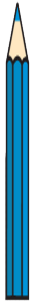


BLUE PENCIL

Pick of the Issue



Any organization works best when its members get involved. This issue of the Blue Pencil showcases several ways you can get involved with the STC: you can recruit new members for the Pittsburgh chapter (page 2); you can submit an entry to the Publications Competitions (cover story and page 7); you can even volunteer your time on the national level with two unique opportunities (page 3). There are many other ways to get involved as well. Let's all choose one this month!

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Call for Entries: STC Technical Communications Competition

Have you or your company produced technical communication products that you think are worthy of awards? Would you like your work to be recognized by your peers? This call for entries is your invitation to participate in the following Society for Technical Communication (STC) competitions:

- Online Communication Competition
- Technical Art Competition
- Technical Publications Competition

Deadline for submissions: Saturday, October 21, 2006

Who is eligible?

Anyone is eligible to submit entries. You do not have to be a member of STC. You may enter work as an individual or on behalf of a colleague or subordinate.

What can you enter?

Entries in all categories must contain sufficient technical, scientific, medical, or similar content to qualify as technical communication. Entries must have been produced or substantially revised within 24 months preceding September 1 of the current year. Entries must have been originally prepared for and accepted for publication by a client, employer, or publisher.

How are the competitions structured?

STC's competitions recognize and encourage excellence in online communication, technical art, and technical publications. STC offers two levels of competition:

- Local and regional competitions
- The international competitions

Local and regional competitions are the first level of competition. The international competitions—the international online communication

Competition, cont. on page 7

President's Column - by Beverly Spagnolo

It's early to start thinking about joining STC for 2007, but have you noticed that Christmas things are in the stores already? Did you know that the best time to join STC—if you're not already a member—is in the month of November? Memberships that begin on or after November 1, 2006, are good for 14 months, ending December 31, 2007. That gives you two free months of all the great things that STC has to offer you! And if you're already a member, it's one of those things that you can mark off on your to-do list before the end of the year.

I don't know about you, but around this time of year—summer's over and the next few months will be a blur so I may as well think that the year is just about over—I start to think about my financial plans for the next year, and one of them is always whether it's in my best interest to renew my membership to STC. And every year, my answer is always "yes". And as a member, I want to belong to a strong, viable chapter to make it worthwhile.

So what can we as existing members do to increase membership in the Pittsburgh chapter? And why is it important? One of the obvious reasons to increase membership is for the financial benefit that we receive from the Society. A small portion of your dues returns to the Pittsburgh chapter, which helps us to provide you with quality programming, a monthly newsletter, a discussion forum, conferences and publications competitions.

Another reason to increase membership in the chapter is to increase your opportunities to network and meet others in similar fields as yours in this geographic area. I've talked to some people who have said that

networking isn't all that important to them, and they're too busy to do it; they're satisfied with just a national membership and the on-line information they receive. That may be true. But for those of us who would like to have contacts when we're looking for our next job, or who want to talk to somebody about writing or Word or Framemaker or a problem you're having creating a PDF file, then knowing fellow writers nearby provides a huge source for problem-solving. Attending meetings also gives you a chance to meet others who do what you do in different industries—I write doc for a software transportation company, and I have to tell you I don't always want to talk about trucks!



You can play a big role to increase the membership of the Pittsburgh chapter, so that we can continue to provide you with the benefits you expect. Help to spread the word about the benefits of the Society. Reach out to new technical writers who are entering the field. Invite a colleague to one of our meetings.

Incentive: If you bring a guest to one of our meetings who subsequently becomes a Pittsburgh chapter member, both you and the new member will be able to attend one of the October through April meetings for free.

If you can think of ideas to increase membership, drop me a line and let's talk.

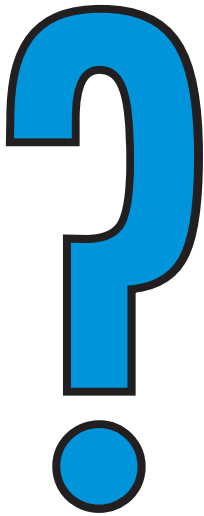
Society for Technical Communication

Pittsburgh Chapter

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Notes from the National Office

Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars

Cost: \$99 (STC Members),
\$149 (non-members)

Time: 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET
See stc.webex.com for more information and to register.

October 11, 2006

Designing Business Forms: A No Nonsense Approach

Instructor: Nathaniel Lim

Filling out forms is a part of life. Job applications, tax forms, health insurance claims... the list of common forms goes on and on. The design of a form determines how clean and complete the data on it becomes. This presentation focuses on the basic designs of hardcopy forms, common design pitfalls, use of white space, placement of instructions, and logical flow. Examples of good and bad forms will be presented.

October 25, 2006

Ten Ways to Increase Your Value as a Technical Communicator

Instructor: Holly Harkness

This presentation will explore 10 ways you can use your talent and expertise to provide important services to your employer. It will also discuss how to market those services more effectively within your organization. For each area, suggestions on how to supplement your skill set are included as well.

Call for Volunteers: New STC Web Site

Work will soon begin on a new STC Web site. If you're interested in volunteering in the area of user research,

usability testing, information design and architecture, or requirements management, please consider getting involved. Those who participate can be expected to put in 16 hours of effort/month for approximately 12 months. To sign up as a volunteer for the STC Web site redesign, please send an e-mail with your skills, experience, and brief explanation of why you want to be a part of the Web redesign team to both bogo_stc@bovacon.com and merrick@stc.org.

Volunteers Needed for World Wide Web Consortium Activities

The Society for Technical Communication is pleased to be a member of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). As a member of the W3C, STC is increasing the visibility of the technical communication profession by actively assisting in the development of Web standards. Your membership in STC means you can participate directly in W3C work groups helping to improve the readability and usability of specifications, best practice guides, and tutorials. Currently, there are openings to work on XHTML, Internationalization, SVG, Accessibility, and the Mobile Web.

Named credit is included on all completed work. This is a great opportunity to help move the Web forward, receive recognition for your talent, and increase STC's standing in the world.

For further information, contact Joe Welinske, STC W3C manager, at jwelinske@yahoo.com.

Software Saturday #1: Structured Authoring, XML, and DITA

Date: Oct. 28, 2006 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Location: Riverhead Training
425 Sixth Avenue (Regional
Enterprise Towers)
www.riverheadtraining.com

Cost: \$60 STC members/\$75 non-members/\$45 unemployed and students (includes continental breakfast)

RSVP by: Friday, Oct. 20 to Nancy Carpenter - vicepresident@stcpg.org

If you are looking for hands-on experience with some of the hottest new topics in technical communication, this Software Saturday session is for you.

Learn about the Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA), an exciting new XML-based framework for authoring, managing, and publishing topic-oriented user assistance. DITA was designed by IBM as a way to meet today's evolving technical communication requirements —

shorter time-to-market, content reuse, multiple audiences, and multiple output formats. DITA is now being adopted by companies world-wide as a way to improve all aspects of the technical communication process (including usability!).

In this hands-on workshop, we will use Adobe FrameMaker in structured authoring mode to create structured, DITA-compliant, XML content. You will learn:

- How to create structured concept, task, and reference topics using the new FrameMaker DITA plug-in from Adobe Systems.
- How to apply metadata for labeling content for different products or audiences.
- How to create a DITA map to assemble a help system.
- How to use structured FrameMaker and DITA to publish to multiple output formats.

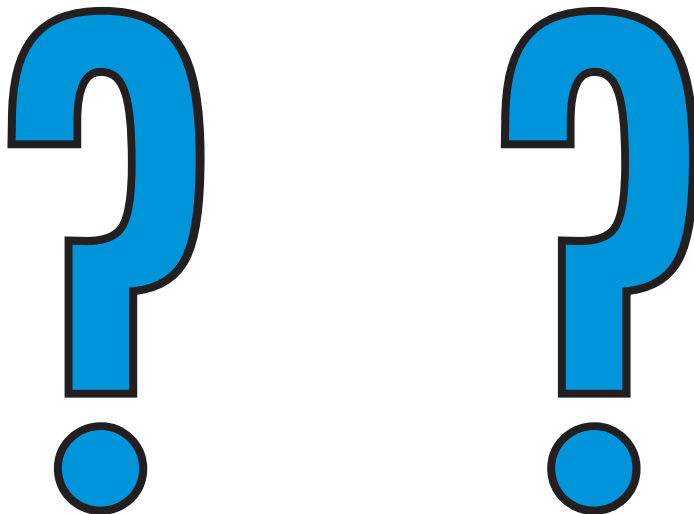
Prerequisites

Some experience with Adobe FrameMaker will be helpful. This is considered an intermediate to advanced level class.

Alan Houser is president of Group Wellesley, Inc., a Pittsburgh-based firm that provides consulting, training, and application development services to support single-source publishing, electronic publishing, and XML-based publishing.

Alan is an Adobe Certified Instructor in FrameMaker and Acrobat, and provides training and consulting for clients across America and Europe. He is co-author of "XML Weekend Crash Course," published in 2001 by John Wiley and Sons.

Alan is an Associate Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication and a voting member of the OASIS Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) Technical Committee. He is a popular conference presenter, and has delivered seminars in structured authoring, XML, and DITA around the globe.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Software Saturday #2: Introduction to MadCap Flare

Trainer: Rob Houser, UserFirst
Services

Date: Saturday, April 28, 2007

Place: Riverhead Training

More information will be
forthcoming.

Is It Time to Update Your Résumé? - by Deborah Walker

The motto “Be prepared,” isn’t just great advice for Boy Scouts; it’s also great career advice. You never know when the perfect career opportunity will present itself. If a recruiter called you today with your dream job, would you be prepared to send out an up-to-date résumé right away?

There are four critical times to update your résumé:

- At least once a year
- Any time your career focus changes
- When you anticipate layoffs with your company
- When you begin to feel dissatisfied with your current position

Update your résumé every year.

This is where many people fall short. When that recruiter calls with the perfect job, you may suddenly find your résumé is years out of date, and you’ll have to scramble to catch up.

Keep your résumé current by including your best accomplishments each year. Don’t count on your memory to recall everything you achieved in years past! You are likely to overlook critical achievements and contributions. If you need assistance, a résumé coach may be able to help you through the process with some targeted questions on your most recent jobs.

Update your résumé when your career focus changes.

If you want to change your career path, then you also need to change your résumé. There are several ways to shift the focus away from your current job and toward your new career.

By focusing on the skills that will be useful in your new career, you can position yourself as a stronger candidate for the job. Highlight those transferable skills in your new résumé, bringing them front and center.

In addition to highlighting your transferable skills, shift your list of accomplishments to support those skills. Accomplishment statements give credibility to transferable skills and prove your ability to cross industry or occupational lines. Well-crafted accomplishments make a big difference in whether you win the interview or are passed over.

Finally, be sure you understand your audience. As you shift career focus, it is critical to understand the hiring motives of your target market. Use your résumé as an effective selling tool by correctly anticipating the recruiter’s “wish list” for great job candidates.

Update your résumé when you anticipate layoffs within your company.

A harsh reality of today’s economy is the need for corporate downsizing. Layoffs and losses are becoming more and more common. But you can prepare for any worst-case scenario by keeping your résumé up-to-date.

Don’t make the mistake of being overly optimistic. It’s safer to assume that you are on the “out” list. Most people who get caught unexpectedly in a layoff thought they were indispensable to their employers. You might be important or well-liked, but remember that the bottom line always has a louder voice than you do. Get your résumé ready as soon as you see any indications that downsizing is on the way.

Don’t mistake company loyalty for a fear of change. Often employees would rather take their chances with a potential layoff than make proactive steps toward finding a new job. Once they’re laid off, it’s already too late. Remember, as a candidate, you are always more marketable while still employed. Avoid this trap and start your job search early with self-marketing tools (résumé and cover letter) that are up-to-date and top quality.

“Your résumé is your best sales tool...it deserves the investment of your time and commitment.”

Résumé, cont. on page 6

Résumé, cont. from page 5

Update your résumé when you are dissatisfied with your current position.

Job dissatisfaction leads to feelings of frustration, worthlessness, and often hopelessness. But there is no reason to stay in a job you hate. Being prepared with an updated résumé can help you feel better in your current job. When you have a really terrible day at work, you can respond to job opportunities that same evening with confidence in your up-to-the-minute résumé. Taking proactive steps toward a new career will give you back your optimism and self worth.

What now?

If it's time for you to update your résumé, first decide whether your résumé requires a simple update or a complete rewrite. If you have been using the same résumé format throughout your career, it's possible that you have outgrown the old look. What your résumé promoted ten years ago may not be appropriate or significant for your career choices today. And if you've simply been "tacking on" to your old résumé, it may start to resemble a house with too many additions, with little sense or direction.

A professional résumé critique can help you decide exactly what you need to move forward. A well-written résumé can make an incredible difference in:

- The length of time it takes to make your career move
- The quality of your next position
- The income potential of your next position

Your résumé is your best sales tool in finding a new job, and it deserves the investment of your time and commitment. With a little extra effort now, you'll be prepared for anything that comes your way—and be well on the path to your next great job.

Deborah Walker, CCMC

Career Coach - Résumé Writer

Find more job-search tips and résumé samples at:

www.AlphaAdvantage.com

Email: Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com

Is Something Missing?

Does it seem like something is missing from this month's Blue Pencil? Well it's true. As was noted in the August Blue Pencil, anyone who was running a free ad in the BP needed to contact me by September 8 to confirm their ad for this year, otherwise the ad would be pulled starting with this issue. I was not trying to be mean - really. I just want to confirm that the ads we are running do indeed represent current active members in the chapter.

Ads that had been running previously whose "owners" I have not heard from include the following:

- Bright Path Solutions
- Carnegie Mellon MAPW Program
- Group Wellesley
- One Planet
- TechComm Technical Writing

Please send me an email (newsletter@stcpgh.org) to confirm that you are still a member of the chapter and you want to continue running your ad. It's that simple!

If you are not currently an advertiser but would like to be, here are the specs.

- You must be a chapter member to run a free ad
- Ad will run for a full STC year
- Ad should be roughly the size of a business card (3.5" x 2")
- Ad orientation can be horizontal or vertical
- Ad can be color or b&w
- Ad format should be pdf or JPEG (medium to high resolution)

-Meg Papa, Blue Pencil Managing Editor

Competition, cont. from page 1

competition (IOCC), the international technical art competition (ITAC), and the international technical publications competition (ITPC)—are the second and final level of competition. Winners of the Distinguished Technical Communication award in each category of each local and regional competition are automatically submitted to the appropriate international competition. After you enter the local competition, no further action is required.

What awards could I receive?

The chapter presents three levels of awards in each competition category. These awards, in descending order, are:

- Distinguished Technical Communication (DTC)
- Excellence
- Merit

Deadlines, Fees, and Where to Submit

The deadline for the Pittsburgh chapter competitions is Saturday, October 21, 2006.

Fees are \$80 per entry for STC members (\$95 per entry for non-members and \$60 for students).

If your product reflects work in more than one area, such as technical art and technical publications, you are encouraged to enter it into both competitions for recognition. However, if you enter a product into more than one competition, you must pay the fee for each entry.

Submit your entries to:

Marlene Miller
 4259 Glen Lytle Road
 Pittsburgh, PA 15217

More detailed information on how to enter and entry forms can be found at <http://www.stcpg.org/events/compete.html>. Contact Heather Lum (hlum@pobox.com) or Marlene Miller (mgmiller33@hotmail.com) with any questions.

Five Reasons to Compete -by Marlene Miller

Here are five reasons to help convince yourself and your boss why entering the competition this year is a great idea.

1. Get **recognition** for your work, its authors and the individuals behind the scenes who provided the approval, resources and support to produce it.
2. Add to your **résumé** and **portfolio**. Anything with the words award-winning attached to it can only help you professionally.
3. Get professional **feedback**. Your entry is evaluated by several of your peers who are experts in their fields. You'll receive insightful comments and suggestions from the judges that can help you improve upon your work.
4. It's good for **business**. Enter the competition and gain some publicity for your company, whether you own it or work for it.
5. The **price** is right. STC's reasonable entry fee pays for competition expenses such as copying and mailing; any leftover money supports other chapter activities. In addition, if your work receives a Distinguished award at the chapter level, the entry fee you paid includes sending it on to the international level.




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October Chapter Meeting: Topic-oriented Writing with XML and DITA

Speaker: Alan Houser

Date: Monday, October 9, 2006

Time: 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

In the late 1990s, IBM discovered that it had a problem. The processes it used to create, manage, and deliver its technical documentation were adequate for conventional software and hardware manuals, but fell short in the face of more modern business requirements. IBM needed a new strategy for creating print and online deliverables, managing content for multiple products and multiple audiences, and ensuring that their technical documentation was complete, accurate, and effective at addressing users' needs.

To solve this problem, IBM designed a new architecture for authoring, managing, and

delivering technical content. IBM's Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) provides a XML-based framework for authoring, managing, and delivering topic-oriented technical documentation.

IBM has donated DITA to the public domain, where it is being maintained and improved by an organization called OASIS (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Systems). DITA is now being used by technical communicators in organizations of all sizes.

Come to learn more about this exciting new development in technical communication.

Cost: \$12 STC members;
\$15 non-members;
\$10 students and unemployed

RSVP: by Oct. 4th to Nancy Carpenter - vicepresident@stcpgh.org

Location: Pittsburgh Technology Council Building (see <http://www.pghitech.org/aboutus/directions.asp> for directions)

Alan Houser is president of Group Wellesley, Inc., a Pittsburgh-based firm that provides consulting, training, and application development services to support single-source publishing, electronic publishing, and XML-based publishing.

He is an Adobe Certified Instructor in FrameMaker and Acrobat, and provides training and consulting for clients across America and Europe. Alan is also an Associate Fellow of the Society for Technical Communication and a voting member of the OASIS Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) Technical Committee.

2006-2007

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