

BLUE PENCIL

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, STC

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Pick of the Issue



Ah, the new year is drawing ever closer—and with it, that inescapable impulse to make resolutions to better ourselves. Well, if you are making a career-related resolution for the upcoming year, this issue of the Blue Pencil is a good place to look for tips on improving your job (p. 1), your attitude (p. 6), and even your organization (p. 7). And career-focused chapter meetings will help as well (see pp. 2 & 9). Let's all resolve to improve in our profession this year.

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Your Career Action Plan for the New Year

By Deborah Walker

People make New Year's resolutions with the best intentions, but they often fail for lack of a solid action plan. If you've resolved for 2006 to move your career forward into a new industry, occupation, or level of responsibility, increase your chances of success with this three-part action plan focused on results.

- *Know your career objective*
- *Update your résumé and cover letters*
- *Update your network and networking skills*

Know your career objective

Knowing your career objective may sound obvious and easy. If, however, you are dissatisfied with your current position, it can be difficult to sort out the good from the bad. You may not fully understand the target of your dissatisfaction: Is it your job or your employer; your company's culture or your supervisor? Analyzing what you want in a job is a good start in determining the best new job for you.

If you are uncertain what type of position to focus on, start by identifying the transferable skills you enjoy(ed) using in your current or past positions. A professional career coach can be helpful in sorting out what you want to keep and, more importantly, what you want to avoid in your next position.

Update your résumé and cover letters

If it has been a while since your last job search, your résumé may no longer reflect your current career direction. Don't forget the most important elements of a strong résumé: solid achievements that illustrate your transferable skills, and key words and phrases to capture employers' attention and interest.

Cover letters can make the difference between a warm reception or a cold shoulder. While it's true that not all résumé screeners read cover letters, those who do are never impressed—and are often put off by cover letters

Plan, cont. on page 7

President's Column - by Nicky Bleiel

As the New Year approaches, it's common to examine the past and plan for the future. With that in mind, our chapter's January and February programs will help you reflect on your professional goals, as well as provide skills training to help you achieve them.

January's meeting — unofficially dubbed the “Annual Employment Meeting” — will cover a variety of topics, including how to improve your personal “marketing” materials and job search skills, advice to help you evaluate your current position, and news about career options.

This event is officially titled “Hot Topics in Career & Professional Development” and will feature five different speakers in an informal progression format.

- **Polishing your professional image** – Jonna Martin, AdvanceMe Associations
- **Contracting opportunities** – Gary Naranjo, A.C. Coy
- **Electronic portfolios** – Nancy Ott, STC-Pittsburgh
- **Job burnout: when to stay, when to go, what to do** – Geri Puleo, G.A. Puleo Associates
- **Getting organized** – Deirdra Makowiecki, MAKK Strategies

This meeting will be held Monday, January 9 at Duranti's Restaurant in Oakland. Please see page 9 or <http://www.stcpgh.org/events/evchpt.html> for more information. Dinner will be served and there is a very low rate for everyone, especially students and unemployed. Please invite your friends! A special thank you to our WorkQuest SIG, Chris Keefer, and Chuck Lanigan for arranging this meeting.

In February, we'll continue the professional development theme, but with an STC twist. The topic will be “Enhancing Your Career and Skills Through STC - Making STC Work for You.” A panel of members will share their experiences speaking at National STC meetings, being published

in *Intercom* and *Tieline*, and winning national and local STC competitions – and how those opportunities enhanced their careers.

I'll be the moderator of this discussion, and the panel will include: Janis Ramey (STC Associate Fellow and WorkQuest founder); Barb Stanton (Immediate Past President); and Lisa Earl (*Intercom* contributor).



We'll talk about:

- The wide-range of opportunities available from STC (including competitions, speaking opportunities at the local and national level, publishing opportunities – including *Intercom* and *Tieline* – leadership opportunities, honors)
- How we took advantage of these opportunities
- How we benefited from these opportunities, financially, professionally, and personally
- How you can take advantage of these opportunities in the future

This meeting will be held Monday, February 13th. We plan to provide a handout with opportunities/general guidelines you can take home and reference.

Please join us in January and February to start the New Year off right.

Happy Holidays from STC Pittsburgh!

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Membership at a Glance

(as of November 30, 2005)

National

Total members: 16,976
 Total chapters: 140

Pittsburgh

Total members: 140

New members:

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 Selina A. Cidade
 Valencia D. Person
 Brenda Reyes

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blieberman2@compuserve.com

Notes from the National Office

Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars

Cost: \$99 (STC Members), \$149 (non-members). See stc.webex.com for more information, seminar descriptions, and to register.

January 11, 2006

Textual Bloopers and How to Avoid Them

1:00-2:30 PM ET

Instructor: Jeff Johnson

January 25, 2006

Developing Visual Fluency

1:00-2:30 PM ET

Instructor: William Horton

February 8, 2006

Documenting APIs: Step Up to the Plate

1:00-2:30 PM ET

Instructor: Susan W. Gallagher

February 22, 2006

Improve Your Technical Communication Skills through Creative Writing Techniques

1:00-2:30 PM ET

Instructors: Susan Haire, Amy Himes, Marella Colyvas

Upcoming STC Events

March 24-25, 2006

The Atlanta Chapter STC will hold **Currents 2006**, its annual technical communication conference, at the Atlanta campus of Mercer University. For more information, please contact: Leigh Richardson lrichardson@intellisync.com www.stcatlanta.org

March 31, 2006

The Rochester Chapter STC will hold **Spectrum 2006**, an all-day conference focusing on coming trends and directions in technical communication, at the RIT Inn and Conference Center in Henrietta, New York. Keynote speakers will be Suzanna Laurent, president of Communications Design Group and current president of STC, and Jared Spool, CEO of User Interface Engineering. For more information, please contact: Tom Moran tformcad@rit.edu www.stcrochester.org

May 7-10, 2006

STC's 53rd Annual Conference will be held at Bally's Las Vegas Hotel and Paris Las Vegas Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information, please visit www.stc.org/53rdConf/. Also, there is additional information in the November 2005 *Tieline* (www.stc.org/Tieline/issues/2005_11.pdf).

National Notes, cont. on page 4

National Notes, cont. from page 3

STC's 2006 Election Guidelines

The annual STC election will be held in early 2006, and only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2006, will be eligible to vote. An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2006 allows members to receive their election materials via e-mail. In March, members who selected this option will be emailed the slate, candidate biographies, and voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive these materials by first-class mail. The election closes at noon ET on March 31. Be sure to renew by February 28 to have a say in STC's future!

STC Dues are Tax Deductible

If you pay taxes in the United States, keep in mind that STC dues are tax deductible. Please note, however, that dues must be deducted from the tax return filed for the year in which they were paid. In other words, dues paid in 2005 may be deducted only from 2005 tax returns. Therefore, if you pay your 2006 dues on or before December 31, 2005, these dues can be deducted only from your 2005 return. Members who have questions should contact their local IRS office or their accountant.

You can claim dues as a deduction in several ways: as a charitable expense, a business expense, or a miscellaneous deduction.

STC Offering 2006 Scholarships

The STC is offering scholarships for full-time, post-secondary students who are studying for a degree in the area of technical writing, editing, graphical design, interface design, or Web design. Four awards of \$1,500 each will be granted toward school tuition and expenses. Two awards are granted to graduate students, and two to undergraduates. Applications must be received by February 15, 2006.

To obtain application forms and additional information, contact:

Society for Technical Communication
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Quick Tip...Continuous Page Numbering Across Separate Files - by Robert Mohr

In a past issue of the Blue Pencil, I described a method by which you can create “books” from separate chapter files. That article mentioned creating page numbers that included the chapter number. Following is a procedure* by which you can consecutively number pages across multiple files without using chapter numbers.

To create consecutive page numbering across separate chapter files:

1. At the end of the first document (e.g., “chapter1.doc”) insert a PAGE field and select it.
2. Format the field as “hidden.”
3. Place the field in a bookmark (Insert > Bookmark), and give it a meaningful name, such as chap1pages.
4. Save this file and open the next chapter file.
5. In the header or footer, where the page number should appear, embed the PAGE and INCLUDETEXT fields within the =Formula field:

```
{ = { PAGE \* MERGEFORMAT } + {INCLUDETEXT
“c:\pagenumtest\chapter1.doc” chap1pages \*
CHARFORMAT ! \* MERGEFORMAT }}
```

In the above example, “chap1pages” references a bookmark placed in “chapter1.doc”.

6. Move to the last occurrence of this code string in the file and select it.

7. Place the field in a bookmark and give it a meaningful name, such as chap2pages.
8. Save the file, close it, and open the next chapter file.
9. Repeat steps 5—8 until all chapter files have been numbered.

Notes:

- The INCLUDETEXT field can reference any document, and any bookmark within a document.
- Be sure to place the document path in double-quotes, and to use double backslashes. Avoid using spaces in the path and file names. (Spaces can cause unexpected results.)
- In the example above, the bookmark name (chap1pages) reflects the path and is named similar to the file containing it. Keep it simple, right?
- The * CHARFORMAT switch forces the field result to be formatted with the font settings in the target document, rather than bring the formatting with it (otherwise the result would be “hidden”).
- The ! switch prevents the PAGE field within the bookmark from updating to reflect the context in the target document.

**Reference: This procedure was derived from a procedure offered on Cindy Meister’s Web site. I modified it to work for Word 2003. Many thanks to Cindy!*

Reminder of Upcoming Chapter Meetings

There will be no Blue Pencil published in January, so we wanted to take a moment to remind you about the chapter meetings in the upcoming two months. You can find the description of January’s Career Roundtable in the regular location on the last page of this newsletter. But mark your calendars as well for an innovative panel discussion to be held in February.

Topic: Panel Discussion: "Enhancing Your Career and Skills Through STC - Making STC Work for You."

Date: February 13th 2006

Moderator: Nicky Bleiel

Panel: Janis Ramey, Barb Stanton, Lisa Earl

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

Place: Pittsburgh Technology Council Building

What Color Are You?

Unconsciously, we often attribute colors to our emotions or state of mind in expressions such as “red with rage,” “tranquil as a green field in summer” or “feeling blue.” Emotional states can, at times, influence us relentlessly, but we can mitigate them by redirecting negative emotions to a more neutral point. At such a level, our emotions are in a state of equilibrium so that we can calmly refocus on the task at hand, such as a job search that has been unsettling or discouraging.

Feelings and emotions are almost inevitable by-products of the job search process. Pursuing a job tends to generate negative feelings that we oftentimes do not recognize or attempt to identify. In fact, these anxieties and frustrations are a natural response to developing and redeveloping a strategy, executing a plan and re-applying ourselves again and again to the mechanics of finding a job in the face of rejection. We may not recognize the causes behind these new, unsettling emotions—ranging from rage to depression—that are primarily the effects of the job search process.

Now, if there were a scheme or available way of eliminating or removing the root cause of a debilitating emotion and substituting it with a positive one, then we might exercise control over the emotional demon which frequently prevents us from thinking clearly and coherently in rearranging or redirecting our pursuit of the job.

But how can someone achieve such a state of emotional equilibrium?

Our first response should be to recognize, identify and accept specifically what our feelings are. We should then try to understand their causes, and then mitigate or substantiate their importance in working on the job search. The idea is, in effect, to bring the combination of feelings that form our emotional state back into a balanced or neutral position. Such a state of emotional equilibrium will permit us to reassess our situation and, subsequently, to function unfettered by aggressive or passive emotions. For example, if I had feelings that generated an extremely angry (“red with rage”) or a dull, despondent state (“feeling blue”), I would try to balance

By Joe Brennan & Geraldine Zalazar

these high and low states into a middle position of tranquility (“peaceful as a green field in summer”).

The following exercise, based on a well-known color spectrum used by scientists and others, associates individual feelings with colors. Then the medley of discordant feelings generated by the job search could be sorted and identified to become a positive force for the job seeker.

For instance, anger would be assigned the color red, the most forceful wavelength in the color spectrum. Depression or deep sorrow would be assigned the color blue, the shortest or weakest wavelength. Turned into a mathematical equation, by equating units to wavelengths on the color spectrum, we would assign 7600 “emotional” units to red (the most forceful or longest on the spectrum), 4950 units to green (the mid-point) and 4300 and 3800 to blue and violet (the lowest points on the spectrum).

Following the chart below, as a job seeker you might attach a “number” to each of your corresponding feelings or emotions. Next, calculate your average overall emotional state. Finally, deduce how many more or fewer units (altered, added or subtracted emotions) are needed to establish what might be considered a stable and, consequently, productive state of mind in continuing a search in the job market.

Emotion-Color-Value Relationships Converted into “Emotional Units”

Rage = Red = 7600

Aggravation = Orange = 6100

Dissatisfaction = Yellow = 5500

Tranquility = Green = 4950

Sorrow = Blue = 4300

Depression = Violet = 3800

The choice is up to you. How much or how little effort you invest in analyzing, recognizing and balancing your emotions that have hindered or distorted your job search depends on you.



Plan, cont. from page 1

that sound phony or mass-produced. If you are uncertain of your résumé writing skills, a professional résumé writer can transform your so-so résumé & cover letters into true selling tools.

Update your network and networking skills

A good job-search network consists of all those persons who can provide information about future or current career opportunities. You say you don't have a network? You probably do, but you just haven't thought about people who could fit this category. Start by identifying groups of people that you are in contact with on a regular basis, such as professional associations, church groups, college alumni groups, and neighborhood associations. Then identify the individuals within those groups with whom you feel comfortable and who could help you learn of job leads.

"If you are dissatisfied with your current position, it can be difficult to sort out the good from the bad."

Many of my résumé and coaching clients lament their poor networking skills. I always tell them not to worry; they are in good company because most people feel inadequate when it comes to networking. Before you dismiss the value of a strong network, remember: In securing all-important job interviews, it's very often not what you know but whom you know. There are many resources available for learning how to build and utilize a network to your job-search advantage: books, online articles, workshops, and career coaches trained in the most effective networking techniques.

Once you've put your job-search action plan into practice, you'll be on your way to a better job and a better life.

Deborah Walker, CCMC

Career Coach - Résumé Writer

Find more job-search tips and résumé samples at:

www.AlphaAdvantage.com

Email: Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com

Helping Individuals and Organizations Be More Resilient

By Joe Brown

A Value-based Model That Helps Workers Achieve a More Balanced Work-Life by Working Smarter, Not Harder

Much attention has recently been given to the need for business organizations and employees to be able to bounce back after experiencing a major catastrophe. The horrific events of 9/11 have raised the consciousness of Corporate America to the potential of such a tragedy. Many executives have scurried to develop contingency plans and strategies to help the business recover from such a calamity.

Hopefully, most businesses will never need to activate their formal recovery programs. But the concept of having an organization that can recover quickly from adversity—from the stress on individuals caused by daily work-life pressures to the organizational dissonance associated with missing key business objectives—is worthy of serious consideration.

Corporate leaders, for example, are finding it increasingly difficult to meet financial market expectations of higher year-over-year fiscal targets. Exacerbating the problem is the current environment of growing global competition, stricter regulatory scrutiny and ambiguity, and geopolitical volatility. Additionally, workers are finding it more difficult to function in a workplace of high uncertainty caused by mega-mergers, downsizing, outsourcing, and a prevailing management philosophy of doing more with less. This instability along with the unrelenting pressures to continually deliver more to the "bottom line" often lead both management and workers to experience increased levels of stress and frustration.

Resilient, cont. on page 8

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Resilient, cont. from page 7

The solution to this issue will require a strategy different than simply developing a new contingency plan. A starting point could be the introduction of a new core value that supplements the organization's existing core beliefs. This new value is **Resilience**. At the highest level, **Resilience is the organization's ability to bounce back constructively when key business objectives are not met, learning from these shortcomings, and moving forward to meet and surmount new problems, challenges and opportunities.** An organization's ability to constructively deal with disappointments, however, ultimately resides in the resilience of its workforce. At the associate's level, **Individual Resilience** can be defined as **the ability to bounce back with vigor and renewed energy when one's work plans or objectives are not achieved.** One aspect of individual resilience that most experts agree on is that a healthy mind, body, and spirit are essential and that work-life equilibrium is a necessary requirement to one's on-going ability to maintain good health and an optimistic outlook.

Those organizations, however, which decide to implement this new core value, should note that the ultimate success of such a program will depend on two factors. First, it will take the **complete endorsement** from senior management to implement the principles of Resilience into all aspects of daily work. Second, it will take a full introduction and commitment to an **actionable set of specific leadership practices.**

The Key Leadership Practices of a Resilient Organization

1. *Acknowledge and learn from failures as well as successes.*

A Resilient Organization celebrates and learns from its successes. But it can also learn from its mistakes. In Peter Senge's book, The Fifth Discipline he states: "Learning in an organization means the continuous testing of experience into knowledge - accessible to the whole organization and relevant to its core purpose." Business organizations, like individuals, can learn and grow from their defeats as well as their victories. A Resilient Organization understands that information shared broadly can become knowledge and knowledge used appropriately can lead to wisdom.

"Fools repeat their mistakes: the wise make them only once." (Anonymous)

2. *Maintain a balance between the needs of the business and the needs of the employees.*

Too often, the only messages flowing down from senior management to the rank and file are directives to focus more attention on customers, product development, or cost-saving projects. As important as these messages are, if employees are to remain loyal, committed, and resilient, there must be some balance in communications and programs between the requirements of the business and the needs of the workforce. Unless nurtured, employees over time will become alienated, and alienation is the antithesis of resilience.

3. *Focus on the value-added work and eliminate or reduce non-value-added activities.*

Michael Hammer, author of Reengineering the Corporation, states that, based

on his consulting with hundreds of businesses, approximately 70% of all work done in corporations is non-value-added. Eliminating or significantly reducing activities that do not add value is a win-win for both the organization as well as the individual. For the company, it means a greater focus on doing the right things—meeting customer's requirements and key business objectives. And for the employee, it means continuing to pursue one's professional goals while enjoying a more balanced work life.

4. *"Work Smarter, Not Harder."*

Achieving individual resilience and a more balanced work-life means that one **works by doing the right things the right way.** Doing the right things means working effectively. Working the right or best way means working efficiently. "*Working Smarter, Not Harder*" is a set of specific *Core Concepts and Tools* employees learn to enable them to work more effectively and efficiently.

In summary, the key driver for a resilient organization is a **Resilient Workforce**. An important ingredient for Individual Resilience is the attainment of a **more balanced work-life** by learning to eliminate non-value-added activities and to **"Work Smarter, Not Harder."**

If you would like to learn more about Building a Resilient Organization and how to implement a "Work Smarter, Not Harder" training program, contact Joe Brown at 724-873-5023 or send an e-mail to jjbassociates@hotmail.com. Joe is a new member of STC WorkQuest.

January Meeting: Hot Topics in Career & Professional Development
STC-Pittsburgh's annual career/employment meeting

Date: Monday, January 9, 2006

Time: Registration and networking 6 p.m., dinner 6:30 p.m., meeting 7:15 - 9 p.m.

It might be cold outside, but we're cooking up a spicy hot meeting for January!

From having meaningful work to marketing your skills set, we have several sizzlin' hot topics in career and professional development that we're wrapping up in one hot tamale of a meeting! Throughout the evening, you'll get to enjoy two or three of these topics as we move from table to table for short, informal presentations.

In cooking up this don't-miss event, we've assembled some of Pittsburgh's best career and professional development experts to serve up well-seasoned advice:

- Polishing your professional image – Jonna Martin, AdvanceMe Associations

- Contracting opportunities – Gary Naranjo, A.C. Coy
- Electronic portfolios – Nancy Ott, STC-Pittsburgh
- Job burnout: when to stay, when to go, what to do – Geri Puleo, G.A. Puleo Associates
- Getting organized – Deirdra Makowiecki, MAKK Strategies

Dig in and help yourself to a heapin' helping of career smarts to kick off the New Year!

Place: Duranti's Restaurant, 128 North Craig St., Oakland (free parking available) <http://www.startw.com/duranti/>

Cost: \$18.00 members/\$20.00 non-members/\$8.00 students/unemployed (dinner included)

RSVP: by Jan. 4 to Beverly Spagnolo at 412-766-7200 or bspagnolo@klauscherarchitects.com.

2005-2006

STC Pittsburgh Officers

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