Management SIG News

Keeping you informed of the latest trends in technical communication management!

STC
SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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

October 2004
Volume 8, Issue 3

Inside this Issue

Newsletter Deadline	
Issue	Deadline
January	December 15
April	March 15
July	June 15
October	September 15

SIG Manager Thoughts

Judith Herr, SIG Manager

"Here is Edward Bear, coming downstairs now, bump, bump, bump on the back of his head, behind Christopher Robin. It is, as far as he knows, the only way of coming downstairs, but sometimes he feels that there really is another way, if only he could stop bumping for a moment and think of it…" Winnie the Pooh, A.A. Milne,

At the LavaCon Conference last month, I started "Increasing Your Sphere of Influence: Movin' Outside the Documentation Box" with a Pooh quote. It still seems that as our profession, organization, and SIG evolve, we may have quite a bit in common with Bear. It's bumpy – but, with the energy and enthusiasm of our volunteers, we're getting closer and closer to finding our new way.

Management SIG members are reaching outside the box — and our volunteers are working hard to assure that we continue to provide real value to members. The SIG Core Leadership Team plans to enhance outreach to new members. Read about this and other activities in the SIG Leadership Meeting article.

We need a volunteer to welcome new members, track budget dollars, and write membership-related articles. Contact me at herrj@comcast.net if you are ready to volunteer in any capacity or have questions or suggestions for the SIG.

Newsletter Editor Says...

Jackie Damrau, Managing Editor

October is the month for recognizing your boss, whether first-line supervisor or upper management, for National Bosses Day (the 16th). With the advent of outsourcing, our management is asking us to take on more responsibilities.

In our feature article, Kit Brown shares her perspective on what it takes to build effective multi-site, multicultural teams. Other articles in this newsletter include:

- Working with a new form of desktop publishing, One World Publishing (Gust & Plattner);
- Demonstrating the value of technical communication to the enterprise (LaVie);
- Thinking outside the box (Gill-Hesselgrave);
- Measuring documentation quality (Cohen); and
- Providing just-in-time training workshops (Baptista).

This edition of the Management SIG News also highlights STC events.

As the Society begins preparing for its next annual conference in Seattle, Washington, several regional conferences and chapter-related events are kicking off during the remainder of 2004. Brenda Huettner, the Management Stem Manager for the 52nd Annual STC Conference and SIG Core Leadership Team

Member, provides her top 10 reasons why we should attend a regional conference. Attendance helps our professional development and helps our communities, both chapters and SIGs.

You'll find a list of STC and non-STC related events taking place over this next quarter. Submit future events to Jackie Damrau (jdamrau3@airmail.net) for publication. Also included is information about SIG's last Core Leadership Team meeting. Get involved in the SIG by sending an email to Judith Herr (herrj@comcast.net).

Volunteering is a major benefit to your SIG membership. Kirt Iverson stepped up to serve as the Associate Editor of the Management SIG News. He has made quite an impact by taking on a few assignments that would not been done otherwise. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my copyeditors, who received numerous articles from me, with a plea to edit quickly and return. They deserve a round of applause.

There are still opportunities to volunteer. The Newsletter staff needs an Advertising Manager and a Layout & Design volunteer.

Finally, the next issue of the Management SIG News is scheduled for an early January 2005 release. **The deadline for articles is 15 December**. We are also looking for the next Feature Article. Submit your ideas for a Feature Article. Remember, this is your newsletter and needs your support.

Now enjoy yourself as you read this information-packed newsletter.

Management SIG News is a quarterly publication of the STC Management Special Interest Group published January, April, July, and October.

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Publication Policy
We encourage letters, articles, book reviews, and other items for publication. Articles can include up to 1,000 words. Picture formats: JPGs or GIFs; Text format: Word, RTF, or ASCII. Address correspondence to Jackie Damrau at jdamrau3@airmail.net.

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We encourage advertising as long as it follows the STC guidelines and promotes services to the Management SIG members. Ad sizes and rates are:

Half page (7.5x4.5): $75 (1 issue); $225 (4 issues)
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SIG Mission Statement
To facilitate exchange of information and accumulated expertise related to the challenges and trends faced by technical communication management professionals; to support members who manage communication projects, people, and/or departments; to provide resources for member interaction including forums and networking opportunities; to mentor and support new or aspiring technical communication managers or those interested in acquiring and applying management skills to their work.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Building an Effective Multi-Site, Multicultural Team

M. Katherine (Kit) Brown, Associate Fellow, Snake River Chapter

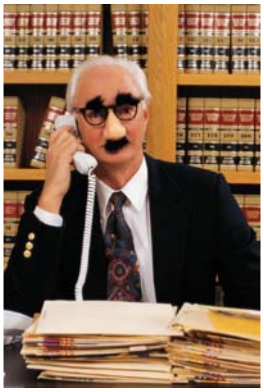
If you haven't worked with multi-site, multicultural teams yet, you will soon. Such team experiences can either be the ninth level of management hell or an enriching cultural exchange that will give you new appreciation for how people in other cultures live and work, depending on your team-building skills. The good news is that, as a manager and team leader, you have a great deal of influence on how well the team functions.

Working with people in different time zones and countries adds several layers of complexity to the task of managing a team or a project. This article provides several suggestions for facilitating team building and ensuring that the team works effectively.

- **Build a Rapport.** Take the time to get to know your team members and to do team building. With companies being sensitive to costs and cutting travel, you may need to get creative. Encourage your team to post pictures and a paragraph or two about themselves on the team intranet site or project web portal. If you have several different cultures represented on your team, you might want to have each locale do a "show and tell" that provides information about the culture and history, as well as do's and don'ts for working in the culture. Even a few minutes a week of chatting or IMing will go a long way later in the project when things become stressful.
- **Be Respectful and Inclusive.** Recognize that not everyone shares the same worldview or work ethic. Don't force your personal or cultural values on the other members of your team. Treat your team members as you would want to be treated. Take the time to learn a few phrases in their native languages. Find out the typical business courtesies used in the other locales and extend them. Honest interest and appreciation are generally reciprocated.
- **Facilitate Interaction.** When you have a team spread out all over the world, holding team meetings becomes tricky. Little things, like ensuring that you include the times for each location in a meeting announcement, go a long way to demonstrate your respect and to help all the team members feel included. If you are working with both Asia and Europe, alternate the times of meetings so that one group doesn't always have to get up in the middle of their night. Find out the local holiday schedules and include those in your project planning. Use a custom page size (8.26in x 11in; 210 x 279 mm) so that everyone on your team can print documents without having to reformat them. (A4 paper, which the rest of the world uses, is longer and narrower than letter size.)

- **Communicate Early and Often.** Lack of communication is the number one complaint in project post-mortems. Add multiple locations and cultures as well as technology differences to the mix, and communication becomes even more challenging. You need to communicate more frequently and with greater precision. Verify understanding by using active listening skills. Follow up telephone or IM conversations with emails that confirm action items, responsibilities, and dates. Agree on a date format (I recommend ISO dates—yyyy/mm/dd, which is equally different for everyone). Recognize and accommodate cultural differences in communication styles. Be responsive to requests and questions.
- **Recognize and Accommodate Cultural Differences and Language Barriers.** When you form the team, establish guidelines for interaction and information exchange. For example, Americans tend to be less formal and more boisterous and direct than many other cultures, which can make some team members uncomfortable and reluctant to contribute during meetings. As a manager, you need to ensure that every member of the team has an opportunity to be heard, and that you are listening for nuances that may indicate discomfort or disagreement. Europeans traditionally take most of August off for vacation, so you need to consider that when building the project schedule. In Asia, "no" is rarely stated explicitly and most Asian cultures have a smaller personal space than Americans and Western Europeans do.

Even if someone is extremely fluent in a second language, they may have difficulty with comprehension over the telephone because body language cues are not available. Be sure to enunciate clearly and to speak more slowly than you normally would (though not so slowly that you are being insulting). In addition, there is often a 10-20 second delay on international calls, so it is even more important not to interrupt. (On such calls, I count to 3 when someone is done speaking before I begin.)



- **Don't Take It Personally and Have a Sense of Humor.** When working with a group of people with varied personalities and cultural backgrounds, misunderstandings are almost inevitable. When a misunderstanding occurs, assume the best intentions. Clarify and reiterate your request both verbally and in writing. If you are upset or confused about something, pick up the phone and call rather than emailing. Nothing escalates a situation faster than an angry email exchange where someone overreacts to another person's email. Use emoticons and other indicators of mood and humor. Making a small extra effort to communicate and understand the other person's viewpoint goes a long way.
- **Be Clear and Specific.** As in any technical communication endeavor, avoid idioms, acronyms, and jargon. Use short (fewer than 25 words) sentences and active voice. Clearly identify responsibilities, dates, and answer the who, what, when, why, where, how, and how much questions. For example, Mountain Time has no meaning outside North America. Instead use Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) to express times (e.g., a meeting that starts at 9:00 am MT [GMT-7], starts at 9 am in Denver, 4 pm in the UK and 5 pm in Germany). Use both metric and Imperial measurements—the US is the only non-metric country in the world. (One of the Mars missions failed because the engineers didn't do the measurement conversion correctly…)
- **Use Technology to Support the Team.** Web portals are a great way to centralize communication about bugs, progress, and other project information, as well as to transfer large files. In addition, having a secure portal or intranet/extranet site enables you to take advantage of the time differences and keep a project moving forward. For mission-critical handoffs, you may want to supplement the portal with a conference call to exchange information during the shift change. Other technologies include webinars and e-learning for conducting training, web cams for video conferencing, voice-over IP (VoIP) for less expensive calls (though this isn't available everywhere yet), and instant messaging for quick communication.
- **Implement and Use Repeatable Processes.** With multiple sites and cultures, process becomes even more important. You need to have agreement on how you will interact with each other in order to reduce misunderstandings and frustrations. If you are working on a "version 1" type project, you can develop procedures based on best practices and tweak them as you go. In addition, you need to define roles and responsibilities very clearly. Hierarchy is more important in some cultures than in others, so clearly defining who's doing what with whom and when will improve communication and team interaction.
- **Keep a "Beginner Mind."** This is a Buddhist philosophy that essentially means to keep a clear, open mind and to maintain an attitude of learning. By approaching each person and situation as though they were your teachers, you gain far more from the experience than by dictating instructions or by assuming a stance.

By taking a few minutes early in the project to establish a rapport and to accommodate differences, you can save hours of time in misunderstandings and missed deadlines. While challenging, building an effective multi-site, multicultural team can be one of the most rewarding opportunities of your career.

M. Katherine (Kit) Brown is an award-winning writer with a background in the life sciences and 15 years of experience in the technical communication field. She is currently the Principal for Comgenesis, LLC, which provides consulting services and training to clients on internationalization, process development, and information architecture, as well as more traditional technical writing and editing services. She holds a Master of Science degree in Technical Communication and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology, both from Colorado State University. Kit is an Associate Fellow for the Society for Technical Communication (STC), and has spoken about various technical communication topics at several conferences in the United States and internationally.

One World Publishing: Single-Source Editing, Translation Workflow, and Cross-Media Publishing

Dieter Gust and *Michael Plattner*

What is One World Publishing?

From DTP to CMP and NP to OWP

The time when one could characterize Desktop Publishing (DTP) as a revolution has passed. DTP is self-evident.

Since the mid 1980s, DTP has been expanded to include further concepts, redefining the publishing revolution each time. From Electronic Publishing to Cross Media Publishing (CMP), an increasing number of facets of computer-aided publishing became the center of attention. The new motto of Adobe, the creators of PostScript, PDF, and Acrobat, and as such the driving force behind Desktop Publishing, summarizes the current state of affairs:

Network Publishing – "Publish anything, anywhere, on any device."

The term Network Publishing (NP) actually comprises another, not yet mentioned, publishing topic: "Publish anything, anywhere, on any device, *in any language*!"

Particularly in regard to documentation for new high-tech consumer products, the demands for "publish in any language" become rapidly clear: cell phones or other telecommunications products are marketed worldwide. Even though telecommunications terminology may largely be based on English, everyone would still prefer to read product information in his or her native language. Regulations governing machinery place further demands: they make localization of documentation into the national language of the country in which a machine will be used a compulsory requirement.

The biggest surprise, however, is that this global publishing awareness—of a world with many languages that need to be considered—is only now, at the beginning of the third millennium, beginning to be taken seriously.

Until the recent turn of the millennium, it was apparent that the typical US business view focused on, apart from the US domestic market, the Asian market. The best example is FrameMaker, which supports Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, but none of the Eastern European languages.

The following Web page reflects somewhat the mentality that has to be changed.


لماذا لا يتكلمون اللغة **العربية** فحسب؟
Защо те просто не могат да говорят **български**?
Per què no poden simplement parlar en **català**?
他們爲什麼不說中文（台灣）？
Proč prostě nemluví **česky**?
Hvorfor kan de ikke bare tale **dansk**?
Warum sprechen sie nicht einfach **Deutsch**?
Μα γιατί δεν μπορούν να μιλήσουν **Ελληνικά**;
Why can't they just speak **English**?
¿Por qué no pueden simplemente hablar en **castellano**?
Miksi he eivät yksinkertaisesti puhu **suomea**?
Pourquoi, tout simplement, ne parlent-ils pas **français** ?
למה הם פשוט לא מדברים **עברית**?
Miért nem beszélnek egyszerűen **magyarul**?
Hvers vegna geta þeir ekki réttlátur tala **Íslenska**?
Perché non possono semplicemente parlare **italiano**?
なぜ、みんな日本語を話してくれないのか？
계의 모든 사람들이 한국어를 이해한다면 얼마나 좋을까?
Waarom spreken ze niet gewoon **Nederlands**?
Hvorfor kan de ikke bare snakke **norsk**?
Dlaczego oni po prostu nie mówią po **polsku**?
Porque é que eles não falam em **Português (do Brasil)**?
Oare astia de ce nu vorbesc **româneşte**?
Почему же они не говорят **по-русски**?
Zašto jednostavno ne govore **hrvatski**?
Pse nuk duan të flasin vetëm **shqip**?
Varför pratar dom inte bara **svenska**?
ทำไมเขาถึงไม่พูด**ภาษาไทย**
Neden **Türkçe** konuşamıyorlar?

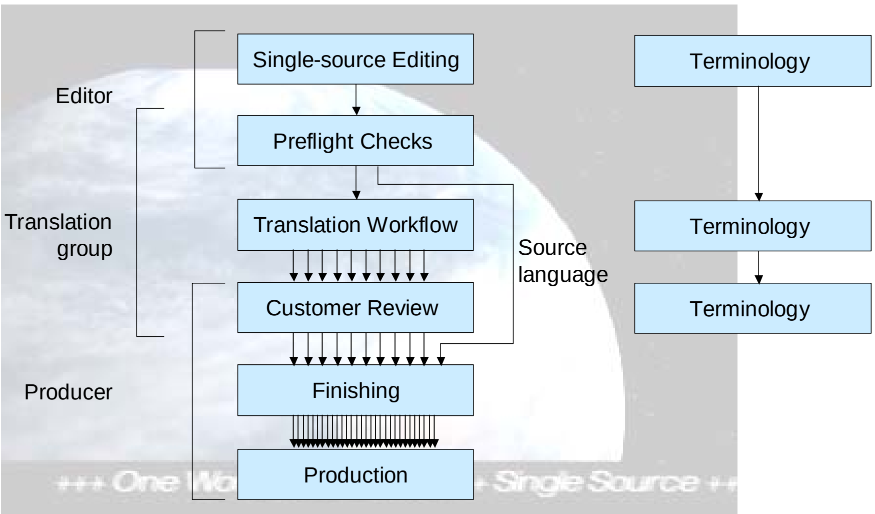
This page is a subtle allusion to the need for One World Publishing, and a nice test for the language settings of your browser.
(Source: www.trigeminal.com/samples/provincial.html)

Beyond its technical aspects, the following link provides further interesting information:

"The World of Languages – Languages of the World – Origins and Development of World Languages (Die Welt der Sprachen – Die Sprachen der Welt – Ursprung und Entwicklung der Sprachen der Welt)", www.weikopf.de/Sprache/sprache.html

One World Publishing has become a necessity due to globalized markets. It is not however, primarily about having publishing systems in all of the languages of the world. It is far more important to be able to use a single publishing system to publish in virtually all of the world's languages, regardless of whatever language version of operating system (OS) is running on the machine. If, for instance, publishing in a language such as Japanese is only possible using a Japanese version of a publishing system running under a Japanese OS, the requirements of One World Publishing have been inadequately met.

As an example, the fact that there is no Greek version of FrameMaker is a circumstance that certainly irritates many Greeks; but that FrameMaker officially does not even support Greek – which, after all, is an official language of the EU – is viewed by export-oriented companies (certainly American as well) as more than just an annoyance.



The overall One World Publishing process: The integration of the terminology workflow is at first an organizational challenge, while technical issues are only a secondary problem (as shown on the right).

One World Publishing (OWP) offers an integrated process approach to *single source editing, translation workflow and cross-media publishing*. And suddenly, one isn't confronted with routine tasks any more. Instead, it's a new publishing revolution. Why is it, though, that 15 years after the introduction of DTP it is still so incredibly difficult to publish in all international languages? Why is it that One World Publishing is a revolution once again? All of the subprocesses have been an integral part of the production of technical documentation for years, and technical documentation has always been translated.

Until now, however, the sub-processes have always been observed separately. Single-source editing and cross-media publishing in combination with the translation/localization of documents in every language – that is a relatively new challenge. Continually decreasing “time-to-market” cycles now demand an entire integrated process that is as fully automated as possible. The numerous arrows in the process diagram make clear that there are an increasing number of subprocesses to be completed in the overall process flow. One World Publishing encompasses practically all DTP technologies developed up to now.

As an example: Suppose English documentation created in FrameMaker or Word needs to be translated into German, Greek, Polish, and Chinese. Each language is then supposed to be published in HTML and PDF formats. Previously, a typical approach went somewhat as follows: you sent the Word or FrameMaker files in the source language to the company's foreign offices and left it up to colleagues there to take care of things. Now, of course, it is necessary to centralize the entire update, cost, time, and quality management for technical documentation. This leads inevitably to the overall process of One World Publishing, which practically has to be accomplished on a single computer system.

What do you have to look out for technically in regard to the overall process? Along with numerous online-specific technical conversions (hyperlinks, compression, graphic conversion, etc.), the following questions are crucial: Do I even have the fonts I need to display all the necessary characters? Does my computer system offer the possibility to utilize these fonts throughout the entire One World Publishing process?

One World Publishing Goals

Not all requirements of One World Publishing are relevant to every situation. Hence it makes sense to break the requirements down into different classes.

Class	Requirements
A	Create and publish documents in any language on a computer
AA	Create documents from any language into any other language, translate (integration into translation processes), and publish
AAA	Create documents with texts from any chosen language (documents with various multi-lingual texts), translate, and publish

Summary

One World Publishing—single-source editing, translation workflow, cross-media publishing—this is the greatest challenge posed to publishing. All parties involved are confronted with the following limitations, which must be overcome:

- Companies who wish to document their products for the global market must recognize that such processes and projects cost more than traditional DTP or single translation projects. However, an OWP project is definitely cheaper than the previous total cost of a non-OWP project.
- Documentation service providers require additional know-how that goes far beyond that of pure translation and singular DTP processes.
- DTP manufacturers must make their tools fully Unicode-compatible without any ifs, ands, or buts, and the Unicode capability must be checked throughout the entire process chain. All DTP systems must urgently be expanded in their functionality while improving system quality instead of diminishing it. Microsoft (and Apple?) has created the basis; Adobe, in particular, must now face demands.

The time when DTP was considered revolutionary is over.

The revolution of One World Publishing has just now begun.

How Do We Demonstrate Technical Communication's Value to the Enterprise?

Donn LaVie
Senior Member, Austin Chapter

Does your technical communications collateral provide value to the organization? How do you know? How do you demonstrate a concept such as "value," especially as it relates to how technical information is consumed in different ways throughout the enterprise and outside of it?

Ginny Redish and Judy Ramey have already done some pioneering work in their 1995 studies into the value of technical communication. Saul Carliner in 1996 provided a framework for demonstrating the effectiveness and value of technical communications that was modeled after the Kirkpatrick four-level model for evaluating training. Other initiatives such as *knowledge management*, *intellectual capital*, and *learning organizations* attempt to place a value on "intangible" corporate assets. All can provide some insight to the contribution of various internal operations, but none contribute to a viable technical communications valuation model. Showing instances of how technical communications can add value should not be confused with having a valuation model, though those instances can be aspects of the model.

What we need is a new paradigm.

A New Paradigm of Information Value

How do we communicate value? By showing in quantitative terms how the technical communications function integrates with and supports the overall business strategy and objectives of the corporation *by assigning value to information content*. The key to an enterprise's competitiveness is its ability to acquire, manipulate, interpret, and use information. Information forms the core of competitiveness and provides the greatest potential payback to organizations. Unlike other enterprise assets, information is reusable; it does not rust or fall into disrepair, and *its value is determined by those who successfully apply it, consume it, and repackage it to further their own internal or external organizational objectives*. Therefore, any valuation model for technical communications should be built using architectures based on how an organization perceives, communicates, and measures its value.

This model must have a rock-solid core, but also maintain enough flexibility in the details surrounding it for organizations to use other methods to account for their value, because traditional financial metrics by themselves are insufficient. Therefore, to be successful, we need the following paradigm shifts:

- A new perspective of how we perceive and define the value we add
- A new vocabulary that communicates to our customers how that value serves them (perhaps using some of the concepts and terms in this article)
- A new set of measures (metrics) that can account for
  - Information content transformations
  - Consumption of information content (context) at various levels in the enterprise and with customers
  - Assignment of value to that information context being consumed at various levels in the enterprise and with customers

Perceiving/Defining the Value We Add

What Do We Know About Determining Value?

The general formula for determining value is written as:

Value = Quality/Price

The difficulty lies with assigning a meaningful financial value to the quality variable. So, the question becomes: How do you determine "quality," which really is a result of the relationship between "perceived value" and price?

Most of us are familiar with one or more of the following methods (as modified from the Kirkpatrick four-level model) for determining the perceived value of technical publications:

1. General reader satisfaction
2. Reader task usability
3. Document effectiveness
4. General customer satisfaction

Now that we've identified a few methods for determining perceived value, there are several traditional ways to assign value to them, such as the following:

1. Measuring time or effort saved
2. Measuring actual monetary savings
3. Measuring cost avoidance
4. Providing quantitative evidence of value

Items 1 through 3 are easy enough to assign a monetary value to; however, item 4 does present some problems.

It's no secret that technical communications organizations have to compete for budget with other departments. Those organizations that do a better job of linking their value to the enterprise's strategic mission receive more budgetary consideration than those that don't. Therefore, collecting qualitative evidence of the organization's intangible benefits *and* being able to relate an appropriate value to that evidence should be a prime consideration. Not only is it important to know the key decision makers in executive management, it is also important to have a thorough familiarity with the business of the enterprise and its competition. Armed with such value-enhancing knowledge, technical communications organizations can react quickly to changing customer requirements by modifying the information product mix, availability, and method of delivery, as required.

So, why is this "value" thing so hard to pin down?

How Value is Consumed

"Value" is a relative term, which makes it difficult to apply a measurable assessment to information content. When applying value to information content, we have two ways to assess its general commercial viability.

- When we need to determine the best method for achieving some task or objective (for example, the best method for distributing information content), we can use a *cost-effectiveness* approach, which provides us with the best value for the expenditure.
- If we have several budget options with which to achieve a task or objective, we can select the option that provides the best *cost benefit*, or "biggest bang for the buck."

So, value can be assessed and used in more than one way.

The Relative Nature of Value

If we cannot assign a monetary figure to information content, our next best approach is to recognize that value is largely determined by the many contexts in which information content will be viewed, consumed, and distributed. How can we place a value on the content of the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution? Very difficult indeed, which further proves the point about assigning value to information; but in other contexts, it's a somewhat different story.

The formula for Coca-Cola is worth hundreds of millions of dollars and is known to only a select few individuals; the value of "Intel Inside"—just two words—is also worth hundreds of millions of dollars and is seen on countless personal computers and servers in homes and offices around the world. Therefore, value (in this example) comes from *the ability of information content to influence or drive product purchases*—a key consideration for technical and marketing publications.

A New Vocabulary to Communicate Value to Customers

How Information Context Influences Value

The value of information content varies from one person or organization to another because that information derives its value from a context that maps to how someone will make use of the information. The same unit of information will have different value to marketing, operations, development, and customer support because of the different contexts in which the information will be consumed and/or manipulated.

Because of these and other influences, ours is not a profession that lends itself to numerical precision when it comes to information value. One consideration that receives little, if any, mention is the *time value of information*—how the value of a given block of information changes (it can increase or decrease) over time. You may have heard from a stockbroker, financial advisor, or investment guru about the time value of money, whereby its value increases or decreases, depending on how and *when* that money is released to work for you. Some companies today operate from a similar notion that reflects a *time-to-information marketing philosophy,* which reinforces the idea that winning the mindshare of a target audience is a prerequisite for a product becoming the market leader. In this context, the timing of information release is equally as critical as the timing of a product release. It's what I've termed "value-ocity" or the speed with which information can be transformed into value for a customer's product or service—and *value-ocity* can be assigned a dollar amount.

Measures for Information Content Transformation

How Data-to-Information Transformations Influence Value

Information is more than collected data—it represents data that have been organized, ordered, and instilled with meaning and context. Information must inform; data has no such requirement. Information has boundaries; data can be boundless. It is only after raw data has been placed in a context, usually through some type of transformation—be it data mining, graphical or textual representation, or statistical analysis—that some value can be assigned to it. And that is no task for mere mortals, as we have seen. It is very important to adequately plan to define appropriate goals, metrics, targets, schedules, data collection processes, and analysis procedures. The objective of all this effort is to elevate the visibility of the influential factors that are occurring in the organization—now and in the future.

Designing Metrics for Valuation Models

When I worked as a research oceanographer in the mid to late 1970s, one of my duties was to design metrics programs for modeling geological and oceanographic processes. The following metrics' characteristics apply equally to designing metrics for technical communications valuation models:

- *Appropriate* – are you measuring the right things?
- *Balanced* – are you including qualitative/quantitative, multiple perspectives?
- *Comprehensive* – are you illustrating all the significant features of the organization?
- *Discriminating* – are you aware that measuring small changes can be meaningful?
- *Efficient* – are you arriving at many non-conflicting conclusions from the data set?
- *Inexpensive* – are you using small sample sizes?
- *Leading indicators* – are you able to forecast future trends internal and external to the enterprise?
- *Objective and unbiased* – are your measures free of personal/environmental bias?
- *Nonintrusive* – is your metrics program non-disruptive to work or operations?
- *Normalized* – are you accounting for benchmarking against other internal data sets?
- *Quantifiable* – is there a built-in ease of aggregation, calculation, and comparison?
- *Statistically reliable* – is there a small margin of error?

Assigning Value to Information Context Being Consumed

With additional manipulation, information can become knowledge that can be transferred. And when simple knowledge transfer (embedded in user documentation, for example) allows external customers to realize their objectives to even greater value, knowledge then becomes *hyperpolarized*, meaning that the transfer of knowledge has produced a non-linear difference of value, as shown in Figure 1. It is my assertion that a Degree-of-Transformation/Relative-Value graph like that shown in Figure 1 would be exponential in nature ($y = e^x$ where e = 2.71), much like the curve banks use to show how interest compounds. Devising such a chart for an organization (with real numbers) would require a significant effort; but once tested, for any degree of data/information/knowledge transformation for a given organization, a “ball park” dollar value could be assigned to that transformation.

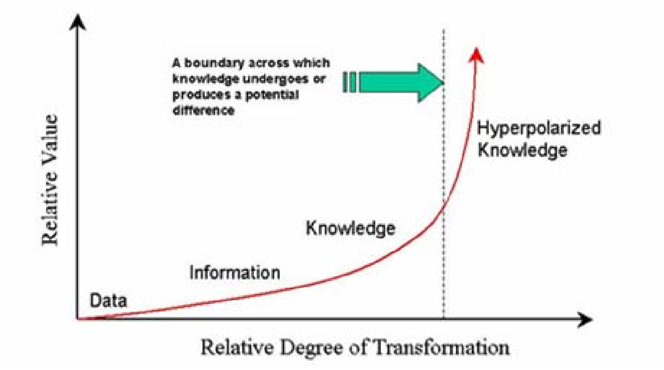


Figure 1. Graphical Depiction of Relative Value vs. Degree of Transformation

Other Fields, Other Clues for Modeling the Value of Consumed Information

In our attempts to define value in technical communications, we’ve had to look at other fields that parallel our own, such as training and information technology, to understand how valuation issues are addressed. One other field that should be looked at closely is library science, or information services, as many people with library science degrees are entering the fields of knowledge management and information architecture.

In a report commissioned by the Special Libraries Association, the *Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century* recommended the following requirements for Information Specialists.

- Possesses specialized subject knowledge
- Possesses knowledge of information resources
- Develops and manages convenient, accessible, and cost-effective services
- Provides instruction and support for information users
- Assesses information needs and designs services to meet these needs
- Uses the appropriate information technology
- Uses appropriate business and management approaches
- Develops specialized information products
- Evaluates outcomes of information use
- Continually improves information services
- Is an effective member of the management team

These requirements suggest a strong background in diagnosing user needs and designing products and services that respond to those needs, which can be called *information consumption*. Such tasks would be difficult to complete without a defined measurement process in place so you know where you’re going and where you’ve been. Librarians are skilled *information and knowledge facilitators*, quickly able to connect people having specific information needs with information products that fulfill that need.

What Can We Do in the Meantime?

Another study in 1995 on the value of the special library arrived at a four-step approach for determining the value of a corporate library, which I have modified slightly to address technical communications. This simple method also requires careful metrics development, but is more of an accounting/finance measure (benefit:cost ratios) than a valuation model. Use it when a more detailed quantitative assessment is not possible or available.

1. Extract all cost data for operating a technical communications organization.
2. Collect user estimates of the value of beneficial technical communications services. (*Now we step outside the organization to ascertain value!*)
3. Record the impact of the technical communications organization, measurable in qualitative terms and countable, though not easily converted into a monetary figure.
4. Analyze the cost and benefit information gathered and determine benefit-cost ratios.

The overall return on investment for supporting an in-house corporate library ranged from a low of 7.8:1, to a high of 14.2:1. While these benefit:cost ratios may not hold for technical communications organizations (these studies were conducted at a time when only libraries had search access to various large-scale databases), I believe technical communications organizations could realize benefit:cost ratios in the 3:1 to 5:1 range (or higher with knowledge hyperpolarization) using an appropriate methodology.

Summary

This article has only touched upon a very high-level view of rethinking how value must be linked to information context as the core of a valuation model. Getting our profession to embrace these and similar paradigm shifts is like turning an aircraft carrier. It’s not going to happen that quickly, and some will continue on with their own course. But if we want different results, we need to do something different than what we've been doing, thinking, and communicating up to now.

Left full rudder.

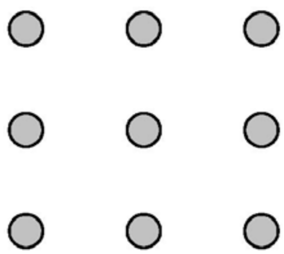
Donn Le Vie, Jr. has more than 25 years' experience with hands-on oceanographic and geological research as well as technical and scientific communications for NOAA, Phillips Petroleum, NASA, Motorola, SEMATECH, and Intel. He is the author of three non-fiction books, more than 85 industry articles, 800 general-interest articles, and is a frequent presenter/speaker at STC regional and annual conferences. This article is an excerpt from his upcoming book ***Creating and Measuring Value in Technical Publications*** *(Good Harbor Publishing, www.goodharborgroup.com). Contact Donn at* *goodharborpublishing@austin.rr.com*

Thinking Outside the Box

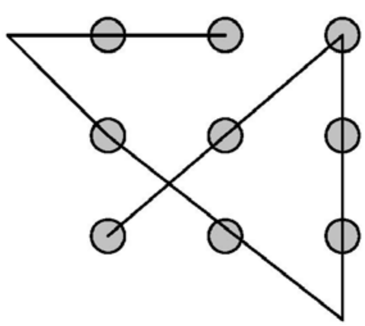
Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave

The phrase *think outside the box* is an allusion to a puzzle that was popular among management consultants during the 1970s and 1980s.

To solve the puzzle, you must connect each of the nine dots using only four lines and without lifting your pencil from the paper.



The only way to solve this puzzle in the prescribed manner is to extend the lines beyond the perceived edges of the "box" formed by the nine dots.



This exercise was used to demonstrate how unwarranted assumptions—like the belief that the four lines must remain within the confines of the grid—can result in your failing to see the best solution (or the only solution) to a problem.

As this phrase has become cliché, it has come to stand as an exhortation to innovate, "Come on, team, let's think outside the box!" Considering that we've all heard this expression before and have perhaps even used it ourselves to urge our teams to come up with something new, how many of us actually understand what is actually required to think outside the box?

Methods for thinking outside the box[1]

Howard Eisner[2], a professor of Engineering Management at The George Washington University, developed ten practices designed to release you from the constraints of your current thinking and to serve as springboards to help you expand your problem-solving skills.

1. **Generalize and broaden your thinking.** An example of this first practice is the story of the railroad company that, as part of their strategic planning, confirmed that they were in the "railroading" business. Some years later, they were almost bankrupt. Had they generalized and broadened their strategic view of their business by redefining themselves as being in the "transportation" business, they might have avoided their fate. When you generalize and broaden your outlook, you expand your vistas. In the case of this "railroading" company, recasting themselves as a "transportation" company could have opened up their thinking to include new market opportunities (for example, marine or air transportation). By generalizing and broadening your thinking, you can begin to leave your current ways of thinking simply by expanding on them.

2. **Cross over to new applications.** Here you look for solutions developed in one domain and apply them to another domain. An example is the push over the last decade by the Department of Defense (DoD) to accept commercial practices and off-the-shelf systems as part of their arsenals and infrastructure. By crossing over to solutions that work in other disciplines, the DoD now has a cost-effective model for doing business, even though it took a while for it to truly be accepted and embraced.

3. **Question conventional wisdom.** This approach often deals with simply challenging statements like, "We can't do that" and "That's not the way we do it around here" with "Why not?" These statements, bounded by cultural negativity, often echo up and down the halls of business and government. The next time you hear statements like these, ask, "Why?" and persist until you get a specific answer.

4. **Think laterally.** Edward de Bono is credited with identifying lateral thinking as a method that results

in developing novel solutions to given problems. According to de Bono, there are four factors critical to lateral thinking:

i. Recognizing the dominant ideas that polarize the different perceptions of the problem

ii. Searching for different ways to look at the situation

iii. Relaxing the rigid control of thinking

iv. Using chance to encourage other ideas

By applying the factors of lateral thinking to your own problem-solving situations, you can move your thinking well outside its current box to create new and unique solutions.

5. **Think systematically.** This approach is an integral part of systems engineering. Through this practice, you force yourself to expand the dimensions of all possible solutions through the systematic consideration of alternatives. Consider the power of employing the highly creative method of lateral thinking with a systematic model of evaluating the options you develop. By leveraging these right-brain/left-brain best practices, you will generate novel alternatives that you can then trace systematically to their roots. This practice allows you to iterate on each possible answer and to test each solution systematically.

6. **Remove constraints.** When you're faced with a sticky problem, try identifying the constraints and then removing them one at a time. You might find that some constraints are unnecessary or artificial, and are forcing the rejection of possible solutions.

7. **Consider your opposite personality type.** If you are a highly intuitive person, you will tend to come at an issue differently than your personality opposite—someone who is a highly sensing type. This suggests that one way to break out of your current box is for you to explore solutions with someone that has an opposite personality profile, whether that is an employee, your boss, or even your spouse.

8. **Analyze backwards.** This approach begins with your imagining a valid answer and then working backward to see what steps are needed to get you to that answer. This method helps prevent you from diverging away from the goal, which can happen when you move from the known input towards an unarticulated output. Instead, articulate the desired output, or solution, and reverse your way through the process to arrive at the problem statement. If you can get from the output to the input, you can generate a solution.

9. **Use only the back of the envelope.** This refers to sketching your thoughts and solutions in a limited space. This technique forces you to puzzle your way through very complicated problems, while following the K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple...) principle. This practice is an excellent method for helping you develop a clearer understanding of the most significant factors related to the issues at hand.

10. **Practice obversity.** This peculiar word actually is the counterpart of an affirmative proposition. In an affirmative proposition, one states that "All A is B." For example: *All spaniels are dogs.* The obverse of that is, "No *A* is not *B*," or, *No spaniel is not a dog.* In his role at The George Washington University, Eisner has experimented with the technique of using obversity to initiate out of the box thinking by distributing a list of "Two Dozen Ways to Move Inexorably in the Direction of Failure," and then exploring the various reactions of his audience. He reports that people pay more attention to the "failure" list than they do to a complementary list that tells them how to succeed. By turning popular wisdom upside-down and accepted conventions inside-out, you are more likely to start thinking "outside the box."

Obstacles to thinking outside the box

When you embark on the journey of moving your thinking outside the box, you need to be aware of how likely your team—from your boss to your staff to your peers in other departments—will take to your efforts at innovation.

Pareto's 80-20 rule—You'll be on your own 20% of the time

When your boss is encouraging you to think outside the box, consider whether or not she is open to the results that might flow from such thinking. If you're thinking outside the box, it's likely that at least the Pareto 80-20 rule is working. That is, it's probable that no more than about 20 percent of your colleagues (and probably considerably less than that!) are able to think outside the box. On an 80-20 basis, 80 percent of your teammates, from senior management to the rank-and-file implementers, are likely not to find your ideas interesting or workable. This means that most of the time you'll have more detractors than supporters.

If such is the case, then you'll have to learn how to be very patient, explaining more than once how you got to your result and why it's the right answer. (This is where method 5, **Thinking systematically**, comes in handy!) Even though this represents an additional burden for you to deal with, it's worth the effort if you value innovation and creativity.

When mental models get in the way

Other obstacles to being successful at thinking outside the box come from aspects of an arcane subject known as psychological decision theory. Two such features are *fixed mental models* and *loss* (or *risk*) *avoidance*. The first says that many folks stick with prior mental models, even if current data suggests a different situation. If your boss holds tightly to her fixed mental models, your new facts may not be able to penetrate her established prejudice. Similarly, if your boss perceives your solution to have even a minor amount of risk, even if the potential rewards are very substantial, she may be so wed to loss avoidance that, again, she won't be able to accept your solution as valid.

An early exercise to prepare you for the rigors of thinking outside the box is for you to explore your reactions to the following conventional wisdoms:

- More is better.
- Soon we'll have a paperless society.
- We can't do it faster, cheaper, and better.
- We must have 100 percent buy-in before we can proceed.
- The system absolutely must satisfy all of the stated requirements.

Once you have acknowledged that your thinking is inside the box and you have made the commitment to think outside it, you will be ready to challenge existing assumptions—yours and your organization's. That's when you can begin to inspect alternatives from a variety of perspectives. As you practice and gain success with some of the principles I've outlined here, you will begin to expand your box and eventually you will cross the boundaries of the box—just as you saw in the solution to the nine-dot puzzle.

Now come on, team, let's think outside the box! The benefit to you and to your organization will be increased creativity and innovation.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to Mark Hall, Principal and Lead User Experience Architect with Hallmark Consulting, for his support reviewing and editing an early version of this article.

References

1. Used with permission from American City Business Journals Inc. and Washington Business Journal. Copyright 1999 and 2000. American City Business Journals Inc. and Washington Business Journal.
2. Howard Eisner, professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering at The George Washington University, has served as president of two high-tech companies. His column appears in each technology special report of the Washington Business Journal.

Document Quality Metrics

Jules Cohen, STC Carolina Management SIG

Kaizen, lean thinking, six sigma, committed to quality—these are all methodologies for continuous improvement. Initially manufacturers applied these methodologies only to their manufacturing processes. Today, continuous improvement is applied to just about any process you can think of, including technical documentation.

To implement any continuous improvement process, you have to measure your progress. This is where metrics come in. Have you been struggling to create a process for measuring your technical documentation? If so, this article provides the information you need to get started.

Presenting Your Business Case

The first step is to present your business case to upper-level management. At a minimum, your business case should:

- Identify the benefits of measuring documentation quality.
- Explain how you will use documentation quality metrics to support the business goals.
- Propose a methodology for tracking improvements over time.
- Establish a corrective action and reporting process.

- Provide an accurate estimate of resources and time required.

Forming a Documentation Quality Team

Once you've secured a sponsor, you can establish a documentation quality team includes writers and managers. The team's primary responsibilities are to:

- Set objectives that management will support.
- Identify the KPIs (key performance indicators).
- Define the process for evaluating documentation.
- Create and implement a communication plan.

The team must determine which KPIs are most important. Ask for input from end users, marketing, engineering, management, sales force, and writers. Choose KPIs that can be validated via surveys, customer support data, or usability testing.

Sample KPIs

- Targeted to the correct audience
- Accurate
- Complete
- Well written
- Easy to navigate
- Properly indexed
- Appropriately illustrated
- Practical
- Relevant
- Consistent

The team should also:

- Decide who reviews the documents (for example, manager, author, peers, editors).
- Train the reviewers to give positive, constructive feedback.
- Define the criteria for selecting documents to be reviewed.
- Select a meaningful and appropriate rating scale.
- Create a process for correcting documentation errors or defects.

Launching the Process

Good communication is key to your success. Measure your metrics—continue to solicit feedback from everyone involved, including management. Send regular updates summarizing the metrics, and noting the successes, pitfalls, and corrective action plan. Consider establishing a recognition program similar to the STC publication competition. Celebrate major milestones and choose meaningful rewards, such as printed certificates, gift certificates, or time off.

It takes time and forethought to develop an effective process for measuring documentation quality. Once implemented, the resulting metrics will let you know whether you're meeting your customers' needs and will provide the data you need to continuously improve your documentation.

This article was written by Jules Cohen, a Technical Publications Manager at Schneider Electric in Raleigh, NC. It is based on information presented by Susan Johnston, Manager of Data & Enterprise Administration Documentation, and Helen Weeks, Technical Editing Manager, of SAS Institute in Research Triangle Park, NC. Jules and Susan are members of the STC Carolina Management SIG.

Just-In-Time Training Workshops

Joaquim Baptista, Altitude Software, Portugal

Just-in-time training workshops earned a reputation for the technical writers and disseminated new knowledge throughout the company, effectively training expert employees on new software releases with a series of light sessions.

Employee Training as an Important Issue

Altitude Software is a Portuguese company that develops and sells software for sophisticated customers. The company has about 600 customers in 40 countries, with from four to 600 licenses per company. In 2002, it employed about 250 people in Portugal and another 150 in 10 worldwide offices. The R&D team based in Portugal had 100 people and included eight technical writers.

Using the results of an internal survey, the documentation team identified a specific set of employees who rated the user manuals poorly. These employees often consulted the user manuals with an intention different from the objective of the manual (for example, selling or supporting a feature instead of using the feature). The manuals often lacked the level of detail required by employees as opposed to end-users.

Employees should have gained the necessary knowledge from the skills-transfer, a company-wide event held when the company introduced a major software release. However, the event usually happened too late for R&D people and too early for most deployers of the software. The company could not afford multiple skills-transfer events.

The training department offered two five-day courses targeted at beginner and intermediate users, but not intended to address the specific needs of employees.

New employees attended the courses as an introduction to the product, but existing employees typically could not afford five days of training to learn a few new details. Also, the training department updated courses at the request of customers, and thus too late for some employees.

To solve the issue of training employees, the documentation team proposed to senior management a series of workshops hosted by expert employees.

Training Workshops – Phase 1

The training workshops were designed to enable expert employees to train other employees in a framework that reduced administrative overhead to an absolute minimum. Expert employees were encouraged to offer workshops on topics of their expertise. Employees were encouraged to attend sessions that they needed at the moment.

A few drastic limitations allowed us to streamline the sessions:

- Workshops covered a single topic and lasted at most one hour, including questions and answers.
- Experts required little or no preparation to present a workshop, because they presented their own well-known topics and reused existing materials.
- Sessions were limited to no more than five attendees, avoiding the need to prepare the elaborate slide shows typically used to train larger audiences.
- Presenters offered at most one session each week in a fixed room and time-slot, avoiding the need to schedule rooms every week.

In fact, workshop sessions often resembled office meetings where the presenter used a document or a computer to talk to a few persons around a table. Presenters often gained something from the question-and-answer part of the workshop. Workshops were simple to present, and there was a low cost of failure. If a workshop session did not work well, at most five attendees lost an hour each. Having workshops with a single topic also meant that it was easier for attendees to select individual workshops.

Selecting and scheduling the workshops was done as follows:

1. On Monday, an administrative assistant sent an email to announce the workshops that might be offered the following week. An intranet site complemented the email with descriptions of the workshops.
2. Potential attendees replied and stated their interest in any number of workshops.
3. On Wednesday, the administrative assistant created a “demand” spreadsheet.
4. Using the spreadsheet, presenters selected which workshop to present the following week and who would attend.
5. On Friday, the secretary emailed the attendees selected for each session, as well as those not selected. Workshop sessions took place the following week.

Each workshop session had minimal evaluation. Attendees just said whether the session fulfilled their expectations, optionally adding free-form comments. Presenters said whether the workshop had the expected duration. The minimal evaluation tracked effective participation, made all the participants consider the benefits of the session, and provided formal feedback to the presenter.

A monthly report rated the workshops and justified the concept to senior management.

Results between April and August 2002

Between April and August 2002, four presenters proposed 23 different workshops. Fifteen of the proposed workshops were presented in 22 sessions to 82 persons. There was an average of 3.7 attendees in each workshop. The evaluations were almost all positive.

Overall, the workshops earned a good reputation for the technical writers and provided the ability to gather immediate feedback for the documentation of new features. Workshops also allowed the technical writers to disseminate additional knowledge not included in the user manuals.

The workshop sessions were a tremendous success for all involved. Still, there were problems. First, attendees often failed to renew their interests weekly. When presenters offered several workshops, potential attendees quickly lost interest in the workshops that were not presented within a few weeks. Second, the four presenters were in fact three technical writers and a single expert. In five months, the documentation team did not succeed in influencing other experts to offer workshops.

Training Workshops – Phase 2

Technical writers are well positioned to present interesting workshops, as they are “temporary experts” and can talk in detail about features just documented. These new features are especially interesting to other employees that are just starting to sell or use the features.

In 2004, the technical writers proposed a series of workshops about features just documented. Rather than opening enrollment to any interested employees, the writers worked with the managers of interested teams and delivered the workshops to whole teams at once. Workshop sessions were also delivered to people in foreign offices using conference calls and NetMeeting.

Results between February and April 2004

Between February and April 2004, one technical writer proposed six different one-hour workshops. Four of the proposed workshops were presented in 14 sessions to 136 persons. The largest session had 18 attendees while the average was 9.7 attendees. Four sessions were presented jointly with an expert that served as a safety net against difficult questions. Seven sessions were canceled because the target teams were surprised with other urgent tasks.

Sessions with more people required more preparation, as the risk and the cost of failure was much higher. Five attendees literally evaluated workshop sessions with their feet by abandoning the sessions. The 29 attendees outside Portugal sent only 13 evaluations.

Sessions aimed at Portuguese employees typically required an extra half hour of administration, while sessions aimed at branches typically required a full hour.

Since workshops were arranged with managers, the attendees no longer selected themselves. As a result of poor communication, some attendees did not know what to expect from the workshop sessions. Still, most evaluations were positive.

Conclusions

Just-in-time training workshops earned a reputation for the technical writers and increased the interaction among teams. The documentation team gained a position as spreaders of internal knowledge instead of being confined to user knowledge for customers.

The workshops succeeded in disseminating new knowledge throughout the company, effectively training the expert employees on new software releases with a series of light sessions. The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. According to the director of the technical support department in 2003, no one ever complained about a workshop session.

Recommendations

The tricky issue is how to keep the sessions simple for all involved, balancing the risk of failure with the need to spend as little time as possible preparing workshops. The team currently follows these guidelines:

- Offer one-hour sessions, where ideally a half-hour of presentation is followed by a half-hour of questions and answers.
- Keep the administrative time for each session to a half-hour, including processing the evaluations.
- Allow at most two hours to prepare a workshop when all sessions have five attendees or less. Allow four hours to prepare a workshop with larger sessions.

In-house writers may want to use workshops to complement the documentation aimed at specific audiences. Consultants may want to consider debriefing workshops on hot topics to build relationships with customers, clarify possible confusions or omissions in the documentation, and gather feedback.

Top Ten Reasons to Attend an STC Regional Conference

By Brenda Huettner, Associate Fellow, Southern Arizona Chapter

1. Save $$$! For a fraction of the cost of the annual conference, you’ll get the wisdom and advice of many of the same experienced technical communication professionals who present at the STC Annual Conference and other conferences around the country and around the world. For less than the cost of a single course at a local university, you’ll get professional guidance in a wide variety of subject areas. Compare STC Regional conference costs (typically under $200) to those of for-profit conferences—you’ll agree, the regional conferences offer the biggest bang for the buck you’ll get all year!
2. Fun, fun, fun! You get to meet and hang out with other people who understand exactly what you do! Share war stories, exchange tips and tricks, compare techniques and environments.

Events Calendar

STC Telephone Seminars

Time: 1:00 pm–2:30 pm EDT
Cost: $99 (STC); $149 (non-STC)

January 12, 2005
Preemptive Project Planning
(John Hedtke)

No one likes surprises, especially if those surprises mean more work. This presentation will teach you how to spot upcoming projects before they sneak up on you. You'll learn to prepare for these projects, avoid those nerve-wracking schedule crunches, and look like a hero in the process!

January 26, 2005
A Pound of Salt, A Pint of Blood–Getting the Most Out of Your Contractors to Ensure Project Success
(Tom White)

If you're short-staffed, with too much documentation work to do, your first choice may be to hire contractors. You hesitate, though, and a series of unanswered questions crosses your mind: How do I find the right people for the job? Can I really depend on them to get the job done when they have no stake in my organization? How do I manage what appears to me to be a bunch of high-priced prima donnas and lone wolves?

STC and Non-STC Events

October 21–24, 2004
2004 STC Region 5 Conference
Wyndham Hotel
Salt Lake City, Utah
www.stcregion5conf2004.org

October 26–27, 2004
XML for Writers (Joann Hackos Workshop Series)
Durham, North Carolina
Price: $825
www.comtech-serv.com/workshops/xml.shtml

January 15–16, 2005
2005 STC Regional Conference (James River Chapter STC)
Four Points by Sheraton Hotel
Williamsburg, Virginia
Contact: Don White, IDM2005@stc-jamesriver.org
www.stc-jamesriver.org

April 8–9, 2005
Tri-Doc 2005: Shaping the Future of Technical Communication (Carolina Chapter STC)
Raleigh Hilton
Research Triangle Park, North Carolina
Contact: Steven Meeks, 919.564.2360
www.stc-carolina.org

Send email to jdamrau3@airmail.net to advertise your events here.

3. Learn something new. You'll find out about the latest techniques and processes in the field, and ways that technical communicators are making an impact in new areas.
4. Solve your current technical communication quagmires—or at least get some options you may not have thought of before! Even if you don't find a session that specifically addresses your current challenges, you're bound to find someone who can help.
5. Looking for work? Looking to hire? Most regional conferences have job-related areas. Many include resume books, interview areas, and other resources. I've even seen interviews conducted on the spot!
6. The smaller scale of the regional conferences lets you get to know the other attendees and the presenters on a more personal level than you would at larger events.
7. Because it is a regional conference, it is likely to be closer to your home than other events. This not only reduces your travel expenses, it also means it will be easier to follow up with all the new, local contacts you'll make.
8. Meet the STC leadership, from your own region and often from other regions as well. Your Director is your link to the STC Board, and he or she wants to hear what you have to say.
9. Product demonstrations allow you to easily compare vendor products. Because there are fewer attendees than at the big annual conference, you'll get more time with exhibitors to really try out the products and ask questions.
10. Expand your horizons by visiting a new city. As a bonus, the conference comes with built-in hosts from the local chapter who can tell you exactly where to find the best cup of coffee in the morning, the perfect after-dinner drink, or anything in between.

SIG News

Volunteers Needed

We need you for the following positions:

- *Web Committee:* Individual to keep the Resources page updated.
  Contact: Elizabeth Bailey (ebaileyl@comcast.net)

- *Newsletter Committee:* Advertising Manager to seek out advertising for the newsletter
  Contact: Jackie Damrau (jdamrau3@airmail.net)
- *Member Business Directory:* Need someone to step up and help provide a directory of the services our members have to offer to others
  Contact: Jackie Damrau (jdamrau3@airmail.net) or Judith Herr (herrj@comcast.net)
- *Membership Manager:* Need someone to serve on the SIG Core Leadership Team in this position who is willing to send out electronic welcome letters to our new members on a monthly basis, send out occasional membership surveys, and other membership-related duties.
  Contact: Judith Herr (herrj@comcast.net)

Creating a Local Management SIG in Your Area

By Harlan Wolper, SIG Core Leadership Member

I am very pleased to be a part of the SIG Core Leadership group once again, and pleased to be working with Terry Knee this year on strategies and ideas for achieving local management SIG networking and meeting groups. In the past, we attempted to link this to the local chapters, but it proved difficult especially for some of the smaller local chapters that span larger geographic areas. The cooperation of local chapter leadership is very important to this effort. We are hoping to get a few local groups together this year and welcome any suggestions or assistance you can provide.

Feel free to drop me an e-mail at hwol@snip.net.

Speakers Bureau

by Marie Highby

Do you have a topic, workshop, or other presentation that you are available to present at a local chapter meeting, regional conference, or as an STC representative at another professional organization?

We are looking to build a speakers bureau of presentation topics that our members are willing to provide to other STC chapters and SIGs, as well as to local and regional communities.

Get your name and topic on the list that will be placed soon on the SIG Web site.

Send e-mail to Marie Highby at marie@highby.com.

Name This Newsletter Contest

Contest ends November 15th

Last issue we started a contest to name this publication. To date, I have received only one entry.

I know that we have creative minds out there. Don't be afraid!

Send in your entry today to jdamrau3@airmail.net with the subject line of "Entry for Mgt SIG Newsletter Contest."

Winner reward: A $25 selection from the STC product catalog!

SIG Quarterly Leadership Meeting Notes

The Management SIG Core Leadership Team conducted its quarterly teleconference call on September 9, 2004. A summary of the notes taken from that call follows. Contact herrj@comcast.net if you have any questions about the activities or you would like to join us on the SIG Core Leadership Team.

Introductions, STC and SIG Update

We spent time discussing how the Transformation initiative will affect our SIG in budget dollars, membership, and volunteer resources.

SIG Updates and Discussion

- **Ethics Committee:** The Ethics Committee during the last quarter established a policy for using the Management SIG listserv for job, educational, and commercial/advertising announcements.
- **Web site (Beth Bailey):**

  Volunteer Needs:

  – *List Discussion Summarizer* to capture and provide summaries of the list discussions that can be posted on the web site as a resource.

  – *Resources Page* volunteer to maintain and update the information on the Resources page of the web site.
- **Newsletter (Jackie Damrau):**

  – October is shaping up with several articles; Expected release: October 15 or sooner.

  – Kirt Iverson volunteered to serve as the Newsletter Associate Editor.

- **Listserv Moderator/ Membership Manager (Joaquim Baptista):**
  - *Listserv:* We discussed whether to automatically put new members on the listserv and let them opt out or to invite new members to join. Another decision to be made is whether to put the listserv behind a members-only area. Many felt that we might gain members by letting all have access to the list.
  - *Membership Manager:* Volunteer needed for this position. Responsibilities include sending electronic welcome letters to all new members on a monthly basis, sending out occasional membership surveys, and serving on the SIG's Core Leadership Team.
- **SIG Conference Input (Brenda Huettner):** Proposals currently submitted for the 52nd Annual Conference includes two SIG-related panels and a 17-table progression session. Discussion took place about breaking the progression into two sessions if the time slots were favorable. Brenda reported that results of the session reviewers would not be available until December.
- **Local SIGs (Terry Knee/Harlan Wolper):** Harlan received no volunteers from his article that appeared in the Summer newsletter. We will reprint this article in the October issue (see page 18). He did provide ideas to others on how to start a local Management SIG in your own community.
- Possible SIG-sponsored projects (directory, handbook): Need to find willing volunteers to consider working on SIG-related projects.

Management SIG Visibility Survey

Judith sent out a brief two-question survey mid-September that asked:

1. Should we restrict listserv access?
2. Do you prefer the SIG newsletter in hard copy or electronic format?

Results for both questions were 50% yes; 50% no.

Comments for question #1: Discussions would not be as broad as some contributors are outside of technical communication; restricting access would require finding someone to act as moderator, which can be time-consuming.

We discussed how to enhance our visibility at the annual conferences and within our own geographic areas. We will be addressing this in more depth during the next meeting and by e-mails. Any ideas?

STC News

Technical Communicator Salary Survey

You can find the STC 2004 Technical Communicator Salary Survey at www.stc.org/salarySurvey.asp. The survey features information for STC members in the U.S. and Canada with demographic breakdowns.

This year, for the first time, the survey form was sent to STC members all over the world. Two countries outside of North America—Israel and India—produced enough responses to be statistically significant. Salary information about those countries has been included in the survey results.