. (Update: The referee training videos are now posted on YouTube and the EP Docs site.)

Q: How do you decide which awards are World Championship qualifying awards?
A: An explanation of which tournament awards should be WC qualifying awards is explained in the World Championship Qualifying Criteria which can be found here:
http://content.vexrobotics.com/epdocs/2013_VRWC_QualifyingCriteria.pdf

Q: As a new Event Partner, how do I know which awards will be World Championship qualifying awards and how many WC spots my event has?
A: Please contact your regional support manager for assistance. The regional support managers work closely with all teams and Event Partners in each state to ensure that the World Championship spots are distributed equitably. Please see link above for information regarding World Championship qualifying awards.

Q: Is it possible for a small state with few teams to have more World Championship spots to encourage VRC program growth?
A: Managing the World Championship spots is a difficult task and every effort is made to be fair to all. Every state and many countries have at least 1 spot. We encourage small states to work with their Regional Support Managers to grow teams and grow spots.

Q: How do the Event Partners in each state allocate the World Championship spots?
A: The allocation/distribution of WC spots is a collaboration of all event partners in the state with the guidance of the Regional Support Manager. There are many factors to consider in creating the best configuration.

Q: Under the current system of assigning World Championship spots, growing the VEX competition in states just starting out can be difficult because of the limited number of World Championship spots. Can you consider more spots for new states?

A: The current system gives all states and countries at least one spot. The system, while not perfect, is the best system because it is based on team counts and provides an equitable distribution of the WC spots. The Championship is limited in spots – that is a reality.

Q: Is it possible to do a state championship and restrict the number of WC spots given out?
A: State Championships are encouraged to manage WC spots so that the state championship and other events have WC spots.

Q: What happens if a team wins more than one WC qualification spot during the same competition season?
A: During the calculation of the WC spots, every state is given extra spots to account for this occurrence.

Q: When a team who has already qualified wins another event, WHY can't that slot be awarded to the next place team who has not qualified?
A: See answer above.

Q: When will we know our allocations for the world and national qualifications?
A: You should contact your Regional Support Manager for the allocation of World Championship spots in your state.

Q: Who decides which VRC tournaments are WC/NC events?
A: You should contact your Regional Support Manager. The Regional Support Manager coordinates the allocation of the World Championship spots.

Q: Please do not increase the size of the World Championship. Maintaining a size limit will raise quality at the event. A state regional system is the way to go in the states.
A: Yes, there is a limit to the size of the World Championship, at some point it cannot grow due to the constraints of the facility. As VEX grows, a change in the model will be needed. Currently, we feel that state or regional model is the way to go. It is important to note that many countries and several regions have implemented a tiered qualification model for the Sack Attack season.

Q: Can you give the new regional competition host schools some advice on hosting a tournament? Are there any lessons learned about what NOT to do?
A: This is a very extensive question and you should consult your Regional Support Manager for assistance with planning a regional competition. There are several experienced Event Partners who are always willing to share their knowledge. Your Regional Support Manager can connect you with an experienced Event Partner.

Q: Have we considered a "Buddy system" to match new, inexperienced Event Partners with experienced event partners?
A: Yes, this is in place in several states. This is setup by the Regional Support Manager. Please contact your Regional Support Manager if you would like to be matched up with another Regional Support Manager.

Q: Is there a logistics template for hosting a regional event?
A: Yes. Extensive information about hosing tournaments is contained in the EP Training PowerPoint found on EP documents website, www.vexrobotics.com/vrc_epdocs.

Q: Will you review the World Championship qualifying regulations for skills/programming/leagues?

A: The VRC World Championship qualifying rules can be found at www.vexrobotics.com/vrc_epdocs The WC qualifying document should answer most questions. If you still have questions after reading the 2013 World Championship Qualifying document, please contact your Regional Support Manager.

Q: Skills challenge only events --- Are inspections required to qualify for global rankings?
A: Yes, all robots must meet current specifications as outlined in the official inspection document.

Q: Will there ever be separate skills scores for Middle School and High School divisions?
A: As the VRC Middle School division grows this may be a possibility. Currently, this is not a consideration for this year.

Q: If we want to hold a skills only challenge event, are there certain requirements? If so, what are they?
A: Yes, the event must be registered on Robot Events and must meet the minimum number of teams to be a legal event. All general event specifications apply.

Q: Skills only events – how is this managed to prevent different robots from the regular events? Cheating? Changing of plates to different robots.
A: Last year was the first year that skills challenge only events were held and they were very popular. The REC Foundation did do some spot checks of events and scores, and did not find any rule violations or misrepresentation of scores. VRC relies on the honor system, and currently, we do not believe that we need to put other systems in place to "police" this aspect of our competition.

Q: Is it true that the TSA VEX competition will be a skills competition during the 2012-2013 competition year?
A: The configuration of TSA VEX challenge for the coming year is yet to be determined. Please keep in contact with your TSA advisor for more details. We anticipate that most TSA events will use a skills challenge only model, with a few exceptions.

Q: For early tournaments, it is hard to get the minimum number of teams to register early. Is there any chance that Fall events can get a little leeway so as to get elements and trophies?
A: While there is a standing 16 registered team rule to receive the Event Partner support kit and the discount code for the field elements and game objects, it is suggested that you contact your Regional Support Manager if you are having difficulties reaching 16 teams.

Q: In the Sack Attack game manual, an alternate alliance selection method/elimination alliance process for small tournaments is listed. Are these my only legal options? Is it possible to have6 alliances of 4 teams or some other configuration?
A: Having a level of consistency across all VRC events is very important. Currently, the elimination alliance configurations as listed in the Sack Attack manual are the only accepted options. If you have suggestions for an alternate configuration, please contact your regional support manager for discussion.

Q: What will the height of the competition fields be at Worlds? Nationals?
A: The REC Foundation will have the fields raised to 24", just like last year's World Championship event. The height of the fields at the US Nationals has not been determined.

Q: Will there be other large events like nationals and worlds?
A: At this time, there are no additional large events in the planning stages. Please consider existing events such as the Pan Pacific Championship, the New England Championships, Mid-Atlantic Championship, etc.

Q: During the World Championship, can teams from the same school be in the same pit regardless of MS or HS?
A: Logistics of the pit locations are a challenge because we seek to keep it logical for judges and to keep pits close to the fields. Please make any special requests to your Regional Support Manager.

Q: How can we reduce shipping costs for game sets, parts and fields?
A: The best way to reduce shipping costs is to bundle your orders whenever possible. Consider using the HEXBUG Fundraiser at your event to cover more of these incidental costs.

Q: What are some effective strategies for organizing communications, funds, etc. in a region or state?
A: Start at a local or state level and begin using Google groups and mail lists. It is important to share resources in all areas of the VEX program. The most effective strategy is open communication at all levels.

Q: Can the REC Foundation provide online support for webcasting or possibly a white paper on how to do it?
A: We encourage any EP who has a good working knowledge of the webcasting process to create a white paper and submit it to us. Once reviewed, we will make it available to all Event Partners.

Q: Why can't an event be operated similar to SkillsUSA with two divisions within one event?
A: Skills USA is a different type of competition with different rules. If there are enough teams at your event, then having two divisions is a possibility. Typically only Level 6 events and above have enough middle school teams to do this!

Q: Do the online challenge submissions have to focus solely on the VRC program? Can the website entries incorporate other robotics programs including FRC?
A: Please read the online challenge rules carefully before submitting an online challenge. The website challenge does look for a website that promotes more than just the VEX Robotics Competition.

Q: Why not hold 2 separate World Championships over two weekends. Have a playoff between the 2 championship alliances. This would double the team slots?
A: Great suggestion. Please consider the cost, time away from school, number of volunteers and staff that would be needed to make this happen. Winners from the first weekend would need to pay twice as much to fully compete.

VEX Equipment

Q: We are concerned about Wireless interference during events, what is recommended? Should we be worried?
A: The VEXnet link is designed to cut through normal WIFI traffic. In extremely noisy WIFI environments, or environments with specific WIFI jamming systems, issues may occur. We suggest that you locate WIFI by using your phone to search for networks. Also, it is important to contact the venue "Tech Staff" and ask that general WIFI be turned off. Additionally, kindly ask all people attending the event to NOT to use their electronics to set up networks. Normal traffic should not be a problem, but work to minimize the traffic wherever possible.

Q: Can you send us the WIFI monitoring software to use at events?

A: We do not have any specific WIFI monitoring software, though there are a number of packages commercially available. Monitoring WIFI with instruments can be very expensive. We suggest that you locate WIFI by using your mobile phone to identify the presence of WIFI networks, and then work to have them turned off.

Q: As competitions get bigger, there is concern that more WIFI noise (traffic) is going to be a problem. Is this a legitimate concern?
A: The VEXnet link is designed to cut through normal WIFI traffic. In extremely noisy WIFI environments, or environments with specific WIFI jamming systems issues may occur. Please make every effort to limit WIFI signals by working with the tech staff at the event.

Q: Can we develop a field perimeter that assembles faster?
A: We will take this feedback into account, and look into making enhancements to the VEX Competition Field Perimeter.

Q: Can we get discounts on VEX parts?
A: Event Partners are eligible to receive a discount for the field perimeter and game objects. Your Regional Support Manager can provide you with additional details. VEX makes a great effort to keep the VEX program affordable to all teams and Event Partners. Note that since almost the entire market for VEX products is educational in nature, all VEX products already have an educational discount built into them.

Q: Could the numbers on the robot license plates be outlined instead of solid – saving ink?
A: This will be looked into as it will save ink and makes sense.

Q: Why can't license plates be larger so we can read them?
A: There are limitations on the printer used to print the plastic plates. During the development of the license plate, multiple sizes were tested. There is a balance between "readability" and "overwhelming the size of the robots."

Q: We are told not to put motors into consecutive motor ports as it will cause a breaker error. Is this accurate advice?
A: The VEX Cortex Microcontroller has two internal thermal breakers to protect the unit from damage caused by over-current. One of these handles the load from Motor Ports 1-5, the other from Motor Ports 6-10. By spreading the motor load at any given time over these two banks, one can reduce the likelihood of one tripping. Note, that these are self-resetting breakers, and will "come back" after a few seconds of non-use. Unfortunately, when the breakers trip most users tend to mash the joysticks back and forth to try to bring the robot back. In general, if teams are tripping breakers, the best advice one can give is to "gear things slower" so the motors will be under less load.

Q: Can VEX supply the allowable polycarbonate?
A: Unfortunately, VEX is not able to offer polycarbonate in a way that is cost effective to teams. There are other sources that are more cost effective such as McMaster Carr.

Q: Are there any known communication issues between the microcontroller and the joystick?
A: When teams experience communication problems between their microcontroller and joystick during a tournament, they can usually be traced back to one of three things. First, power or proper battery levels is the most common problem. Next, teams often experience problems due to improper tethering of the microcontroller to the Cortex. Last, teams experience communication problems because of WIFI key failure. WIFI key failure is usually due to damage caused during insertion and removal (students bending/breaking the connector) or improper storage of the key when not in use.

Q: Are we going to fix the communication drop off at events?
A: During the past season, communication drops were not a reported issue. Enhancements to the VEX firmware have improved the effectiveness of the VEXnet link and reduced reported failures. Ensure your teams are updated to the most recent firmware. Factors like static, WIFI interference and a few hardware failures seem to be the cause of the reported communication drops. Also, please refer to question above.

Q: When is VEXNet going to get more reliable VEXNet keys?
A: While there have been some reported issues, there have not been large-scale problems. It is important to contact VEX Robotics regarding any suspected issues. The VEX technical support staff are eager to work with any team who suspects they have a problem and get it resolved. Contact support@vexrobotics.com or 903-453-0802. Improved products are always under consideration.

Q: Can we build/setup a competition field from scratch during the summit as a training session? Please include all electronics.
A: If you were asking for a practice set-up at the summit then we were just short of time. Please make contact with your Regional Support Manager for assistance with constructing the playing field or attend a local event for practice.

Q: Can you make a field that we can put together and take down for a limited classroom? Please keep the field perimeter discount for EP'S.
A: There is a classroom field available that is perfect for quick set-up in a classroom. The field is a snap together steel frame that can be quickly set-up and taken down. The field is 8' X 8'. Please visit www.vexrobotics.com to order the field.

Q: Can we sell the sprockets and high strength chain separately?
A: VEX makes decisions about parts availability / packaging based on market demand. This request will be taken under consideration.

Q: Is it true that Event Partners no longer get free field elements until there are enough teams registered for the tournament?
A: All official VRC events will get an EP Support Kit and 50% discount coupon code(s) for the Game and Field Objects kit as soon as they have 16 registered teams for their event. The 50% discount for the Game and Field Objects is new this year and will save the average Event Partner money.

Q: Do we still get a trophy pack for free?
A: Yes, when your tournament gets 16 teams registered, your Regional Support manager will provide you with the codes for your event. Contact your Regional Support Manager if you have additional questions about this matter.

Q: Can we advance purchase a game kit and get credit later when the event reaches the magic number?
A: Unfortunately, this is not possible at this time due to the amount of paperwork that would be involved with completing the refunds.

Q: Can RECF provide Event Partners with a list of all of the VRC teams?
A: Event Partners have access to team contacts for the VRC teams in their state. If EPs would like to contact teams in neighboring states, please contact your Regional Support Manager for assistance.

Q: Is there a way to repackage VEX components to reduce waste?

A: VEX Robotics is always looking for ways to better package products in order to reduce the company's carbon footprint. Improved VEX packaging is already rolling out, product by product.

Q: Can VEX assist with the transition from the PIC Microcontroller to Cortex Microcontroller? Buy back, reduced costs?
A: While VEX offered this at the initial launch of the product for recent buyers, there are no current plans to have an additional transition program at this time.

Q: Would it be possible for VEX to produce a kit to create custom length 2/3 wire cables.
A: Creating custom wires is a very skilled and tool specific task. Failure rates and quality are of concern if the tool is not used correctly. Currently, VEX Robotics is not planning to offer any such kit.

Q: Can VEX sell replacement high traction tires for the 5" wheels similar to the ones for 2.75" and 4"?
A: This is a possibility. VEX Robotics will consider this request.

Q: The pig tails on old / new batteries are different lengths. Can we get an extension cord?
A: This is a possibility. VEX Robotics will consider this request.

Q: Please revisit Power Expander to handle a 12-amp total load as well as 3 and 2 wire converters.
A: VEX Robotics will investigate your concern and request.

Q: Resell the plastic straps that can be used to hold 3 wire connectors together. The tape is weak.
A: Another alternative to tape is the small tie wrap. This is a possibility. VEX Robotics will consider this request.

Q: How do we eliminate static on the playing field? Is there a low cost way to reduce static?
A: Control the environment. Static and low-humidity go hand in hand. Off the shelf products like Static Guard can help.

Q: Using a field on carpet causes drop outs – suggestions?
A: Control the static, using an anti-static spray treatment and limit WIFI Interference.

Q: How can we test our VEXNet keys?
A: The only on-site test involves replacing the keys with good keys and then retesting the original keys. The VEX technical support staff are eager to work with any team who suspects they have a problem and get it resolved. Contact support@vexrobotics.com or 903-453-0802.

Q: Are USB connections really made for competition robots?
A: At the current state of electronics and market development, it is the best option from a cost standpoint.

Q: Can you list somewhere the minimum number of VEX robot parts needed to compete in a Sack Attack event?
A: Please read the definition of a robot in the Sack Attack game manual. Once a team has satisfied those requirements, the robot design will dictate the needed parts.

Q: Will it ever be possible to use non-VEX sensors, specifically those using digital 5v analog?
A: Non-VEX parts are not allowed for use by HS or MS teams unless specified.

Q: Can there be an award for designing a game?
A: Yes there is already an Online Challenge and award for game design. Please visit http://forum.robotevents.com/design/ for more information about the Online Challenges.

Q: I do not like kids repositioning the robots manually – Why was it included/permitted?
A: This was included to enable more teams to have successful autonomous modes, while eliminating some of the frustrations students have with autonomous mode. Some of the ways teams utilized the 2011-2012 rules were unanticipated. The rules have been modified for 2012-2013.

Q: Who designs the VRC challenges?
A: A team of experienced people with many years of teaching and robotic competition experience designs the VRC challenges. The Game Design Committee spends an extensive amount of time brainstorming possible game ideas. Next, a matrix of tests is used to ensure that the game that is exciting, challenging at all levels, and affordable. Last, the potential games are played and tested until the ideal game is identified. All in all, it is a complex process to develop a game that is successful. This is the short answer.

Q: Did anyone Google "Sack Attack" before the decision was made to name this year's VRC competition "Sack Attack"?
A: Yes, the name was researched. After careful consideration, we felt that everyone needed to be treated like adults and the people that would take license with the name for negative use were not adults. We felt that the name was a good choice and had consensus from many sources.

Q: How can the set-up of the field be easier?
A: This is a very common suggestion. The solution is under development. Did you notice that the game elements in 2012-2013 were easier to setup than 2011-2012?

Q: Will you ever allow 2 power expanders on one robot with custom Y cable pack to one Battery?
A: Currently this is not allowed, and there are no plans to accommodate this request. Any chance to increase the amount of allowable power requires careful consideration by VEX engineering and the Game Design Committee.

Q: It would be helpful to all teams if you market the competition switch to everyone.
A: The competition switch IS available at VEX robotics and is a commonly purchased part.

Q: Experience has taught us that the students who use a back up battery on their robot tend to experience problems with their robots. Can you convince me that it is a good idea to have a backup battery?
A: The purpose of the back up battery is to prevent a total power loss that would shut down the microcontroller. The backup battery system is reliable and works as designed. There are no known issues related to the back up battery system.

Q: Will inspection rules be written in other languages at the worlds?
A: We currently do several languages, including Spanish and Mandarin. What language do you suggest?

Q: Why do you have 3 wires on the touch sensors?
A: To reduce confusion and utilize the existing cable. Only the outer 2 wires are utilized. We will consider moving to a 2-wire cable in the future.

Q: Can you provide info on the motor issue and overheating? Motor port is this an issue?
A: There are specific reasons for a motor overheating. The most common answer is asking the motor to do more work than it was designed for or having the motor in a stall condition. Consider your gear ratio as an answer. Also consider all the friction points in your system.

MISC Questions

Q: Can we re-purpose old game sets? Are there any good recommendations for use of old game pieces?
A: Yes. Please do find other uses for the game pieces from previous years. Refer to the VEX garden made by Mike Martus. Pictures will be posted in the EP forum.

Q: What should I do with the old field objects? Can I reuse them? Can I give to volunteers?
A: Yes, the objects are great for use in math classes. Think of possible uses within the classroom or use them for robotics demos. Be creative and put them to good use. Share/post your ideas at the VEX Forums.

Q: Where are the VEX videos from past competitions?
A: We are working on a central location for videos. Until the REC Foundation website is finished, you can find the videos on YouTube.

Q: Can we add a rule that parents and coaches cannot program or build the robots?
A: Making a rule that is not enforceable is not in the best interest of any organization. Parents and mentors helping with robot design and development is appropriate. If you feel that a team has an unfair advantage because a robot was designed and built by adult, the best solution is to notify the Judge Advisor so that the judges can handle the situation.

Q: What are plans for growth of the VRC Program?
A: As VEX grows, there will be changes to the program to accommodate the growth. Be assured that any changes will be carefully considered before they are put into place. The development of a state level championship and League Play are two examples of developments to handle the growth of the program.

Q: Can we create an adults division?
A: The RECF will discuss this. At this point, there are no plans.

Q: We need new fundraiser products – Hex bugs are not selling.
A: This is where sharing among Event partners on the forum is important. Event Partners should start a discussion thread about this.

Q: Please discuss ways to get fundraising. What are the laws?
A: The issue is not really laws unless you accept donations and are not a 501c3. Simple fundraising is usually controlled by a school – they may have rules.

Q: What is RECF doing to promote colleges and scholarships?
A: The REC Foundation is aggressively marketing the VEX Robotics College Challenge program and seeking out scholarships for the participants in the VRC program. We welcome your assistance. Contact your Regional Support Manager with leads.

Q: We need a list of RECF staff and what they do on the website.
A: This will be enhanced on the new website – coming soon.

Q: What plans do you have for home school students?
A: Home school students are encouraged to participate with VEX. Several past VRC World Champions are home school students.

Q: How do we do something like gracious professionalism?
A: REC Foundation is discussing this.

Q: How can schools fund this program? Suggestions?
A: This is a good topic for the forums. Please start a thread.

Q: Are there suggestions on how Event Partners can perform background checks for volunteers?
A: This is a complex issue that we are currently investigating.

Q: What does "Honor by Design" mean?
A: This is a Create Foundation Credo Similar to the FLL Values.

Q: Can we have a rule that states only pre-college students talk to judges or refs?
A: This works well for refs in many conditions that are not limited by language. The issue gets complicated when judges need a translator.

Q: What types of engineering degrees is the workforce looking for?
A: This varies from region to region. mechanical, electrical and chemical are the most sought after engineering degrees and computer science is very close behind.

Q: Suggestion – EP online community FB, Linkedin, etc.
A: Great idea, hard to manage.

Q: Can lesson plans be made for middle schools as well as high schools.
A: The NEW Autodesk Curriculum is in progress and will be released.

Q: Workshops with teachers. What has worked?
A: This is a great forum topic as there is a variety of workshops that have worked in the past. The Event Partners should start a thread.

Q: Can each student get a participation certificate?
A: We are currently working on a master certificate that will be available for download.

Q: Will the PowerPoints from the Summit be available to the participants?
A: We will make them available through the Event Partner documents page.

Q: Can we get a list of all of the Event Partner Summit attendees with e-mail and contact info?
A: The REC Foundation refrains from sharing personal information