

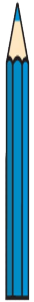
# BLUE PENCIL

PITTSBURGH CHAPTER, STC

HTTP://WWW.STCPGH.ORG

VOL. 43, No. 7 - APR 2007

## Pick of the Issue



*This issue has articles on topics ranging literally from A (Asking for a Raise, p. 4) to Z (Zen and the Job Search, p. 3). And don't forget to RSVP to the Annual Banquet in May!*

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## Karen Schriver Honored (Twice!) by STC National

**Double Congratulations** to STC Pittsburgh member Karen Schriver! She has been named a Fellow by the National Office, and has also been named the recipient of the STC's international Ken Rainey Excellence in Research Award. It was given to her "for outstanding research contributions to information design, passion for consumer advocacy, and exceptional service as an international ambassador for research." You can send congratulations to Karen at [kschriver@earthlink.net](mailto:kschriver@earthlink.net).



## May Annual Awards Banquet: *Remain in the Light: Column Writing as Truthful Narrative in a Ruthless World*

Post-Gazette columnist Tony Norman will talk about the mechanics of writing a column and how the public reacts to the various "styles" he utilizes. He will discuss writing as a way to think about what we believe at the deepest level.



We will also present honors and awards to members and special guests.

**Speaker:** Tony Norman, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

**Date:** Monday, May 21, 2007

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

*Banquet, cont. on page 6*

Society for Technical Communication

**Pittsburgh Chapter**

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**STC Pittsburgh's Mission Statement**

STC Pittsburgh's mission is to provide professional support for technical communicators in the region. The chapter strives to:

- \* Provide opportunities for professional enrichment
- \* Help members achieve their career goals
- \* Support the local business community
- \* Promote technical communication as a career.

**Keep Your Information Current**

Receive your STC emails and publications on time! Update your STC contact information at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org). STC Members, Member Directory, Address/Restriction Change Form link: (<http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/formAddressChange01.asp>).

**Notes from the National Office**

**Upcoming Telephone/Web Seminars**

See <http://www.stc.org/edu/seminarsList01.asp> for more information and to register.

The cost for each seminar is \$99 for members and \$149 for non-members. All seminars are scheduled from 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**May 2, 2007**

Choosing the Right Usability Technique (to answer the right question)

Presenter: Whitney Quesenbery

\*\*\*\*\*

**STC Technical Communication Summit - 54th Annual Conference**

**May 12-16, 2007**

Extensive information about the upcoming STC Annual Conference in Minneapolis is available online at <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/>. You may register online NOW at <http://www.stc.org/54thConf/register/index.asp>

\*\*\*\*\*

**Honors Reception**

The new STC fellows and associate fellows will be honored at STC's 54th Annual Conference, May 12-16, 2007, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. An honors banquet will be held on Tuesday, May 15. (A reception will precede the banquet at 6 p.m.) Tickets for the banquet and reception are \$45 and can be purchased using the conference registration form online at [www.stc.org/54thConf/register/index.asp](http://www.stc.org/54thConf/register/index.asp).

\*\*\*\*\*

**Israel Chapter Celebrates 40 Years**

**June 4, 2007**

The Israel Chapter STC, which will celebrate forty years as a chapter—and as the oldest STC chapter outside of North America—will hold its semiannual convention, “The Proactive Technical Communicator: Multiple Disciplines, Multiple Perspectives,” at the Daniel Hotel, Herzliya, Israel. For more information, please e-mail [convention@stc-israel.org.il](mailto:convention@stc-israel.org.il) or visit [www.stc-israel.org.il](http://www.stc-israel.org.il).

\*\*\*\*\*

**“From Writer to Communicator”**

The February 2007 issue of *News & Notes* features the article “From Writer to Communicator,” which details STC's efforts to change how the U.S. government defines the technical communication profession in the Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC). Why is the SOC important? It's used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), a U.S. government agency that collects information on and categorizes the profession. STC's efforts to update the definition created by BLS reflect our strategic objective of telling our powerful story. To learn more about STC's work with this project, read the News & Notes article at [www.stc-cdx.org/newsnotes/2007/02/a2](http://www.stc-cdx.org/newsnotes/2007/02/a2).

## The Art of Zen and the Job Search - by Joe Brennan

In the act of seeking work in a highly competitive job market, it may be helpful to use the ancient art of Zen. If we can think of the job market being similar to a sports arena, then perhaps Zen may give an edge to a savvy job seeker. Zen may help that job seeker to refocus his or her effort. Referring to the sports/job search analogy, the Pittsburgh Steelers, often will, before entering competition, “psyche themselves up”. “Getting in the Zone” as they say. Essentially, they are elevating their emotional state to a level of extreme concentration. Similarly, it’s important to learn all the necessary skills for interfacing with potential employers, just as it is to learn the necessary athletic skills. In the heat of the moment, you must be mentally focused.

But what is Zen? And how can it enhance competitive performance?

Zen is the highest level of consciousness, and meditation is at the heart of Zen. Focusing of one’s mind – to the exclusion of all other sensory stimuli - concentrating on the instantaneous moment that is now. Nothing of the future or the past should be a distraction. Our body, mind and soul must be centered as a ballerina on point. To be able to concentrate without the ordinary distractions of modern life is not only important and advantageous, but crucial. Mentally, one must be focused as a laser beam with the intensity of positive thought, which can be extremely

powerful in presenting yourself in a positive light. And that, after all, may be the lesson of Zen. In a sense it is freeing your body, mind and soul to trust in your training and self improvement; and “letting go” of the mechanical techniques which may cloud your thoughts.

Why not use this same technique in job search? So in the process of “selling yourself” in the job interview or to a potential customer, you must utilize the tried and true mental characteristics of every successful salesman - specifically the qualities of listening, a pleasant or happy demeanor, and a keen sense of awareness or an ability to pay close attention (to be able to read) the needs and desires of the customer or the interviewer. Would it not be best to start at such an elevated and concentrated mental level before you pick up the “500 pound” telephone, or before you walk into that interview. Over time the process can become ingrained and almost without effort. And when we are actively engaged in job search activities, we can be there (in the moment) completely, instinctively, effortlessly, confidently, and naturally.

Basically, psyche yourself into a charged emotional state, then trust in your learned techniques and, finally, focus on the moment. Then the negative emotions fade away and what remains as an imprint - as a transformation - is Zen.

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## How to Ask for a Raise—and Get It! - by Deborah Walker

When was the last time you asked for a raise? If you are like most people, you waited until you were frustrated, angry, and resentful. Not the best frame of mind for trying to make a positive change. You probably made some critical mistakes. You may have:

- Made your appeal based on emotion
- Given your boss an ultimatum
- Failed to plan ahead what to say, figuring you could just “wing it”

And how did that strategy work for you? Did you get everything you hoped for? Probably not.

There is a better way to ask for a raise that doesn't involve emotions, ultimatums, or even slamming doors. The answer is planning. Be prepared with objective documentation that proves beyond doubt that you deserve a raise, and have a strategy that puts that information forward in the best possible light.

### Research salary surveys

If you suspect your current earnings are below average for your industry in your state, verify your suspicion by checking out salary surveys. Your state employment service agencies probably provide a salary survey for your industry. Average earnings can vary greatly from state to state, so be sure to get information that is appropriate for your area or region. STC has done salary surveys in the past. Make copies of any salary surveys you find.

Additionally, if you suspect your earnings are low within your own company, ask your human resources representative if he/she can provide the normal salary scale for your position. Ask for a copy if possible.

These two documented sources will help support the fairness of your request for a raise. By providing a rational argument and proof of competitive salary in your request for a raise, you'll increase the likelihood that your boss will say yes.

### Prove your worth


Fairness alone won't convince your boss you deserve a raise. You'll need documented proof that illustrates your

contributions to your organization. If you are waiting for your boss or supervisor to notice what a great job you are doing, forget it. No one is paying that much attention to you. It's up to you to prove how much you are worth—literally.

The best time to begin documenting your accomplishments is in your first week of employment. Keep a weekly journal of what you've done that proves how you have:

- Created revenue opportunities
- Discovered costs savings
- Helped a coworker meet or beat a deadline
- Developed a better process
- Completed tasks ahead of time
- Generated good will with clients or customers

*Raise, cont. on page 5*




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*Raise, cont. from page 4*

Use your list of accomplishments to update your résumé, and add a "Highlight of Accomplishments" section that illustrates the positive impact you've had on your company. An updated résumé is your most convincing evidence that you deserve a raise. It will also put your boss on the alert that you are ready with an updated résumé when a recruiter calls or when the right career opportunity presents itself.

If you don't have a record of your accomplishments and contributions, you are not ready to ask for a raise. A career coach can be a valuable asset in helping you compile your list of accomplishments. Trained in the art of asking the right questions, a career coach can help you quickly identify the contributions you've made to the company. This will build not only your case for a raise, but your confidence as well.

### **Plan your strategy**

Too often, people don't think about what they're going to say until they're actually in their boss' office. That's too late. You have to plan your strategy in advance, just as you would plan any business project. It's the only way to succeed.

With copies of salary surveys and salary scales, you'll have quantifiable evidence that your request for a raise is a reasonable one. And you'll be able to back that up with a strong list of accomplishments that demonstrates how valuable you are to the company. Practicing how you want to present your case can be the final key to success in getting the raise you want and deserve.

Choose a friend or family member who has been in the position of hiring others, and ask them to let you practice your request for a raise. If you're not comfortable with doing that, or if you don't know someone who is a hiring manager, a career coach can help you craft your presentation.

Once you have your documentation, your accomplishments, and your strategy in hand, you'll be ready to approach your boss with confidence. And you'll be well on your way to getting the raise you have truly earned.

*Deborah Walker, CCMC  
Career Coach - Résumé Writer  
www.AlphaAdvantage.com  
Email: Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com*

## **Thea Teich Gave Fun, Thought-Provoking Talk on the English Language - by Bryce Walat**

Thea Teich of Teich Technical and Marketing Communications (Teich TMC) was the featured presenter for the March chapter meeting on March 12. Thea's presentation, entitled "Rules or Myths: The Changing English Language," explored common myths about English, trends in the evolution of English, and where to go and what to do to keep on top of all of these myths and trends.

As technical communication professionals, we have a great deal of responsibility for providing final, definitive answers to questions about the rules of English grammar, punctuation, and usage. Our co-workers, bosses, and clients look to us for the "right" way of saying things. But is our "right" way really right? And do all of the rules we learned along the way still apply?

Contrary to popular belief, it is OK to end sentences with prepositions and begin them with conjunctions, split infinitives, use contractions and direct address, and omit serial commas before the last item in a series. These rules come from such conventions as the study of Latin, where split infinitives and prepositions at the end of sentences are as effective as verbs before subjects.

English is still evolving to this very day. One such trend is toward "verbing nouns" to create words like "to incent," "to cascade," "to keyboard," and my favorite, "to surveille" (which means "to do surveillance," as in "The narcotics squad has assigned a task force to surveille suspected meth labs"). Another trend is to add, modify, or remove definitions. For example, when McAfee or Symantec warns you about a "Trojan horse," they're not talking about Greek mythology.

When it comes to hyphenation, hyphens are like gills on lizards: they wither away as they evolve. What started out as "on site" became "on-site," which became "onsite."

English is the language of business and technology, and is spoken by more and more people, yet it borrows extensively from other languages. For example, the word "menu" is French and the word "typhoon" is Hindi.

*English, cont. on page 6*

Banquet, cont. from page 1

**Cost:** (includes dinner and beverages)  
 \$24 STC members;  
 \$29 non-members;  
 \$29 students and unemployed

**RSVP:** by May 11 to Nancy Carpenter - 412-820-2221 (w) or [vicepresident@stcpgh.org](mailto:vicepresident@stcpgh.org)

**Location:** The Chadwick, One Wexford Square, Wexford, PA (see <http://www.chadwickevents.com/directions> for directions)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### Software Saturday #2: Introduction to MadCap Flare

Date: **Saturday, April 21, 2007**

### Region 4 Conference: "The Crucial Communicator"

Sponsored by the NorthEast Ohio Chapter

Date: **Friday, October 12, 2007**

Place: Cleveland, Ohio

Details at: <http://neostc.org/conf>

English, cont. from page 5

New English words come about in many other ways, such as compounding and association ("laptops and desktops," Internet, intranet, and extranet"), eponyms ("norvilling," "pasteurization," and "sandwich"), coining ("softgels" and "populuxe"), trademarking ("Xerox," "Kleenex," and "Google"), and blending ("infomercial" and "bioterrorism"). On the issue of trademarking, some companies, such as Google, frown upon this practice as a breach of trademark, while others, such as 3M (Scotch tape) and DuPont (nylon), don't seem to care.

Thea wrapped up her presentation by offering helpful resources to make sound writing and editing decisions in the face of all of these rules, myths, and changes.

To learn more, you can download Thea's presentation from the STC Web

site at: <http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/sessions/dataShow.asp?ID=128>

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