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

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Technicalities

This site is best viewed with Internet Explorer 5x or newer.

Editorial Staff

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Technicalities is published bi-monthly by the Rocky Mountain Chapter (RMC) of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) and is distributed to chapter members, editors of other STC newsletters, and officers of the Society. It is available on request to anyone interested in technical communication. Other STC chapters and publications may reprint material if credit is given.

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles on subjects of interest that they wish to be considered for publication to Society and chapter members. Please credit repeated material and send a copy of the original material to: news@stcrmc.org

Submission Guidelines

Submission deadlines and themes for the next year are as follows:

October 15, 2007 - Gadgets and Gizmos: Wikis, RSS, and Other Technology for Technical Communicators

November 15, 2007 - No theme

The staff will also announce the upcoming issue and its theme via an e-mail to the membership and/or at chapter meetings.

The preferred word count for articles is 500-750 words. If your subject matter warrants it, articles longer than 1,000 words will be serialized between two or more issues.

Please e-mail all submissions to: news@stcrmc.org with the issue date, such as "October/November 2007," in the subject line. The editor can be reached during the day at 303.956.1906, by e-mail at news@stcrmc.org and by postal mail at 6025 S. Quebec St., Suite 260, Englewood, CO 80111.

Submissions can be pasted into the body of the e-mail, or sent as an attachment. If you send your article as an attachment, it should be in either RTF or DOC format. Please include your contact information.

A "headshot" of yourself to be printed with your article would be appreciated.

Note: By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

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.

STC RMC 2007-2008 Officers

Administrative Council

President: [Ron Arner](#)

Vice President: [John Endicott](#)

Secretary: [Kathy Recchiuti](#)

Treasurer: [Jessica Betterly](#)

Past President: [Deb Lockwood](#)

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Assistant to President: Frank Tagader

Associate Fellow Nominations: Martha Sippel

Database: Karen Kraft-Miller

Hospitality: Julie Bettis

Jobs: Craig Banister

Listserv: Karen Kraft-Miller

Membership: Tammy VanBoening

Nominating Committee: [Alida Franco and Frank Tagader](#)

Programs: Kristy Astry

Scholarships: Marc Lee and Don Zimmerman (Mentor)

Seminars: Bette Frick

Strategic Planning: Martha Sippel

Volunteers: Ron Arner

STC RMC SIG Managers

Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC SIG): Whitney Broach and Linda Gallagher

Northern Colorado: Carmen Carmack

Western Slope: Victoria Thomas

Society for Technical Communication, Rocky Mountain Chapter

General Chapter Business

Rocky Mountain Chapter

Society for Technical Communication

6025 S. Quebec St., Suite 260

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info@stcrmc.org

Job Postings

Send job postings to jobs@stcrmc.org

Jobs are posted on the chapter Web site (http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance.jobs.htm), and are e-mailed to the techcomm-discuss mailing list.

Chapter Web site

<http://www.stcrmc.org>

STC International Office

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1822

703.522.4114

stc@stc.org

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Message from the Editor: Job Hunting 101

by [Stephen Wertzbauger](#)



As I sit down to write this column I gaze through the rose-colored glasses of time and memory at my fairly successful adult professional life. Although I have had several different careers in three disparate industries, I have been fortunate that I have never gone long without gainful employment. That's not to say that there has never been a time when I needed to find a job to fill a paycheck gap, but such desperate straits have been rare.

Unfortunately, many people I know have not been as blessed with reliable employment. For those folks, the job hunt has been one of constant frustration and anxiety as they wonder whether they will ever again work or will instead become another welfare statistic. And despite the news that technical communicators are again in demand, finding that new position is often as easy as trapping the elusive jackalope.

Then there are those people who are already employed, but for reasons of their own have decided to move on. They may be looking for a higher salary, better working conditions or hours, a new or different challenge in a different industry, writing for a different product or audience, or maybe a promotion to management. But whatever their reasons, this group of people can and often do face the same obstacles that their unemployed brethren face: a veritable Death Valley wasteland of new employment opportunities.

Why can some people find new jobs as easily as changing socks while others seem to languish in the Bermuda Triangle of job-land? If I knew the answer I'd be rich beyond even Donald Trump's wildest dreams. Still, finding a job isn't all fate and luck—there are a number of things you can do to increase your odds of landing your dream job, or even any job, if that is your goal. Writing the perfect resume; preparing adequately for the interview, both over the phone and in person; dressing appropriately; even showing up on time and presenting yourself confidently during the interview process—all of these things are important. And of course, in our information age, it is just a matter of a few clicks to publish your resume online with any number of job and resume sites.

Finding a job, whether you are a new college graduate or a seasoned professional, or are changing industries or professions, can be a daunting and frustrating experience, but it doesn't have to be the end of life as you know it, or even something to fear. Even if you don't relish the thought of job-hunting, you should still approach it with the same care and planning as you do other parts of your professional life. We hope we can give you some tips and other small gems in this issue of *Technicalities* that will allay some of the anxiety you may be feeling about looking for that new position.

And if you already know everything there is to know about job-hunting, feel free to drop us a line at news@stcrmc.org to let us know how we did with preparing everyone else to find a job!



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President's Corner

by [Ron Arner](#)

It's official—I'm now the President of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the STC.

What does this mean to me? I can't really give a definite answer to that question, because one thing that will make me a successful president is to keep an open mind and allow for minor changes to our game plan this year. Martha Sippel and her committee have done an excellent job of designing a long-term strategic plan for the chapter, and the council recently met to decide how best to implement the first part of that plan. But things will happen, as they always do, to make this seemingly perfect plan more challenging than it appears. People's lives will change, unforeseen personal and professional commitments will emerge, and adaptation will be necessary to continue on the path to success. So being president of the STC won't be much different from most other tasks in life.

On the other hand, STC does have some unique characteristics that will help us meet the challenges of the year ahead. Why do people belong to the STC? My guess: for the networking, professional development, and social interaction that STC can provide. Members seem to find meetings, seminars, and Web resources our most valuable resources, and we are addressing all three areas: Kristy Astry has compiled the results of the program survey and is already busy organizing a fantastic slate of programs for the year ahead; Marella Colyvas will soon be sending out a similar survey to see what kind of seminars you're interested in this year; and that leaves only the Web resources piece of the puzzle, which Bill Thomas and team have been talking about for a month. They've already started working on the redesign of our website, and Craig Banister has stepped up to be webmaster and Jobs List manager, so that we can continue to bring you crucial information until the new site is up and running sometime next year.

Thanks to a wonderful group of volunteers working on the council, including Past President Deb Lockwood and veteran advisors like Frank Tagader, Martha Sippel, and Mary Jo Stark, I'm optimistic that this will be a stellar year for our community. But the hard work is just beginning. We continue to need volunteers to perform tasks as simple as helping set up for or clean up after a seminar, writing an article or reviewing a book for the newsletter, or planning the details of one of our networking meetings. If you would like to add your name to a list of volunteers available for tasks like these, please send an email to John Endicott at vice-president@stcrmc.org. And as I mentioned, things happen—long-term volunteer positions may also need to be filled over the course of the year. If you hear a vacancy announced at a chapter meeting or see one listed in an e-blast, please consider donating your time and talent to the chapter.

Now that my carefully disguised call for volunteers is out there, let me just say thanks one more time to all who have stepped up to help out! I am very excited about what we will be able to accomplish as a community of technical communication professionals in the year ahead.



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Tips from the Trenches: Job Hunting 101

by [Dana Dutson](#)

When I began my career as a technical writer, I was warned repeatedly that I should expect to be laid off—often. Last spring, I experienced my first layoff. The experience was both frightening and exciting. I received a lot of great advice and support—much of it from fellow members of the Rocky Mountain Chapter. For others who are job hunting for any reason, I compiled the advice.

Attitude

- Don't take it personally.
- Look at a layoff as an opportunity to move on to new experiences.

Network

- Attend STC meetings. The STC members were very supportive – not only did they have good advice, but they also shared job leads.
- Let people know that you are looking. They may give you leads and even be willing to recommend you for a job.
- Join LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com). It's a social networking site like Facebook and MySpace, but it's geared toward professionals. The STC has a presence on LinkedIn that allows STC members to network with other STC Group members. For more information on the STC Group on LinkedIn, see "[STC is 'LinkedIn'](#)" in this issue of the newsletter.

Work

- Set aside time every day for your job search. Looking for a job is a job. The STCRM has a jobs list that provides excellent leads. You can sign up to have e-mail notices sent to you whenever a new job is posted.
- Don't be afraid to take a contract job. You'll gain more experience and expand your network. Some contracting agencies even offer benefits if you meet their requirements.
- Find a recruiter and follow up regularly. If you haven't heard from the recruiter recently, call him or her.
- Think about your long-term career goals. It may be the perfect opportunity for you to transition from a technical writer to an instructional designer, start your own business, or become an independent contractor.

Resume

- Keep your resume and portfolio updated.
- If your current resume is chronological, consider changing to an experience-based resume, especially if you are changing careers. For more information on experience-based and other types of resumes, see "[Which Resume Format is Best?](#)" in this issue of the newsletter.
- Post your resume on monster.com or other online job search tools and set up job search agents. The job search agents e-mail jobs to you that match the criteria you set such as location, keywords, full-time, and so on.
- Customize your resume for each job and make sure to use the same keywords as the job posting. Also, include variations of keywords such as technical writer, tech writer, technical communicator. Many companies search resumes electronically and only look at resumes that match a certain percentage of keywords or phrases.
- Don't add "References available upon request" at the end of your resume, but do have your references ready to give to a potential employer.
- Don't put hobbies or volunteer work unless it is related to the job.
- Have someone else review your resume and cover letter. Your resume is a sample of your

work. I heard someone say that an error in a tech writer's resume is the kiss of death.

The most important advice was:

- Enjoy your time off! Read the stack of books on your nightstand, complete a project you've been putting off until you have more time, or go play outside.

I used much of this advice during my job search. I received great job leads from talking to people. I took a short contract job to get me out of the house, which taught me a few new FrameMaker tricks, expanded my network, and gave me new job leads. After a several weeks of "vacation," I started a new job at a great company, where I am happily employed.

Dana Dutson is a member of the RockyMountain chapter of the STC.



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From the Insider: Advice to an Emerging Professional

Dear Insider:

I am looking for software to help me with goal-setting for my department with some very specific parameters, and I am having trouble finding something appropriate.

How can I best utilize the STC to help me in this task? Since I'm new, I was wondering if you could tell me how to post an organization-wide question. I'm sure I'm not the only one doing this sort of thing!

—*Needing to Post*

Dear Needing to Post:

The Rocky Mountain chapter of STC has a great mail list that any member can post to. We use this list to post questions about software use, methodologies, exchange job leads, and much more.

You can find out much more at our web site: http://www.stcrmc.org/resources/resources_maillist.htm

We look forward to hearing you online!

—*STC Insider*

If you are new to the profession, transitioning from another profession, or finishing up coursework in the field of technical communications, feel free to submit your questions to Insider at news@stcrmc.org. We will do our best to provide you with valuable insights and information to help you get started.





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Chapter News

Chapter Meetings

October 18 , 2007 – Trends and Technology for Technical Communicators – A Panel Discussion

November 15, 2007 – Network with your Peers

December, 2007 – No meeting

CIC-SIG Fall Meeting Announcement

Please mark your calendars for the local Contractors and Independent Consultants Special Interest Group fall meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, November 7th.

Our speaker, Terry Nelson CPA will talk about "Understanding the Tax Implications of Becoming an LLC or S Corporation." It should prove to be an informative meeting.

Look for details in the next issue of *Technicalities*.

Membership News

Dana Dutson started a new job in July at McKesson Provider Technologies in Louisville.

If you have any membership news, please send news items to news@stcrmc.org.

Networking Opportunities

Get connected ... If you're an STC RMC member, consider joining techcomm-discuss, the chapter's email list. For information about the list, including how to join, view the [list FAQ page](#) and the [posting rules](#).

Employment News, Trends, and Opportunities

You can view job announcements on the STC RMC Web site at http://www.stcrmc.org/jobs_freelance/jobline.htm.

Education News, Trends, and Opportunities

October 27–30, 2007 – [Lavacon](#). The conference is for advanced technical communication and management professionals including documentation managers, project managers, and independent contractors.

Location: The Astor Crowne Plaza hotel, New Orleans

November 27, 2007 – Boulder Writers Alliance Meeting

Topic: Microsoft Vista and Office 2007

Time: 6:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Location: NCAR



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STC News

Dues Increasing for 2008

Dear STC Members,

The Society is embarking on some of its most exciting improvements ever--and that's hard to believe considering all the progress we've made in the last few years! But it's true: From the revamped Annual Conference to the soon-to-be-released Salary Database, STC has significantly upgraded its services.

In fact, many of you sent notes to the STC office saying how much you enjoyed the new, expanded content of our e-mail newsletter, *News & Notes*. I'm glad to hear it!

But, in STC, just as in the rest of our lives, improved services and normal inflation add costs. So, to support those and other rising expenses and to pay for needed capital improvements to the technology that supports the STC office, STC's Board of Directors decided at its August 2007 meeting to raise membership dues for calendar year 2008.

I'm sure your first question is "how much?" Although it's approximately 15% for the majority of members, the change does vary according to your location and the category of membership you choose. I've asked the STC office to put together a Q&A titled [STC's New Dues Structure](#). This Q&A also goes into much more detail about those rising expenses I mentioned.

It's also natural for members to wonder how their dues are spent. That's why STC has posted an article titled [Where Do My STC Dues Go?](#) As you'll see, even with the increase, STC dues are in line with those of similar organizations.

Chapter presidents and treasurers have already been informed of another Board decision regarding changes to our chapter funding model. If you're interested in the details of how chapters are funded, you can read [this message sent recently to chapter leaders](#).

If you would like to discuss the dues and funding changes with other members of STC, including STC Board members, I invite you to do so on the STC Member Forum at stcforum.org/viewtopic.php?pid=4182. When you use the discussion topic on the forum, it gives Society leaders a chance to see and respond to all comments.

As a member of the STC Board of Directors, I'm quite proud of the priorities we've set, the decisions we've made, the financial responsibility we've exercised, and the value we've delivered to STC members. Decisions to increase dues are never easy, but I am confident that the value you receive for your dues dollars is worth every penny.

I thank each of you for being an important part of this Society that has supported our profession for more than 50 years. The support you give to your Society in turn strengthens our profession.

Linda Oestreich
STC President

2008 STC Technical Communication Summit Call for Proposals

The Call for Proposals for the 2008 STC Technical Communication Summit has been announced on the STC website. For more information, see <http://www.stc.org/cfp/index.aspx>.

The Summit is June 1–4, 2008 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



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Fly on Your Own Wings

by [Alida Franco](#)

Unemployed, and tired of sending out resumes? Or perhaps you're looking for a professional change, more variety in your work, or wanting to use a great set of skills that your current job doesn't seem to need?

These are some of the feelings that set independent contractors in motion. Think about it. Maybe life is opening a door and presenting you with a chance for a new professional opportunity. If you haven't considered becoming an independent contractor, maybe you should.

So, what are the benefits?

It may seem odd to some that there are professional writers who are willing to forego paid holidays, a paid vacation, health and dental insurance, paid Social Security, and other benefits to work for the best boss in the world—themselves.

Independent contractors have a penchant for relying on their own personal and professional resources. They love structuring their own time. They like the creative process of selling a job and negotiating the terms of a contract. They have the opportunity to bid for and select from a variety of jobs, depending on their own individual skill sets. And, they have the right to turn down and refuse contracts that do not meet their standards. Very few jobs provide these benefits.

Independent contractors define their businesses and differentiate themselves from their competitors by providing a specific skill or service. For example, web designer, human factors expert, technical writing and consulting, marketing and copywriting, and so on. But in reality, independent contractors are really selling themselves. Any client who has worked with independent contractors knows that no two are alike, even when they possess the same skills and provide the same services. As an independent, you **are** your business, and the business relationships you develop with clients reflect your unique style.

If you are ready to give independent contracting some concentrated thought and effort, here are a few starting points:

- Identify what type of legal business status your company should have. Call **303.892.3840** and ask for a copy of the *Colorado Business Resource Guide*, a comprehensive publication on starting up a small business and the deciding factors in determining your legal status. Learn about becoming a sole proprietor, a limited liability company, or a corporation.
- Contact the Small Business Center at your local Secretary of State's office to register your company name and legal status. For Colorado, check out: <http://www.sos.state.co.us/>
- Determine what type or types of skills and services you plan to sell. If you haven't already, start networking and talk to other independent contractors.
- Join the STC Contractor and Independent Consultants Special Interest Group (CIC-SIG) at the local and national levels. Go to <http://www.stc.org/membership/sigDescription01.asp?ID=1> or contact Alida Franco.
- Educate yourself on the mechanics of running a business as a freelancer. Learn about setting up and maintaining a home office, marketing your skills and services, writing contracts, managing state and federal taxes, and more. Check out: http://www.stc.org/jobs_freelance/freelance.htm

Finally, plan to attend the CIC-SIG fall meeting in November. What are you waiting for?

Alida Franco is the current chair for the Rocky Mountain CIC-SIG group. She is also the owner of

Communiqué, LLC, a firm that provides technical communication services and consulting in the Denver metro area. You can contact her at <mailto:alidafranco@earthlink.net>



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Which Resume Format is Best?

by [Martha Sippel](#)

In our effort to excel in different careers or jobs, we eventually must dust off our resumes. While some people keep their resumes up to date, others dread updating their resume and put it off until the last possible minute. If you are suddenly involved in a downsizing, you can find yourself at a disadvantage. If you aren't aware of resume formats, you might consider doing some current research to help make your resume stand out from others.

First, there are two resume focuses and two basic formats. The focus will be either a resume targeted to a specific job position or an "inventory" resume that contains a general objective without limiting you and that might be suitable for all jobs. Resume formats are chronological (the older format that many of us are used to) or functional, which is another way of describing a "skills-based resume." You can combine the two formats to create a combination resume.

As technical communicators, we should take resumes very seriously. Any way we can improve them will help us stand out from our talented competition. To help you find the latest on resumes, I've collected some of my favorite websites for helping people with their resumes (and this line of business generally doesn't pay well, by the way, so don't get your hopes up).

Resume Format and Focus Examples

I found the most concise examples of resume focus and formats on Michelle Dumas's "Distinctive Documents" website at www.distinctiveweb.com/choose.htm. She provides details about how to make both focus and format decisions along with advice on the content and how to best arrange it. Her years of experience show—there is a lot of good information here.

Another good site for this type of resume information is "Quintessential Careers" at www.quintcareers.com/best_resume_format.html. This site provides extensive information about the purposes and attributes of resumes, more than you want to know about resume formats, and the [Top 10 Things You Need to Know about E-Resumes](#). Also, be sure to check out [Resume and CV Resources for Jobseekers](#). Believe me, this site is worth a visit. I think that it contains the most excellent information and advice about careers you will find in one place on the Internet. As the authors say,

In the end, the most important lesson here is that the days are gone when a jobseeker developed one resume format and printed 100 copies of it on high-quality paper. In today's job market, resumes need to be modified and fine-tuned at the drop of a hat, as well as available in multiple versions. In fact, electronic resume versions are taking over as the most popular formats for resumes. Still, there will probably be a need for years to come for attractive, eye-catching print resumes with appropriately organized content.

How can you apply your skills to create a stellar resume? There are several methods, but as a technical communicator, you can use the ingenuity you've developed over the years. Here's a new twist: Find out which resume format is best for you by listening to the [CareerStrides Podcast](#) on www.careerstrides.com, the website of a nationally certified resume writer. By now you can tell that you must adapt and learn new technologies to stay up with the pack!

Here are four steps that have worked for me in the past. The following sections contain reasons why and suggestions for how you can do the same things:

1. Set your career focus.
2. Set your resume focus.
3. Select your resume format.
4. Write your resume.

Why Should I Focus My Resume?

Over the years, I have received fewer responses when using a “generic” or “inventory” resume. I receive more responses when tailoring a resume for a specific position. Sure, it takes more time and effort, but it is worth it. When I reviewed resumes before hiring, our group looked not only for people with the correct technical skills but who were specifically suited to our company working environment and corporate culture and who were obviously team players. We looked for innovative people by interviewing them separately with different types of questions. So do some research and consider what you know about the company you are targeting to determine the best focus for your resume.

Which Resume Format is Best for Me?

I have also received more responses from a functional resume format. I believe it is because I provide a skill, attach it to a completed task or project, and show a result. For example, I might say “Introduced and enforced company style guides and document review processes, resulting in increased accuracy and consistency of product and project documentation and project coordination.” I also provide relevant section headings like “Web Development and Web Management” that describe general work or skills. This organization allows me to more easily customize resumes. As a consultant, most of my work is from referrals, so I’m not always asked for a resume, but my resume and overview are always updated in case the right opportunity comes up. In case you’re wondering, these aren’t the best examples from my resume because that might put me at a disadvantage!

How to Start Writing

Starting to write is often the most difficult task for many people, including some technical communicators. But starting to write really doesn’t have to be so challenging. Start by organizing the main categories from most important (first) to least important (last) for the specific position. Then begin to create sentences describing the skills that you applied to the project (or task), and make sure you end with a tangible result (like improved productivity, or reduced costs or support calls). The result describes to a prospective employer or client the real benefits you can provide.

Sometimes it’s hard to toot your own horn. But this is the time to do it! Enlist a good friend or colleague and ask for some help clarifying what you did. Or it may help to read emails from your “attaboy” or “kudos” folder that remind you of what you did to help someone find information or make the job easier.

Summary

As technical communicators, we must adapt to ever-changing technologies. Being flexible and adaptable isn’t just an option—it’s required for success in our technical communication field. Because we communicate information about technology, it is imperative that we stay informed about the latest technological improvements and are able to use technology and software to our advantage to help our employers and clients. Remember, employers or clients want results, and you need to analyze their problems and provide solutions. Your resume should reflect your ability to do just that.

Additional Resources

www.distinctiveweb.com/choose.htm

www.quintcareers.com/best_resume_format.html

[Top 10 Things You Need to Know about E-Resumes](#)

[Resume and CV Resources for Jobseekers](#)

[CareerStrides Podcast](#)

www.jobweb.com/Resumes_Interviews/default.htm

hotjobs.yahoo.com/careertools/?refsrc=ysem

content.monster.com/resume/home.aspx

career-resources.dice.com/technical-resume/tips_and_articles.shtml



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Book Review: Bait and Switch

by [Kathy Recchiuti](#)

Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream
Barbara Ehrenreich, Copyright 2005. Nonfiction. ISBN: 0-8050-7606-9



This is not the book to read if you would like to be encouraged and uplifted about the job search process or the corporate world. In this disheartening portrayal of the white collar world and unemployment, Ehrenreich pursues insight into what has been causing so many experienced, well performing, midlevel workers to lose their jobs, and how they must go about looking for a new one.

For ten months, Ehrenreich searches for a public relations job. She hires career coaches, attends networking and career search training sessions, applies for jobs, and submits her resume to corporate web sites and job boards. Through this account of her feelings and experiences and those of the people she meets, we see depression, loneliness, frustration, and despair. In her experience, networking events were not conducive to interacting with others. She finds that career coaches were more focused on tests that sort people into personality groups than specific pointers for finding a job.

The book's gloomy tone is maintained with words and phrases such as the following: shadowy, bitter, lonely, queasy, dulled passive expressions, chronological defect, requisite phoniness, and individual failings. If you are currently without a job and job hunting, reading the book can indeed make your situation seem desperate. For example, because of the trouble you might encounter due to a gap of time on a resume she comments, "being unemployed may in and of itself disqualify one for a job."

If you need a pep talk about the payoff for all the hard work you invest in the job search (or in the job itself, for those currently employed), this may not be the right time to read this book. The book emphasizes the dehumanizing aspects of the corporate world. For example, it says, regarding layoffs, "whatever wild process is chewing up men and women and spitting them out late in life, damage is definitely done." She says that while corporations purportedly seek diversity, they insist on employees who are at all times "cheerful, enthusiastic, and obedient." And she quotes a management consultant as saying "organizations that used to see people as long-term assets to be nurtured and developed now see people as short-term costs to be reduced..."

On the other hand, you might enjoy the book for the sympathy it offers regarding the many frustrations of a job search, such as lack of response when electronically submitting resumes, lack of personal contact with potential employers, difficulty networking, and so on. Ehrenreich paints the job seeker as victim, as opposed to responsible party, which is how they are portrayed by several philosophies she encounters in books and at job-seeker events.

Ehrenreich concludes by suggesting that the unemployed work together toward improving benefits for the unemployed, such as health insurance and unemployment pay. Since technical communicators are often vulnerable to layoffs, many might be able to relate to the experiences and themes conveyed in the book. The book could trigger some interesting discussion.

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July Meeting Review

by [Deb Lockwood](#)

On July 12, 2007, the STC Rocky Mountain Chapter had the honor of hosting a meeting at which our speaker was none other than Susan Burton, STC's national Executive Director. Susan joined the STC last August and has presented this program to several chapters.

Susan has over 30 years' experience in managing non-profit organizations and has worked for eight different associations, for three of those as Chief Executive Officer. She has consulted with over 150 other associations.

Susan clarified that the STC is a charitable, educational foundation and has a 501(c)3 status under the U.S. tax code. This means we are a not-for-profit organization, but not that we can't make money—we certainly can. The restriction is that the funds must be used for the benefit of the organization's members.

Susan began the presentation with an overview of basic facts about the STC:

- The STC was founded in 1953 and incorporated in New York State.
- The organization is headquartered in Virginia.
- The office has 14 full-time staff members and contractors and three part-time staff members.
- We employ outside legal counsel.

The STC is governed by a 14-member board of directors that includes five officers, the immediate past president, and eight directors. These are volunteer positions. The organization sponsors over 130 geographic chapters and 20 special interest groups (SIGs), which are virtual communities.

One of Susan's recent initiatives has been to create a new Community Relations Manager, who will help communities as they strive to provide value to their membership. Evelyn McCarney has been hired to perform these duties.

The Leadership Community Resource (LCR) is a way that we can benefit from the experience of others. This initiative, run by volunteers, has gathered resources that help leaders more effectively run their communities.

Susan talked about the vision for STC's future. This vision includes some exciting initiatives and will help us bring STC internal systems into the 21st century, including updating the home-grown accounting system and the membership database, and creating a new website for the STC office. The new accounting system is already in place and the membership database is almost ready to go. While it will take time to develop the website, the analysis process has already begun.

Another initiative is to help technical communicators tell our powerful story to the community by raising the image of what we do and changing the perception of our profession. In pursuit of this goal, the STC is championing an initiative to redefine our profession with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Currently the BLS classification for technical writers says that we "write technical materials, such as equipment manuals, appendices, or operating and maintenance instructions [and] may assist in layout work." Few of us today actually meet that description.

To replace this outmoded definition, the STC has proposed that the title be changed from technical writer to technical communicator and that the definition be changed to the following: "Develop and design instructional and informational tools needed to assure safe, easy, proper, and complete use of technical goods and services. Combine multi-media knowledge and strong communication skills with technical expertise to educate across the entire spectrum of users'

abilities, technical experience, and visual and auditory capabilities.”

Susan encouraged all STC members to tell our powerful story by doing the following:

- Submit articles to *Intercom*.
- Participate in SIG and chapter discussions.
- Respond to requests on surveys.
- Go to STC-sponsored conferences.

You can see Susan’s PowerPoint presentation on the STC RMC website at stcrmc.org/news_events/meetings/2006-2007/july07.pp



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STC is "LinkedIn"

This feature is an e-mail sent to the techcomm-discuss@stcrmc.org list and republished with permission from the author.

I am writing to let those of you who have LinkedIn profiles that the STC has created a group on that site. To add the group to your profile, see the instructions at the end of this message.

For those of you who do not have a profile and don't know what I'm talking about, LinkedIn is a social networking website for professionals. You build a network by creating a free profile and adding friends and associates. It's kind of like a MySpace account in the way that you can add friends and friends of friends. To see what it's about and to create a profile, go to www.linkedin.com. Here's a link to a LinkedIn blog that has more information about the social network: http://blog.linkedin.com/blog/2007/04/your_window_to_.html.

Deb Lockwood
STC RMC Immediate Past President

As an STC member, we'd like to invite you to make use of a valuable new tool available to STC members only: the STC on LinkedIn. Through the members-only STC Group you can:

- Leverage the power of the STC Group network to find and reach the new business contacts you need;
- Accelerate your career through referrals from STC Group members;
- Know more than a name - view rich professional profiles from fellow STC Group members;
- Let other STC Group members know what you have to offer to them and their contacts;
- Limit your network searches to other STC Group members only, if you wish to do so.

LinkedIn is the leading professional network tool online, used by over 9 million professionals worldwide. Access to special XYZ Group features on LinkedIn is free, and is available to STC Group members only. Whether you use LinkedIn already or you're new to LinkedIn, please join the members-only STC Group here:

The link to join the group is:

<https://www.linkedin.com/e/gis/2926/71AB2B36FD7B/>

Thanks for being a member of STC Group!

-- The STC Group Team



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