Rocky Mountain Chapter

Technicalities

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Features...

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

Technicalities

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Editorial Staff

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This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication.

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Readers are encouraged to submit material on subjects of interest to Society and chapter members. Please credit repeated material and send a copy of the original material to: news@stcrmc.org.

The editor can be reached during the day at 303.405.8143, by e-mail at news@stcrmc.org, and by postal mail at 820 S. Monaco Pkwy. #286, Denver, CO, 80224. Please submit electronic files in ASCII text format and include a telephone number where you can be reached. If you need to mail or fax articles and/or artwork, please contact the editor for a mailing address and fax number. The deadline for article submission is one month prior to issue release (first of the month, every other month).

The *Technicalities* staff reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length; substantive editing of feature articles will be reviewed with the author prior to publication.

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Message from the Editor

by Ron Arner

I really need to warn you that online gaming is a lot more enjoyable than you may think. I've always wanted to try it, but never thought I would become a devoted participant. That was before a former co-worker gave me a one-month free pass to play *World of Warcraft*, and now I'm addicted!

World of Warcraft just came out last year, but was already voted Game of the Year by Gamespot, CNET's Games and Entertainment portal. The basic premise of the game has a very *Lord of the Rings* feel to it:

At one time in Azeroth's past, the Horde was a force of evil, and the Alliance was a bastion of good. However, in today's war-torn Azeroth, such black and white distinctions are gone. Both factions are simply fighting to preserve their way of life in the wake of the Chaos War[1].

In order to begin playing the game, you must first create your own character. Your first choice is whether you will be part of the Alliance (made up of Dwarves, Gnomes, Humans, and Night Elves) or the Horde (made up of Orcs, Tauren, Trolls, and Undead). You must then further specify the class, gender, appearance, and name of your character. Since I joined the group my former co-worker had already created (it's much easier to complete your quests by working together with other players), I had to be part of the Horde. My character (pictured below) is a Toren Druid named Pakanani.

The graphics and functionality of the game amaze me every time I play. I am constantly asking myself "How do they *do* that?" The "camera" you see through (you don't look at the game through the eyes of your character) follows your character's every move, and you can zoom in and out of any scene you're in. And, talking about scenery - the game contains some of the most amazing graphic art I have ever seen.

You might really think I'm having a mid-life crisis when I say that I recommend *World of Warcraft* instead of TV as a pastime. But seriously, I find my computer skills sharpened from playing, and for anyone seriously interested in the latest GUI developments, online gaming is a must!

Sources:

1. ***World of Warcraft Game Manual***. Blizzard Entertainment. 2004. Irvine: Blizzard Entertainment.

World of Warcraft. Blizzard Entertainment. 2004. Irvine: Blizzard Entertainment. [ISBN: 0-7849-2661-1. $45.00 (CD-Rom).] http://www.worldofwarcraft.com

All images from the World of Warcraft Website or Game, accessed on September 11, 2005.

President's Corner

by Marella Colyvas, STCRMC President

As I contemplated the most recent changes in my life the other evening, I had to ask: Is it really me who is now leading a group of talented people who look to the STC RMC as a beacon of professionalism? Wow. I am honored to have been chosen to assist with this new birth, even if I do harbor the anxiety one feels before a first-ever jump out of an airplane, parachute attached!

Now as I write this article, the grim reality that I've just tripled the number of ever-present deadlines on which I have to act hits me squarely in the stomach. And, so do the feelings that inevitably come with deadlines - namely, fear and panic. I don't know about you, but sometimes I find deadlines totally paralyzing.

Then I began to wonder, am I alone in feeling totally panicked when faced with deadlines in my life? Is my reaction unrealistic? After all, I'm a technical communicator and used to facing deadlines of all kinds in the professional world. So I embarked on a very unscientific, but interesting, survey. I polled four members of our community about deadlines and found that people meet the reality of deadlines with two distinct attitudes.

The first is that deadlines motivate and fuel action. The second is that deadlines foster anxiety, fear, and a sense of being overwhelmed.

These two attitude groups are not mutually exclusive. Before the overwhelming boiling point happens, people generally use the deadlines as motivators (*after* they scream!). But when they get "dumped on, " even by themselves, they feel the anxiety and sometimes paralysis that precludes the fear of not being able to perform.

When faced with the situation that overwhelms, people's actions are as follows. They:

1. Figure out where in their calendar they can free up the time to accomplish the task.
2. Prioritize other tasks.
3. Work on the task a little bit at a time.
4. Recognize that they will feel extremely good when the task is complete. Do
5. whatever it takes to make it work.

OK, this last item is one that we all inevitably do. But what is the cost? In my survey I found that people do the following:

- Take frustration and anger out on others who are not involved.
- Let their family and personal life suffer.
- Lose sleep.

We didn't have much of a chance to discuss these actions, but we all agreed they are not optimal. Although we really can't do anything about the deadlines, I propose we can change what happens to us inside when we are faced with them.

It is a known psychological fact that it takes tremendous energy to worry about something—far more than it takes to work the problem. But to stop the worrying, first you have to free up the energy the worry is sapping. You have to first give yourself permission to acknowledge the fact that you do feel overwhelmed. Here's what works for me:

1. I go somewhere where I am completely alone, usually my own house or outside.
2. I scream at the sky or pound a pillow and yell that these deadlines are just not fair!
3. I take 15 minutes to breathe deeply and clear my mind.
4. I visualize the projects and pick the one that has the highest priority.
5. Then I go into my office and get started.

OK, before you think your STC president has gone off the deep end, just remember that I'm crazy enough to take on this volunteer job and its inevitable deadlines on top of my already busy life. (I'll let you all judge the sanity of that action as the year progresses! - < smile >)

By taking the informal survey and interacting with my fellow technical communicators, I found that I am not alone in my ambivalent feelings and behaviors around deadlines. Maybe with some practice, we can all learn methods that help each other. In fact, I invite you to contribute to my informal survey—how do YOU handle deadlines and the feelings that you have surrounding them?

Tips from the Trenches

by Deb Lockwood

No matter the job title and no matter the industry, all technical communicators have one thing in common: we must all manage our projects. This month I posted the following request to both the Rocky Mountain community and the Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC) Special Interest Group (SIG) e-mail discussion lists: Would you tell me what project management tools (e.g., software applications, techniques) you use to manage your work-related projects? Also, do you have any recommendations for books, magazines, Web sites, or classes that would help people to expand their project management skills?

At CSG Systems, Inc., we track our projects' milestone dates using a home-grown Microsoft Access database. Doing so allows management to monitor our team's progress across products and projects, and to pull reports. Personally, I use an Excel spreadsheet that I created years ago to help me stay on top of the milestone deadlines for multiple projects. This simple one-page spreadsheet shows me at a glance what is out for review, when it is due back, and how quickly I need to turn it around. I update the dates and tasks once a week.

Following is a compilation of the responses I received from our experts in the field:

Rodger Ward: I typically use a combination of an in-house project management application that we call Scope and Track and then add Excel spreadsheets. Scope and Track provides only a few, very basic functions plus management reports. I use the spreadsheets to track the project pieces that belong to me.

Victoria Thomas: I am taking several courses through the American Management Association as part of their Project Management certificate program. I have found their classes very helpful. For more information on the AMA Certificates in Project Management, see http://www.amanet.org/seminars/Certificate_detail.cfm?cat=209&cp=6.

Susie Cone: Of the project management methods used at Sun Microsystems, Inc, two are the most common: the PRojects IN Controlled Environments (PRINCE2) method and the Project Management Institute (PMI) method.

The PRINCE2 method of project management, originally developed by the United Kingdom government's Office of Government Commerce, "entirely describes a structured method for approaching, managing, and closing down a project of any type or size." The PRINCE2 method tells you "what should be done and why it should be done - but it stops short of telling you how to do it"; it is descriptive, not prescriptive. PRINCE2 is a public-domain method, although manuals, training, and certification (Foundation and Practitioner) are available.

The PRINCE2 method contains three main elements: Processes, Components, and Techniques:

* Processes:
- Starting up a Project

- Directing a Project Process
- Initiating a Project
- Controlling a Stage
- Managing Product Delivery
- Managing Stage Boundaries
- Closing a Project process
- Planning process

* PRINCE2 Components:
- Business Case
- Organization
- Plans
- Controls
- Risk Management
- Quality in a Project Environment
- Configuration Management
- Change Control

* PRINCE2 Techniques:
- Product-Based Planning
- Change Control Approach
- Quality Review Technique

SunIT has used the PRINCE2 method in many of its projects. PRINCE2 does provide templates for its components, which is helpful when starting a project and for maintaining consistency in documentation across projects. More information on PRINCE2 can be found at the official PRINCE2 website: http://www.prince2.com/index.html.

The Project Management Institute (PMI) method includes a Framework ("basic structure for understanding project management") and Knowledge Areas. PMI produces the "Project Management Body of Knowledge" (PMBOK (R - Registered Trademark)), which can be purchased from PMI on book or CD (with or without a membership in PMI), and is also often provided with PMI training courses. PMI certification is available at two levels: Project Management Professional (PMP) and Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM).

PMI prescribes the following knowledge areas (Source: PMBOK ® GUIDE 2000 Edition, but there is now a Third Edition available dated 2004):
- Initiating the Project
- Planning the Project
- Executing the Project
- Controlling the Project
- Closing the Project
- Professional Responsibility

Many of Sun's projects use the PMI framework in addition to or instead of the PRINCE2 method. PMI provides this framework, but does not suggest documentation templates as PRINCE2 does. More information on PMI can be found at the official PMI Website: www.pmi.org.

Judy Cantrell: We use TeamPlay by Primavera (http://www.primavera.com/customer/products/teamplay.asp). PMI is a good Web site for resources. From what I can tell, this is a hot field. If you're good at numbers crunching...this just might be the field for you.

Jennie Achtemichuk: I think it's important to not just focus on tools. Most of the effort I spend is on the project team communication and negotiation, as this drives all the constraints (and pain) I can face on a project. It's kind of like learning how to develop online help...you can learn easily to use the software tools, but the concepts and theory around hypertext are harder to find and apply.

Kim Lee Shaw: I'm very low-tech! I use a desk pad calendar to note due dates and meetings. Sometimes I also enter tasks (action items or meetings) in my Outlook calendar as an extra reminder. For complex projects with multiple deliverables, deadlines, and reviewers, I usually design a simple tracking sheet that I can keep on my desk and check off items as they're completed. While I don't always use them, I also like the preprinted expanding project folders (the kind that you can buy at office supply stores). They're very handy for keeping all project information and material in one place. I can write project contact information and action items on the front of the folder where it's easy to find. Not exciting, but it seems to work.

Bonnie Jaye Biafore: I am a project manager and a writer so I have a lot of opinions about project management. As far as project management tools go, I do use Microsoft Project because most of my projects are relatively small. However, I've created a template specifically to help me manage my book writing projects including special fields to calculate the pages per hour that I write. Taking a few minutes to build a template saves hours, days, and even weeks down the road, so I'm always creating new templates in every software application I use.

Lots of folks don't get past the scheduling tools. Actually, I've found that one of the first programs that comes in handy is a word processor, because a project plan is mostly a text document; and yes, I've got a template for that too. I also use spreadsheets for budgets, Visio for all sorts of charts, and so on.

I've been doing a fair amount of work with Microsoft on all sorts of project management resources. The Work Essentials web site (http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/FX010931361033.aspx) is a career-based Web site, including, you guessed it, project management. The site includes articles, templates, and demos on lots of project management topics and it's growing every month (partly because I contribute several things each month.)

I also authored a course on project planning for Microsoft that is available through New Horizons (http://www.newhorizons.com/content/courseCatalog.aspx). For books, I particularly like "Fast Forward MBA in Project Management" by Eric Verzuh and "Project Planning, Scheduling & Control" by James P. Lewis. Of course, come February, my favorite book will be "On Time, On Track, On Target", but I have to finish writing it first!

[Note from Deb: Bonnie will be conducting a free Webcast on October 26, 2005, about project management and the Work Essentials Web site. During the Webcast she will be showing how to do several of the techniques she talks about in her articles. Go to the **What's New** section of Bonnie's Web site (www.bonniebiafore.com) for details about attending this session.]

Brenda Huettner: Yipes! This is a huge topic for one little article! For starters, I'd look at classic books like "Managing Your Documentation Projects" by JoAnn T. Hackos and "Starting a Documentation Group: A Hands-On Guide" by Peter J. Hartman. You can also look to the the STC Management SIG resources at www.stcsig.org/mgt (http://www.stcsig.org/mgt) (or more specifically, http://www.stcsig.org/mgt/HotTopics.htm). This site has links to lots of sample templates, guidelines, and other resources specifically for project management. Click the **Learning** link to view pages for managing people and managing businesses that you might find helpful! Another great reference is to search for publications on the main STC site (www.stc.org) by choosing **Publications**, then **Search Pubs** (you must be a member to do this search). This will let you search both the Intercom articles and the conference proceedings, where you'll find lots of additional references.

Dan Gallagher: Would it have been better to not e-mail you rather than to e-mail you to state that I have no project management tools other than my brain? (i.e. no application or software tools).

JoAnna Springsteen: Massive topic!! I agree with Brenda; always start with the Hackos book. (We call it the TC bible, actually.) In my previous job I was the lone Tech Writer in a newly formed project office. My best project management suggestion(s) would be the following:

1. Don't try and make up your own methodology. Go with something that is proven and add your own little variations.
2. Don't think that buying a big fancy tool will automatically change how you do projects or make your project management skills better overnight.

I created a pretty basic documentation project plan using Microsoft Project (I could have easily used Excel to do the same thing). Project at least helped me estimate my hours and get a sense of how long it actually took me to do certain tasks. For a doc project, it's really all I use.

I get most of my templates for project administration type stuff from PMI. If you're looking for a broad project management background (i.e., applicable to all types of projects, not just documentation projects), start poking around the PMBOK (Ed. This is a guide available through the www.PMI.org Web site). Six Sigma (http://www.isixsigma.com/) is another hot methodology right now and I know there are others too. You can probably find local classes or even online classes to help develop your project management skills. I'm pretty sure most PMI chapters offer workshops, so check one out in your area for some more tips.

The book I am just dying to read for project management stuff is called "Herding Chickens: Innovative Techniques for Project Management" by Dan Bradbary and David Garrett. It looks hilarious and when you get down to it, managing projects really is just like herding farm animals.

Contributors: Jennie Achtemichuk, Bonnie Jaye Biafore, Judy Cantrell, Susie Cone, Dan Gallagher, Brenda Huettner. Kim Lee Shaw, JoAnna Springsteen, Victoria Thomas, Rodger Ward.

Solutions, Inc.

by Ron Arner

Some recent tips, how-to's, and advice from the Rocky Mountain Chapter Listserve:

Thread #1: Word AutoText Category Names

Can the name of a category of Autotext in Word be something other than a Word style?

A client wants a logical- and physical-layer template for equipment installation proposals. The proposal content depends on the product line to be installed and the end customer's preferences expressed before the proposal is prepared.

Hypothetical example: In one proposal, Product X might be installed and formatted; in another proposal, only installed. A formatting proposal has more deliverables and more tasks, so it needs more content.

Usability would be enhanced if the Autotext category names could reflect the product names rather than Word style names. All task statements have the same physical appearance even if their content differs. Same with deliverables.

Yep....

1. On the Tools menu, click Templates and Add-Ins.
2. Click Organizer, and then click the AutoText tab.
3. In the In box on the left, click the entry you want to rename, and then click Rename.
4. In the Rename dialog box, type a new name for the entry.
5. Click OK, and then click Close.

Thanks for taking a shot at it.

This procedure changes the name of the entry, not the name of the category. I hadn't noticed that entry names could change, but that's valuable by itself.

The category names appear beneath All Entries when the AutoText toolbar is displayed. By default the category names are Style names. As near as I can tell, there's no way to change them.

I'm going to try to work around this and will post a success story if one develops.

This article may be a good starting point for you. Good luck!

WD2000: Adding AutoText to the AutoText Menu This article describes how to add AutoText submenus (groupings), how to add AutoText entries to the AutoText drop-down lists, and how to use the AutoTextList field for easy access to these AutoText entries. Microsoft Word provides a set of...
http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;207925

Ah, ha! That's it: "It is not possible to rename the AutoText submenu. You must delete the AutoText entries that reside under the AutoText submenu, and you must then create a new AutoText submenu using a different or renamed style."

It's work-around time....

Thread #2: Graphical Display of Complex Schedules

Colleagues,

Do you have a favorite tool for displaying complex schedules?

I have a client who wants an at-a-glance display of his data backup schedule. The blocks of time need to be coded for identity and interdependence - can't run this backup until that backup is complete. He's been laboriously managing an Excel sheet, which yields a nice visual, but he wants something easier to maintain. He says he's done a lot of surfing and can't find a tool that will do what he wants.

Any ideas?

Sounds like you're looking for a PERT chart tool. PERT charts provide a graphical display of project tasks connected together in a network that looks like a flow chart. MacProject was an early PERT-based scheduling tool, unlike MS Project, which is Gantt-based. You can get PERT-like displays with MS Project, but they're awkward to work with. If you're willing to create and maintain your PERT chart by hand, you can build one in Visio 2000. I don't think MacProject is available anymore, and it only ran on Mac OS, so if you want to create and maintain your schedule in a dynamic scheduling tool, you'd need to use MS Project's "network diagram" (PERT) feature. Or you could try one of the PERT chart tools on the market (search for PERT charts in Google).

Thread #3: Adobe Acrobat 6.0 /Linking to a Specific Spot on a Page

I'm trying to link from a bookmark to a specific spot on a .pdf page (within a large doc). As far as I can see, I can only link to a page and not a spot on a page, even if I create a bookmark from selected text that appears at the bottom of a page.

Adobe provides the ability to link to a destination defined in an HTML page, but my source doc is MS Word.

Any suggestions or work-arounds??

Running XP Pro, MS Word 2002/XP.

In Adobe Acrobat's full Help, search for "named destination". Once your named destinations exist, right-click on the Bookmark and set the properties to named destination, then browse and select the specific destination.

Chapter News

Welcome Our New and Returning Members

New and returning members for the months of June and July, 2005:

June 2005
• Beth Etter (E-Member) • Amy J. Klene • Mary J. Lehti • Ryan J. Peterson (Student) • Julie Wenzel
July 2005
• Bruce Fritz • Jeff James • Robert J. Kleinfeld (Transfer) • Debbie L. Martinez • Brian D. Rainwater • Chuck C. Roby • Gina M. Vick

'05-'06 Programs Preview Available

You can see what programs are planned for the rest of our chapter meetings during the 2005-2006 chapter year at: http://www.stcrmc.org/program_calendar.htm. Wow! What a great collection of speakers and topics!

2005 STC Annual Conference in Seattle

by Martha Sippel

If you haven't attended an STC conference, you are missing out on an unbeatable networking opportunity at the world's largest gathering of technical communicators. STC conferences provide something for everyone: educational sessions, workshops, vendor exhibits, and displays of winning entries from the Society's international competitions. At the 2005 Annual STC Conference in Seattle in May, attendees looking for new career opportunities were also able to use STC's employment resources at the Employment Information Booth.

STC RMC members attending the Honors Banquet at the STC Conference in May (clockwise from upper left): Frank Tagader, Jeanie Fogwell, Deb Lockwood, Marc Lee, Marella Colyvas, Martha Sippel, and Linda Gallagher.

Leadership Day provides resources

The conference started on Monday for most conference attendees, but for STC leaders, the conference began Sunday with Leadership Day in the morning and early afternoon. This year's leadership keynote speaker was Rob Ziegler of IHI Environmental, who talked about leadership, teamwork, and vision. Ziegler illustrated his points with photos and anecdotes from his mountainclimbing adventures in Alaska, Nepal, and Pakistan. His adventures and the photographs depicting them were all inspiring.

Other leadership topics included

- Planning, Executing, and Surviving an STC Regional Conference
- Rechartering-We Made It! More Value for More Members
- STC Community Newsletter Editor's Forum
- Recruiting and Working with Volunteers in Virtual Communities
- STC Transformation Value for Students
- The Marathon of Community Leadership
- Zero-base Budgeting for STC Communities
- Planning for Leadership Succession and Electing Officers in Virtual Communities

Several of our community's leaders attended these sessions to learn more about how we can improve the services we provide to you, our members. This includes recruiting and working with volunteers. We have some great teams of people working on several different things, so if you are interested in participating in managing our STC RMC community, please let me or one of the officers know.

Opening speaker and Honorary Fellow provide inspiration

On Monday morning, Patrick Whitney, director of the Institute of Design (ID) at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, opened the conference by speaking about a few of the Institute's design projects, and how researching needs and designing solutions with the user in mind can positively affect people's lives. One project Patrick shared is the ID's Design for the Base of the Pyramid: Concepts for improving economies and daily life in an urban slums project. This project included bringing water more efficiently to large population centers in India, among other benefits (see www.id.iit.edu/profile/gallery/design_for_BoP/).

Felice Frankel, STC's 2005 Honorary Fellow, is a research scientist in the School of Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Frankel presented some of her photographs at her "Envisioning Science" session. Frankel magnifies photographic images to communicate the beauty and magic of chemical and biological processes. Her images remove barriers between our world and the molecular one, inspiring her audiences to learn more about both.

Her photographs set the standard for images working in conjunction with text to help scientists and scientific researchers see ideas in new ways. Frankel's images enable scientists to produce research that enhances their own understanding, as well as that of the general reader. This session inspired me, so check out some examples at http://web.mit.edu/felicef/. Her photographs have been exhibited from the Champs-Elysees, Paris to Musee de L'Elysee, Lausanne, Switzerland, to the National Academy of Sciences, Washington DC. She also has written two books and several articles in many journals.

Technical communication sessions abound

Technical sessions ran from 11:00 Monday through 3:30 on Wednesday. The closing session rounded out the conference and post-conference workshops were held on Thursday. The stems, or session areas of interest were: Management (32 sessions); Professional Development (44); Theory, Research, Education, and Training (18); Tools and Technology (38); Usability and Information Design (48), and Writing and Editing (34). I concentrated on the Usability and Information Design sessions and attended some wonderful presentations, including session by Ginny Redish and Whitney Quesenberry, two usability experts who will speak to STC RMC next year.

Honors Banquet highlights

One of the highlights of the conference was attending the Honors Banquet Tuesday evening. Several STC RMC members proudly watched as Linda Gallagher received her Associate Fellow award from Larry Kunz, Associate Fellows Nominating Committee Chair, and Suzanna Laurent, STC's current President. On hand to celebrate Linda's recognition were Marella Colyvas, Jeanie Fogwell, Deb Lockwood, Marc Lee, myself, Mary Jo Stark, and Frank Tagader. The 2005 Society Honors booklet states, "Those selected as Associate Fellows are exceptional individuals who have demonstrated a consistent pattern of meaningful contributions to the Society and to the profession over a period of years." (See http://stcrmc.org/technicalities/feb_march_2005/feature1.htm for a recent *Technicalities* article about Linda's award).

Linda Gallagher receiving her STC Associate Fellow Award from Suzanna Laurent and Larry Kunz

As if being awarded Associate Fellow wasn't enough, the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG was also selected to receive a SIG Pacesetter Award, which Linda accepted on behalf of the SIG. To top off the evening, Jane Smith, who spoke at our May meeting and presented two seminars, received a SIG of Distinction Award for her service and management of the Instructional Design and Learning SIG.

Next year in Las Vegas

Even if you're not a gambler, attending next year's STC Annual Conference is in Las Vegas, Nevada May 7-10, 2006 (http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/) can provide you with new ideas to improve your skills and any products you design or create. Take your chance to win some professional knowledge at a reasonable price. See you in Las Vegas!

Ways to Add Value and Make Money: How communities can increase the services they offer and make more money while doing so

by John Hedtke

We should always be thinking of ways in which we can provide more service to ourselves and to other STC members. By extending the services offered through your chapter or the local branch of a virtual community, you can enrich the skills, educational opportunities, and, yes, even your chapter's coffers. This article will tell you about some tried-and-true ways in which you can provide lots of value to your community's members that will generate interest and enthusiasm as well as providing a way to draw in new members, new sponsors, and an answer to the eternal question "What *am* I getting for my dues, anyway?!?"

The Rulez

Okay, there are some rules about what I'm going to tell you. First, **none of these ideas require you to spend any money**. (Dig it!) All of these things can be done through applied effort, wheedling, and perhaps a bit of whingeing as well, but no bucks. Second, **you can expect to see results in 3-6 months**. None of these things will show immediate results; they all take some lead-up to pull off, even if it's just advertising that they're going to happen. Third, **if you do any of these, you have to do them and follow through**. One or two things (like the library) can be done slowly and even stall for a while, but for the most part, it's better to not do these at all than to do them halfway.

You'll probably want to forget about everything you've done so far. Well, maybe not *everything*, but very possibly a lot of what you know and have been doing. Remember, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. What I mean by this is, if you've been doing things one way and they haven't been generating money or interest in the community or the STC, it's probably time to do something different.

Also keep in mind that "non-profit" doesn't mean "no money." The STC is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. We have some specific reporting and operating requirements to qualify for and to maintain this status, most of which will land on the local treasurer's lap. However, a common and self-defeating misperception is that because we're a non-profit, it's a bad idea for us to make money at all. I am pleased to tell you that *it's okay for STC chapters and groups to make money!!* You can charge for meetings, seminars, books, teleconferences, coffee mugs, and local SIG group memberships. The key thing is that the group must maintain a focus of being an educational and professional organization, with the idea that you'll be doing things for the benefits of the members of the group or of other sister groups. If you're successful at creating better programs, enhancing the job opportunities, and running auctions, you're going to make your members very happy. Happy members show up at more meetings, volunteer for things, and they get their friends to join up, too. They get more jobs and are more likely to stay with the STC because there's a clear value to them. The bottom line is that if you make your members happy and more successful, your group will make buckets of money as well. (Actually, it's a really good idea for your chapter or group to work on generating your own sources of income so you're that much more self-sufficient. With the belt-tightening that's been happening, having your own funds at your disposal will make it a lot easier to do things than if you have to get money that may or may not be available from the STC office.)

Finally, if you are successful at what you're doing, sooner or later, someone's going to come tell you that you're (a) doing it all wrong, (b) destroying the STC or some variant theme thereof, or (c) a fool for even attempting this in the first place. You'll probably have at least one dissenting opinion no matter what you do—a plan that doesn't offend somebody couldn't possibly interest anybody, after all—so don't figure you're going to be able to please absolutely everyone. But do listen to the opposing views, particularly if there are a lot of them (they could be right after all).

Okay, that's enough pontificating. Let's get started!

What You Can Do

Here are a bunch of ideas for things you can do to add value and make money. I've done all of these as VP and President of a chapter and they all have worked wonderfully.

1. Present better programs.

   Are your chapter's meetings being attended by only a small percentage of your members? You may need to perk up the program schedule. There's always some room for improvement. When I was VP & President of the Puget Sound chapter, I raised meeting attendance from 20-30 people/meeting to over 150/meeting and made a bloody great pile of money, too! (150 people was about 20% of the chapter membership at that point.)

   The key is to have meeting topics that are FUN. Don't go for the humdrum; try to get something sparky, rather than things like "Serial Commas, Pro or Con: A Panel Discussion" (I've included some ideas that have worked really well in a list below.) Some topics are always going to sound a bit on the flat side, but the program topic and write-up can help a lot. STC members respond well to fun stuff. You should be able to see an immediate increase in meeting attendance.

   Other than coming up with good program topics, I only did one thing different for publicity: I stopped sending a reminder postcard—it was costing the chapter its profit margin and didn't have a good return. Instead, I put together the program schedule 4-6 months in advance, published a tear-out sheet in the printed newsletter that could be posted on a cubicle wall, and sent regular (2-3x/month) email reminders to the entire chapter plugging the upcoming current program/activity and also reminding them about the subsequent programs or activities.

   Once I had a general email template for this (shown below) and had created an email list (which I did from the STC HQ supplied spreadsheet of current member data for the chapter and student chapter), announcing anything was a matter of five minutes or less. I'd just plug in a blurb about whatever it was—frequently able to lift the text from a previous email or the newsletter columns—and send it.

   Tips:

- Get interesting speakers. There are a lot of speakers who are willing to come to your chapter for minimal expenses and do a presentation on a wide variety of topics. If you've got a great idea but can't figure out who to have present it, check with your director for resources on people who could fill the bill. And there's an STC speaker's bureau being assembled at the Society level to help coordinate speakers for events. (Check with the STC office for more information on where to find this.)
- Door prizes are good. Get local authors, software companies, others, to donate goodies to give away. Figure 2 or 3 door prizes/meeting.
- Don't stop for the summer. Have some kind of activity each month, even if it's only a picnic or a lighthearted meeting. There was a handwriting analyst in the Puget Sound chapter one year, a guy who talked about how to make effective presentations another year, and a freelance graphic artist who showed us the wide variety of work that he did as (with many slides to illustrate) a third year. Take a tour of a printing plant, even—most communicators these days have never seen what actually happens when they fling their stuff over the transom to be printed. There are always lots of printers in the area who would be glad for the PR plug of showing their potential customers how they do things. The reason for not stopping is that you keep the momentum going.

The key is to be active. Keep people informed at all times about what's coming up now as well as what's coming up over the next few months and keep reminding them in the newsletter, in email, and at any of the events as part of the prefatory comments prior to the beginning of the activity.

The payoff: If you get people coming to meetings, you'll have more money from the meetings themselves. Members will network more, which is 60% of the value of any professional organization. You'll also have a chance to keep hammering home the other values of the STC: help with jobs, upcoming seminars, competitions, conferences, and so on.

2. Maintain an active job line.

If you don't have a job coordinator, appoint one for your chapter right away. The job coordinator should do two things: they should solicit businesses for job listings as a free service and they should maintain a book of resumes for STC members.

As part of their job, the job coordinator should encourage local job shops and agencies to send reps to meetings to make announcements and recruit. The chapter has an advantage in that they're getting the ear of people who can help them get jobs; the agencies have a source of qualified people. It all works out.

The job coordinator should post new job orders on the chapter website and/or send them out to the members via email. Depending, you may also want a chapter job line with an answering machine that's updated regularly. Access to the jobline should be free for chapter members and student chapter members, and should have a small charge for non-members.

The payoff: An active job line reminds members that the STC is interested in helping people get jobs and also shows employers that the STC is a strong resource for them when they need contract or permanent communicators.

3. Start a job fair.

   Once you've got a good relationship with agencies and employers in the area, it's time to have a job fair. The economy is still pretty bad, but things seem to be picking up a little and there's always some turnover that needs to be filled. If you have enough volume, consider having a job fair.

   Contact all the high-tech contract agencies and as many of the larger fulltime employers in the area as you can. For the agencies and companies with a number of positions, give them a table or part of one. They're going to be the presenters, collectively. Charge all the attendees, STC and non-STC members alike, say, $5/head. What if you have just one or two positions that you're looking to fill? Prepare a job sheet that lists the following:

   - Job Title
   - Job Description
   - Company
   - Location
   - Salary/Salary Range
   - Contact Information
   - Qualifications for the position
   - How to apply
   - Who to talk to for more information

   Have prospective employers provide 50 copies of each job sheet (don't be surprised if you have a couple hundred people at the job fair, so be ready to get copies on short notice). One copy will be taped up on a white board in the room; the other copies will be left on a table for people to pick up. As an employer, you'll also have a gold star on your name badge so people will know to talk to you directly (if possible, have little café tables and chairs for this purpose).

   Consider a door prize or two for this event, donated by one of the companies/agencies. You might even have a door prize an hour or every half-hour depending on volume. Regardless, all the contact with the agencies and companies is the perfect time to hit them up for donations of goods, services, and even sponsorships.

   This is a great PR opportunity for the STC. With so many communicators out of work and/or looking for work, there's plenty of opportunity to bang the STC drum loudly. Make sure you've lots of STC brochures, membership applications, sample copies of the newsletter, the next 4-6 months of programs on that 8-1/2" x 11" sheet I was mentioning earlier, and anything else you can think of.

   The key concepts here for the job fair at first are "cattle call" and "free PR." You want to get as many potential employees going past as many potential employers and picking up sheets on as many potential positions as possible. You also want to plug the STC as much as you can and tell absolutely everyone why they should show up at meetings and talk about jobs and/or why they should join the organization and participate.

The payoff: Just like an active job line, job fairs provide opportunities for STC members to get more work. (If there's a better draw for STC communicators, I've not run into it yet.) Job fairs also are a great draw for non-STC members who might be interested in what we have to offer, particularly when we're clearly offering more of it.

4. Present a series of Saturday mini-seminars.

   Mini-seminars are 4-hour or 8-hour seminars on a specific topic of interest to STC members, students, and other technical communications professionals. These sessions are designed to provide specific technical skills, let you brush up your already existing skills, or give you enough information on a topic to go out and learn more on your own. The focus of miniseminars is to provide extensive technical or professional skills and knowledge that can't be communicated in a meeting format. Sample mini-seminar topics appear below.

   Mini-seminars should cost $40-50/STC members, $45-60/non-members, and $25-30/ students for the half-day sessions and $75-100/STC members, $85-120/non-members, and $50-60/students. (Offer non-members an opportunity to combine a seminar registration with an STC membership so they get a slight discount over and above the member rate; it'll all work out nicely.) For some seminars, there may be a materials fee, too. Registration at the door is on a "space-available" basis. In all cases, add a $5 or $10 surcharge for registration at the door.

   Mini-seminar instructors should be paid for their work: $100-200/half-day session and $200-350/full day session. Consider a small bonus if a topic draws a larger crowd, too. Miniseminars are higher priced than most STC functions but they should be worth it. Publicize them for 3-6 months in advance heavily and keep track of registration. Consider canceling any mini-seminar that doesn't have, say, 3 people in attendance.

   The payoff: Mini-seminars should feel 'meaty' compared to monthly meetings. Participants should come out of them with the impression that they've gotten a lot of information that they didn't have before that they'll be able to use fairly directly in their jobs or careers. Mini-seminars in the Puget Sound chapter would net as much as $5000-10,000/year for the chapter.

5. Have a fund-raising auction

   Many chapters have a fund-raising auction, frequently as part of the May or June investiture meeting for the new officers. You'll get donations of goods and services from members, non-members, and companies, and auction them off.

   Publicize both the event and the list of auction items for several months prior to the event in the newsletter and the chapter website. Let people know the latest goods that have been added to the list, too; there *will* be interest in this.

   Tips:

- ?Be adventurous when it comes to ideas for donations. The sample auction list below shows typical goods and services available in an STC auction. Don't just hit up companies or people that know what the STC is or even what a technical communicator is. Range far afield and see who would like a tax write-off. We *are* a 501(c)3 organization, after all; here's one place it pays off. Consider bakeries, delis, landscapers, toy stores, book stores, picture framers (that'll go over big with STC members, believe me), and anywhere else that you can think of. Also hit up the vendors at the regional and annual STC conference, or other conferences, for goodies. Shucks, try to get some of them to show up and present at a meeting, too; lots of them *live* for that kind of PR.
- Have a *lively* auctioneer! You want someone who can jazz the crowd up and get them to bid more. The difference in return for a good versus a dull auctioneer is easily 2x.
- ?If you've never done a benefit auction before—or even if you have—immediately go out and buy a copy of "Benefit Auctions: A Fresh Formula for Grassroots Fundraising," by Sandy Bradley, available on Amazon and at many other stores. Sandy's book will tell you things you never suspected about running an auction that will reduce your workload, increase everyone's satisfaction, and make more money.

The payoff: Auctions are a great fund-raiser, a nice tax write-off for individuals and companies, and make for a really lively evening. Auctions can raise anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars depending on the donations and how many people are in attendance.

6. Set up a chapter lending library.

To remain competitive, technical communicators must continually be learning and expanding their skill sets. The easiest way to do this is read technical books and magazines in our fields or out of them. Unfortunately, technical books and magazines are expensive and it can be hard to find the exact book or magazine you need. Similarly, buying copies of every software product that you may need to learn is highly impractical. In fact, if you bought one technical book a month, subscribed to two magazines, and bought two new products a year, you could easily spend over $1000—a tidy sum.

Training budgets are one of the first things to get slashed by companies in tough times and the same thing applies to individual technical communicators. It's a short-term fix but it's hard to justify putting more things on the credit card if things are looking dicey. Public libraries are a resource that every technical communicator should use regularly, but most of the recent or highly technical books and magazines will not be available. The solution is for chapters to set up their own technical lending libraries that pools resources to create a permanent collection for technical communicators.

Briefly, you can get book and magazine donations from members, authors, software companies, vendors, publishers, companies, and magazine publishers. (If you're interested in details on how to do all of this for free, email me and I'll send you more information on how to do all of this.)

When you've got enough resources, you'll need to set the library up. The typical chapter technical lending library is housed at an easily accessible location. This is usually a few spare bookcases in someone's house, but it can be anywhere where there is reasonable control for checking out materials. (The mechanics of this are going to be ad hoc from chapter to chapter, particularly chapters that are spread across a wide geographic area.)

You don't need to catalog the library extensively. A simple list of the books, magazines, and software can be created and maintained on the local chapter website. Checkouts can be done with an online file or 3x5 cards. All the materials should be stamped or labeled with something that says "Property of the Library."

Check-outs should be allowed for one month for books, and two weeks for magazines and software. Popular books or software can be restricted to one week. Late fees can be assessed as deemed appropriate; software, particularly new or expensive products, should be lent with the clear understanding that failure to return it in a usable condition will carry the requirement of replacing it with a like product.

The payoff: A chapter technical lending library is not much for raising money as a rule, but it's a great value-added feature for your chapter. Not only a great technical resource for the members, it is a great marketing resource for the chapter. The best policy is to provide the library's services as a free benefit for chapter members and for the associated student chapter and charge a small, per-book fee for lending privileges to non-members.

7. Look for corporate donations and sponsorships.

   This pretty much speaks for itself. Check with local companies, both high-tech and not, for their gifts-in-kind and their donations programs. (Start with HR or the PR group; they'll probably be able to route you to the right people.) One thing you may be able to get is donated equipment or software. For example, would your chapter benefit from a donated older computer or laptop, an LCD panel, or surplused copies of software? Here's another tack: would the company be willing to donate meeting space, underwrite refreshment costs at a meeting, or do things for the annual STC banquet. Be profuse in your thanks, sending TY notes in the mail and making a big fuss on the website and in the newsletter and also at meetings: "This meeting has been subsidized by the great folks at MumbleCo, Inc., makers of FrabbusWare 9.7, a copy of which has also been donated as tonight's door prize. Please take a look at MumbleCo's website and see what great stuff they're doing right now and don't be shy about dropping them a brief TY note for their sponsorship."

   The payoff: The corporate sponsors pay for things, meaning you don't have to. They donate things, enriching the attendee's experience. They give you energy from outside the community resulting in a net increase of resources available to the group.

8. Consider setting up a local freelancing SIG.

   Depending on the percentage and number of freelancers in your community, it may be productive to have a local SIG that focuses on freelancer issues. This is going to be a subset of the local group initially but it's aimed at helping freelancers be more productive, more competitive, and find more/better jobs. As the group gains momentum, you'll have freelancers inviting people that they work with and you'll be able to tell them about the wonders and glories of the STC and of your local group, too.

Have monthly meetings (that don't conflict with anything the local group is doing, naturally) that have announcements of job orders, a brief discussion of what's happening in the community, and a speaker on topics of direct interest to the group, such as marketing yourself, finding new business, how to fire a client, making cold calls, and so on. A good technique is to have everyone in the group introduce themselves at the start of the meeting with a short description of what you're doing and what you hope to get out of the meeting/SIG. (And everyone should be encouraged to bring resumes and business cards.)

I recommend charging nothing or only a minimal amount for membership in the freelancing SIG. The costs will probably be very small—just a meeting space usually and the newsletter can easily be done online. Make it really easy to show up and get benefit.

The payoff: While the initial payoff is low, members of your local community will feel like you're doing a lot for them… and you are. Freelancers tend to be a vocal group about wanting programs and activities that focus on their needs; this is the very thing for providing that. The longer term effect is a feeder group to the community and a core of strongly motivated members and non-members who will talk about the STC at each job they go to.

9. Have a local competition.

Competitions can be a great value-added feature for your chapter or community as well as a dependable moneymaker. There's a lot of information about running a successful competition in your community available from the STC office that says things better than I can, so let me just add that you'll want to keep the competition interesting. Change the theme, make the award certificates different and attractive from year to year, have the awards banquet at different locations, and consider having a few door prizes for banquet attendees as well.

Hot Tip: You can solicit competition entries in languages other than English. ("Noooo!!!" I hear you cry.) What you can do is figure out what languages you'd like to solicit and then line up judges. Judges can be found in the following places:

- Translation firms (who get their axes ground by getting a lot of publicity w/r/t their competition)
- Bilingual writers, particularly native speakers, who are now technical communicators themselves
- Language departments in universities

The payoff: The local competition is a strong bonding experience for communities when done well. Entry fees can be a substantial source of revenue, particularly with money coming in from non-members and organizations.

10. Solicit bequests to the chapter.

A lot of us are getting to the point (i.e., past 40) where having a current will seems like a Really Good Idea. A note in the community newsletter about identifying the STC or the local community as a beneficiary in one's will is adequate. Talk to the STC Office for information about how this has been done in the past.

The payoff: It is a shame and a sorrow to lose people, but many people feel a sense of satisfaction in knowing that there is a scholarship fund or educational project they're endowing.

Summary

What started as an article of a couple of pages of quick tips has morphed into an 8-page monster… and you haven't even seen the examples yet! In the interests of some shred of brevity, I'm going to call a halt to the explication here, but if you want more information about any of these ideas, please feel free to get hold of me and I'll be glad to tell you lots more about whatever you'd like to know.

(For John's complete, 25 page article including examples of his suggestions, click here.)

Chapters can do lots of things for their members that will enrich their STC experience while at the same time enriching the chapter. Chapters don't have to be impoverished. It's certainly true that it can be hard to raise money but STC chapters are actually in a good position to do so. There's room for everyone to become happier and more prosperous as a result.

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Getting Your Ducks in a Row: What to consider before moving to a structured writing environment

by Brent Freeman

We've all heard the cliché "get your ducks in a row," meaning: get organized, usually in preparation for future work or new challenges. This is how you need to approach the move from working in an unstructured writing environment to a structured writing environment with a content management system. Tackling such a project without having your "ducks" organized is ensuring yourself a very large headache and less than successful results. To get your ducks in a row, you need to answer these questions:

- Why do we want to get structured?
- How does our current environment look?
- How should our new environment look?
- How are we going to get there?

The key for a successful outcome is to answer the first three questions before answering the last one, organizing each of your responses before moving on to the next one. Doing so will ensure your organization is able to take advantage of its new structured writing environment in the best way possible.

DUCK ONE: Why do we want to get structured?

To understand why this question is important, it helps to know what the wrong answers are. Wrong answers include: "We want to move into the 21st century", "Everyone else is doing it", "It is the latest trend", and "My friend at Company X did it".

Do not make the move to a structured writing environment just because it is trendy. Do not make the move to a structured writing environment because your friends' companies are doing it. The task of the first "duck" is to sit down and list the benefits that structure will give to your unique organization. Many groups find it useful to identify their pain points, or the problems that they would like to solve, and then talk about how structuring their content will fix those problems.

The benefits of a structured writing environment are huge, and they vary from organization to organization. Here are some to consider:

- Greater control over content - Improving consistency and accuracy are almost always a high priority. Content reuse and repurposing help organizations to do that, allowing authors to take advantage of content that is already created and approved, while spending less time creating new (or duplicate) content from scratch. A structured writing environment also makes it much easier to deliver content to multiple channels, such as the Web, CD-ROM, and print, without creating twice the work.
- Higher levels of productivity - content management systems enable you to automate key tasks that will save hours of time within your unique editorial process. This automation can

vary from automatically emailing an editor when an author is finished with a project, to automatically sending new content out for translation. Automation frees staff members from mundane tasks and allows them to be more productive, while ensuring a smooth editorial process.

- Shorter production cycle - Content reuse and repurposing, combined with automated processes, can greatly shorten the production cycle. Imagine that your organization publishes an encyclopedia and you need to put together a short booklet on mammals. Your author could pull approved content and repurpose it into the booklet. The graphic designer could automatically receive an email request for the relevant photos, and the editor could be automatically notified when the booklet was ready for review. The booklet could be compiled in days rather than weeks!
- Cost savings - When an organization can do more with its existing content while shortening its production cycle, significant cost savings are sure to follow. Reusing and repurposing, combined with more efficient workflow and translation processes, equals money saved.

DUCK TWO: How does our current environment look?

After it has been decided that moving to a structured writing environment is a good idea for your organization, it is time to address your current environment. After all, you can't get your ducks in a row if you don't know where they are!

Start by evaluating your current environment. Many organizations have an "over the wall" editorial process. Content is thrown over cubical walls from author to editor and so on, rather than using technology and an organized workflow. This puts content at risk for editorial mistakes, inaccuracies, and getting lost. Also, think about how much time you spend looking for content that you know someone created but you don't know where they stored it. Your goal in evaluating your content is to understand where your content goes. What path does it take? What people are involved?

Once you have a better idea of what path your content takes, go through and identify the valuable processes. You have already identified some pain points, so you know the process isn't flawless, but there must be some steps that are working or you wouldn't be able to operate. Put flags next to your valuable points - these are the steps you want to keep. Next, work with your team to reassess everything else. The goal is to look at your environment as it stands now and identify what is working and what is not, where the bottlenecks and delays are in your processes, and so on.

Another aspect of evaluating your current environment is to understand what your current content looks like. What does it consist of? Procedures? E-learning lessons? Parts definitions? What content does your organization create, what does it use, and what does it need? What content have you created in the past? Do you currently reuse any of it? As you ask these questions, keep in mind that most likely not all of your content will need to be converted. Every organization will require a different strategy for dealing with legacy or "old" content. This step presents a good opportunity to identify which content is the most useful and which is less useful.

When you have combed through the whole process from start to finish and you understand what content you are currently managing, your team is ready to move to duck three.

DUCK THREE: How should our new environment look?

Once you know what your current environment looks like, your team can dream about your ideal environment - emphasis on dream! Don't be afraid to think big in this stage. Look at Duck Two and think "Ok, this is what we have - but what would we LIKE to have." A few points to keep you on the right track:

- Know where you are going. What is your destination, or final deliverables? - Don't lose track of this in your brainstorming, or you will end up with a really interesting environment that doesn't get you to your deliverable.
- What should your final deliverable look like? - In other words, does it need to be published in print, on the Web, and CD-ROM? Or just print? Does it need to be in English only or in multiple languages?
- What should your document lifecycle, or workflow, look like to get to that destination? What tasks must get accomplished?

If your team can answer those questions, then they are most likely ready to block out a roadmap of how to get from an unstructured to a structured writing environment. Congratulations! Before leaving this duck and moving on to the next one, be sure to go back and compare your ideal environment with duck number one. Does it address your pain points? Then compare it to duck number two. Does it include your most valuable points? If the answer to both questions is yes, move on to duck four.

DUCK FOUR: How are we going to get there?

Duck four is the "road map" step. Based on the previous, in-depth analysis your team has done to get to this point, it is time to put together a road map of how your group will get from its current environment to its new structured writing environment. The previous analysis was crucial because it will ensure that you choose your tools and your path based on your unique situation and your goals, rather than letting your tools dictate your goals. The final decisions you make need to be solidly based on your organization's unique situation - but because you have your ducks in a row, that won't be a problem!

Here are some of the decisions your team must make:

- Which DTD is right for our situation?
  Based on your analysis, you'll need to decide whether to create a custom DTD or pick one off the shelf, such as DocBook or DITA. Don't forget to include metadata in your discussion. Metadata enables your authors to locate and use information and is a big part of working within a structured writing environment.
- Which tools will help us to reach our goals?
  A major part of your overall move to a structured writing environment will be implementing the appropriate technology. This will probably include an authoring tool, a content management tool, and a publishing tool. If you are nervously patting your wallet, that's ok. This is where the financial investment comes in, but don't let that intimidate you. Today's vendors provide a variety of options and are willing to work with you to put together a plan that works for your team as well as your budget. Ideally all three systems should be selected simultaneously. They should be evaluated with each other throughout

the process to ensure that they work together seamlessly, ensuring the most efficient editorial process possible.

- Should I use a phased in approach?
  By now you are probably thinking, "Wow, this is becoming a huge undertaking." Don't panic. For many organizations, a good way to begin this new initiative is to run a pilot. Running a pilot of just one project is a useful way to figure out the kinks and benefits of the new environment and will probably make everyone feel more comfortable. Though this varies, if your company is ready to jump right in, by all means go ahead!
- How/when do I turn off my old system and turn on my new one?
  The easy answer here is: when you don't need the old one anymore. Some overlap is inevitable and not a bad thing. There is comfort knowing that the older, more familiar system is there if the newer system should encounter a problem. But once you have your content switched over to the new system and your staff is comfortable with it, it is probably a good idea to remove the old system - to avoid mistakes and duplication of effort.

Dealing with Challenges

Having all of your ducks in a row will greatly help to minimize the challenges you will face when moving to a structured writing environment. Although every organization is different, there are still a few common obstacles that you should be aware of in case they arise.

First, be aware that writing in a structured writing environment and using a content management system is fundamentally different than writing in an unstructured writing environment. This opens up a whole new way of thinking to your authors, some of whom will find it exhilarating, while others will find it a little intimidating. Be aware that each of your authors will have an adjustment period and that the length of that adjustment period may vary from author to author. A strong training program as part of your content management system implementation will go a long way to helping the entire editorial staff become more comfortable with the change and get excited about the system. Be sure to ask each of the vendors that you work with about what training and support is available.

Second, even with previous analysis, when it comes time to actually implement the tools needed for a structured writing environment, some organizations find that they haven't adequately addressed the issue of legacy content. Many organizations have so much legacy content that it is difficult to form a plan of attack. The simplest is often to divide the legacy content into three categories: used often enough to store in the content management system's repository, important enough to save but not used often enough to store in the CMS repository, and not important. If a large amount of content falls into the second category, don't worry. As the editorial department continues to work in and become more comfortable with the structured writing environment, it will become easier to sort through the legacy content.

Third, organizations often have a harder time identifying an ideal workflow than one might think. Sometimes it is difficult to tell where the "entry point" to the process is. The authors point to the editors, who point to the managers of the department, and so on. Often, editorial workflows actually start outside the editorial department, when the development team draws up the specs for a new product. Then they tell the editorial department that they need new materials, and that is what actually initiates the workflow. After identifying the entry point, some organizations stumble when trying to automate their workflow processes. Should they use automated email?

What tasks need to be automated? It is helpful to identify what tasks are repeated the most often, because they are often the tasks that can be the most helpful when automated (i.e., author sends an email to the graphic designer requesting an image, author sends email to editor with content for review, etc). CMS vendors can provide helpful advice and guidance in this area, because they know their systems well and have usually worked with a variety of unique organizations.

Guaranteeing Success

Finally, there are a few final tips that can help guarantee success:

- Set goals. Goals give your plan a direction. Even the best technology can not succeed without a well-designed implementation plan.
- Set milestones on the way to each goal. Projects of this size often get so large that they can seem out of control to the people actually involved. By celebrating milestones along the way, the people involved can see that steady progress is being made, reflect upon lessons learned, and build on each milestone until the ultimate goals are reached.
- Build measurable results. Be sure to structure all goals and milestones in a way that is measurable - not "We will improve our editorial process". Ideally everyone can improve their editorial process, but how will you improve yours? Will you shorten production time by X days or weeks? Do more with less people? Keeping goals and milestones measurable will also make them easier to report to upper management and to celebrate when you meet them.
- Evaluate progress. As you proceed, always evaluate each goal and milestone. In fact, evaluate your progress in between each goal as well. The true value of having your ducks in a row is being able to always look back to make sure that you are on the right track - but that is only valuable if you take the time to do it!

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In Memoriam: Joy Yunker

by Professor Robert H. Amend

We are all unique people. However, I'm sure that all of you would agree that Joy Yunker was a truly singular individual. Professor J. O. Yunker was the Chair of the Technical Communications Department at Metropolitan State College of Denver and upon retirement, she earned the rank of emeritus faculty member. Her accomplishments and service to the college are too numerous to recount, so I'll just mention a few.

First and foremost, Professor Yunker was an advocate for the college. She was a tireless supporter and campaigner for Metro who truly believed in the college's role and mission, and the students it served.

Joy was the face of Technical Communication at the college. She founded the department, hired the first handful of faculty and helped ensure its longevity. She was instrumental in encouraging students to pursue their collegiate and career dreams. This was evidenced by the fact that under Joy's helm, the department produced three President's Award Winners—a rather remarkable achievement for such a small department. And like many graduates from the college, those from our department distinguished themselves by working with companies and organizations here in Colorado and throughout the world. Some of them are in attendance today as a tribute to Professor Yunker.

Joy deeply believed in service to the college. This service included a long tenure as the department's representative to the faculty senate and membership, at some time or another, on most of the established school and college committees. She was a founding member of the Auraria Faulty and Staff Club and had been its president. Even in retirement, Joy was active. She had been spearheading the move to organize retired and emeritus faculty members so that the college could benefit from their knowledge and expertise.

Just the other day, Emeritus Professor Duke Stoner from our department reminded me that Joy had been a strong advocate for women. Prior to coming to the college, she had worked at the National Jewish Hospital. Her time there reinforced her determination to help women students undertake and succeed in professional occupations. But Joy did not discriminate. She mentored numerous students, both male and female, during her tenure at the college.

There were other activities that Joy engaged in during her younger years. Undoubtedly, she was the only faculty person at Metro who had been a member of an undergraduate fencing team, a recreational activity she pursued during her student days at Syracuse. And I remember her reminiscing about the days she would don ice skates when she was a graduate student at the University of Illinois.

Outside of the college community, Joy was enamored with her dog, Pendragon, and animals in general. She delighted in raising and training her dogs. Another favorite activity was visiting the Denver Zoo and observing the baby animals being fed.

The time that college faculty spend in service to the college, community and to professional organizations occasionally overshadows their paramount responsibility which is to teach. For Professor Yunker, teaching and advising students was her true love. Joy did not pamper students and I'm sure some of you can attest to this fact. She demanded that students write and produce final projects that met exacting standards. I can recall more than a few times when students lamented that she was a tough, sometimes daunting teacher, but never did I hear a student say that she was unfair. One graduate confided to me that she wrote on one of his papers "This is one of the worst reports I've ever read". However, through hard work he managed a C in the class.

Joy's favorite classes to teach were Communication Law and Power and Authority. And she was quite knowledgeable about each. She researched law cases with the tenacity of an attorney, and some say she often demonstrated the principles of power and authority in her classes. But I will never forget a sign in her office that summarized Joy's witty outlook on a controversial law issue and teaching in general. The sign read "As long as there are exams, there will be prayer in school."

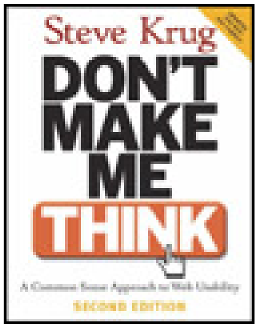
Finally, Joy was the long-time director of Commencement for the college. Yes, this was a difficult undertaking, especially at semester's end. Occasionally, actually quite often, I heard her mutter a few choice words about the manner in which commencement planning was proceeding. But Joy was truly in her glory as director of commencement. Who else could have reveled so much in reminding college presidents, elected officials, politicians and other dignitaries about their duties on graduation day?

Just as Commencement is the end of one chapter and the beginning of a new one, so too, is this service today. I know that all of you will retain a special memory of Joy. For me, it's quite simple. Whenever I hear the strains of the traditional commencement music by Sir Edward Elgar, a sly smile will cross my face and I'll think of her. Rest in peace, Joy.

Professor Amend is the Chair of the Department of Technical Communication & Media Production at Metropolitan State College of Denver. He can be reached at: amendb@mscd.edu

Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability

by [Ron Arner]



Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability
Steve Krug. 2000. Berkeley: New Riders Publishing. [ISBN: 07897-2310-7. 195 pages. $35.00 (paperback).] http://www.sensible.com

If you need to brush up on Web site usability over a weekend, then I highly recommend Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think!*. This book had been recommended to me several times in the past, so when a co-worker offered to let me borrow his version, I was excited to read this Web design standard.

The book is a fairly quick and easy read, and is interspersed with humor and a plethora of examples of Websites that are designed well, but could still be better. There is no "bad-mouthing of poorly designed sites" in the book, because as Krug puts it, "Anyone who gets it even half right has my admiration."

Krug organizes his Web design tips into 11 chapters:

- Don't make me think!
  Otherwise known as "Krug's First Law of Usability," this phrase speaks for itself. What a wonderul, common sense way to sum up the practice of making a Website as easy to use as possible.
- How we *really* use the Web
  Krug points out that readers do not really read Websites, but scan them instead. This belief leads to Krug's next point.
- Billboard Design 101
  In this chapter, Krug builds upon his point that people scan rather than read Websites, giving detailed instructions on how to design scannable sites.
- Animal, vegetable, or mineral?
  Users like mindless choices, even if it takes many clicks to achieve these results.
- Omit needless words
  If this rule sounds familiar to you, it should. Krug says the best advice he ever got in regards to writing for the Web came from E.B. White's *The Elements of Style*: Omit needless words.
- Street signs and Breadcrumbs
  This chapter contains Krugs points on how to design navigation.
- The first step in recovery is admitting that the Home page is beyond your control
  Krugs advice on designing a good homepage: designing a Home page inevitably involves compromise; the one thing you can't afford to lose in the shuffle is conveying the big picture.
- "The Farmer and the Cowman Should Be Friends"
  Krug feels that most Web design team arguments about usability are a waste of time, and gives some ways to avoid them.

- Usability testing on 10 cents a day
  Krug is a proponent of usability testing, and also believes it should be kept simple; any testing is better than none at all.
- Usability tesing: The movie
  (How to do your own usability testing.)
- On not throwing the baby out with the dishes
  On how to interpret your usability testing results.

The nice thing about a book like *Don't Make Me Think!* is that it can be used by the beginning Web designer as well as the seasoned professional. Even an experienced Web designer needs to review the basics now and then, and Steve Krug's book is a quick and easy way to do that!

STC's New Training Program

In a little less than two months, STC will launch its new Training Program, designed to provide technical communicators with an educational experience more in-depth than anything previously presented.

Imagine a two-day course covering the things you need to advance your career in technical communication--an in-depth, focused course taught by some of the most respected names in the field.

Now imagine that you have a choice of five such courses, each covering a different subject within technical communication. That's the STC Training Program--a new learning venue designed for today's professionals and scheduled for October 20-21.

The five two-day courses, described in detail at www.stc.org/training,
cover the following subjects:

- The Architecture of Content. Instructor: Jonathan Price, STC Fellow
- Creating and Using Personas to Improve Usability. Instructor: Whitney Quesenbery, STC Associate Fellow
- Focusing on Content: Making Web Sites Work for Users. Instructors: Janice (Ginny) Redish, STC Fellow, and Caroline Jarrett
- Leadership in Information Management: Developing the Business Framework and Implementation Roadmap for Single Sourcing, Content Management, and Knowledge Management. Instructor: Benhong Rosaline (Roz) Tsai, STC Associate Fellow
- XML: From Hand-Coding to WYSIWYG Authoring. Instructor: Neil Perlin, STC Associate Fellow

The STC Training Program will take place at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Crystal City, Virginia (near Washington, DC). Register by September 21, 2005, and the cost for STC members is $1,095 (with hotel, $1,295*) and $1,255 for non-members (with hotel, $1,455*). After September 21, costs increase $150. Don't miss out on this unique opportunity. For information or to register, please visit www.stc.org/training.

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*Hotel accommodations include up to three nights lodging in Crystal City, Virginia. Registration includes two breakfasts and two lunches. Discounts are available for multiple registrants from the same company.

STC's New Career Center

Dear STC Member,

We're pleased to announce STC's new Technical Communication Career Center! Far more advanced than our previous job board, the Career Center (http://jobs.stc.org) provides a comprehensive resource for jobseekers. With STC's Career Center, you can:

- view new job listings before they're made available to the general public
- post anonymous resumes and control, on a case-by-case basis, to whom your identity and contact information is revealed
- create personal Job Alerts, based on criteria you select
- create "My Career" accounts to store job openings, resumes, cover letters, and more
- access technical communication job listings and descriptions from more than 300 job boards in our network, including the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT)

While anyone can view basic information (position, company, and location) for each job listing on the site, only STC members can open the job description for critical details, such as qualifications and contact information. With the new Technical Communication Career Center, STC continues to improve the value of your membership dollar.

Spread the word about the Career Center to colleagues and managers! Once they've seen the benefits it provides, we hope they'll stick around.

At STC, we take our members' career development seriously. While the economy has begun a slow rebound from the dotcom bust of the early 2000s, it's still important to prepare for a difficult market. STC's Technical Communication Career Center can help. Visit it today: http://jobs.stc.org.