## Perk UP! Beef UP! Move UP!: Use STC's Annual Employment Meeting to UPgrade Your Career Path
### By Laurel Patterson

It's in the news. It's in our conversation. And, it's playing a part in our daily decisions. It's the "economic downturn."

Because of this permeating air of concern, this year's Annual Employment Meeting will concentrate on the 'UP' of things. At this year's meeting we will challenge ourselves to focus on the 'UP' instead of the 'down.' When it comes to earning a living, we will focus our energies on the positive and on what each of us can do within our own circle of influence. The challenge is to Perk UP! Beef UP! and Move UP!

### Perk UP!

We must believe in ourselves. Put the spotlight on the UP-side of our lives and experiences. Gather our gumption, and focus on the positive—on the good things we already have or on ways to improve what lacks a bit.

### Beef UP!

We can take inventory of our skills. Get prepared for the unexpected. Learn

how to conquer stress. Stay on top of new networking strategies. And because we're doing all this, we can pull UP, ahead of our competition.

### Move UP!

Then we can take all of our assets and knowledge and use them to make our dreams happen. Present our quality skills and gifts, along with our positive attitude, and create the earning lifestyle we desire.

So get fired UP! On Tuesday evening, January 13, 2009, from 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., expert presenters will meet with us at Duranti's Restaurant in Oakland to start us off in the right direction.

After a fine meal of Duranti's cuisine, **Carol Brenneisen**, Director of Human Resources and Education Services at IMPAQT, will be available to **review our résumés** and give us pointers to spruce them UP and make them even better. She will be stationed at a table, approachable throughout the evening to avail us of her years of HR experience.

Four other experts will be sharing information in roundtable fashion. As the evening progresses we will have the opportunity to visit each table and gather information to help us stay 'UP' as we work to find employment, attract

clients, or stay on track with our current career.

**Geri Puleo**, Principal and Founder of G. A. Puleo & Associates, will share information about our **transferable skills**. At times, it's to our advantage to change UP—to reinvent ourselves or recast the skills we have into another career channel. Geri is here to help us see ways to take what we already have and frame it in a new form.

**Mary Grace Musuneggi**, Founder and Senior Partner of The Musuneggi Financial Group, has information that's important for all of us, whether we're currently employed or not. Using her financial as well as her life experience, she will lay out a plan to help each of us **be prepared**—what to do while we are employed and what to do if we find ourselves unemployed. She will help us shore UP our security.

**Diana Fletcher**, TotalHealth Coach, will give us strategies for **preventing and conquering stress.** No matter the source of our stress, or whether it is experienced through symptoms such as high blood pressure, shallow breathing, cravings, or aching muscles, Diana will share practical solutions to get you tuned UP and de-stressed.

## Table of Contents

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

## President's Column - *by Bryce Walat*
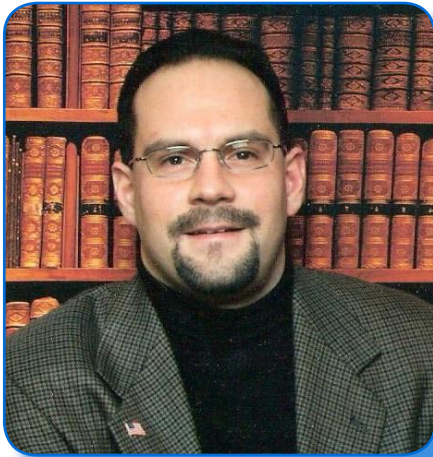
This time is a time of both endings and beginnings. For some of you, jobs, careers, and relationships have both ended and begun. Some of those endings and beginnings have happened because of choices we make, others because of circumstances beyond our control.

This is also a time of celebration and gift-giving. We celebrate the end of another year and a time of peace on earth and goodwill toward all, even though those things may be far from our minds at times.

STC Pittsburgh is here to help you through the beginnings and endings in your career as a technical communicator, whether you're starting out or starting over. Most importantly, STC Pittsburgh is about giving the gift of knowledge – a gift that is priceless. We give the gift of knowledge at work, at our meetings and events, and in elevators every day. We also receive that gift when a fellow STC member helps us learn new software, handle a sticky situation at work, or just lends a sympathetic ear.

This holiday season, and for the rest of the year, remember the gift of knowledge, both when you give it and receive it.

On behalf of the STC Pittsburgh Board, I'd like to wish all of you the best this holiday season, and a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2009.

And finally, **Chuck Lanigan**, STC member and current board president of STC WorkQuest™, will help us use various **applications of Web 2.0** such as online social networking to develop new ways of connecting to others in order to find clients or employment.

He will discuss how to blend traditional forms of face-to-face networking with new networking resources to meet UP with people to maximum advantage.

Each subject promises to give us a jump start to 2009. As we take advantage of this expertise, we will be able to keep our spirits UP during this time of economic challenge. Join us for an evening full of UPs. Let's Perk UP! Beef UP! Move UP! in 2009.

## Speaker Bios

**Carol Brenneisen** (www.impaqt.com)
*As Director of Human Resources and Education Services, Carol spearheads internal support and performance management for IMPAQT personnel and leads on-boarding, recruitment and training for the company as well as client education programs.*

**Diana Fletcher**
(www.mytotalhealthcoach.com)
*TotalHealth Coach, author, and motivation speaker, Diana is an expert at helping people reduce stress, lose weight, and achieve optimal health no matter how busy and hectic their lives are. Diana is the author of three books and a regular contributing writer to The Pennsylvania Guide to Good Health.*

**Chuck Lanigan** (www.sanepractices.com)
*Chuck works as a knowledge management consultant at a large financial services company. He has developed workflow and collaborative applications to facilitate knowledge-sharing, communication, process improvement, risk management, training, and exception tracking. He currently serves on the executive board of the Pittsburgh Regional Knowledge Management Consortium.*

**Mary Grace Musuneggi**
(www.mfgplanners.com)
*For almost 30 years, Mary Grace has focused her efforts on helping individuals and small business owners develop comprehensive strategies to help them achieve their financial goals. As an award-winning entrepreneur, she is the Founder and Senior Partner of The Musuneggi Financial Group. She is also a financial educator, author and motivational speaker, who often lectures on financial planning and lifestyle issues.*

**Geri Puleo** (www.gapuleo.com)
*Principal and founder of G. A. Puleo & Associates, Geri is an entrepreneur with over 25 years of experience. She has published nearly 100 articles on career management, human resources strategies, and burnout. Her research findings on burnout during transformational organizational change were published as part of the AMDS national conference in Dallas in 2006.*

## Society for Technical Communication

**Pittsburgh Chapter**
- P.O. Box 133
  Pittsburgh, PA 15230
  www.stcpgh.org

**National Office**
- 901 North Stuart Street
  Suite 904
  Arlington, VA 22203-1822
  Phone: 703-522-4114
  Fax: 703-522-2075
  www.stc.org

## 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.

## STC's Mission Statement

The STC's mission is "creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication."

## Keep Your Information Current

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

# STC National and Regional Notes

**SPECIAL Web Seminar**
- **Date**: Thursday, Dec. 18
- **Time**: 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. ET
- **Cost**: **FREE** for Members

***Seeding the Clouds: How to Make It Rain on YOU Even During a Dry Spell (John Hedtke, Fellow)***

"Seeding the Clouds" is a presentation for technical communicators who have been affected by the rotten economic conditions… which is to say, all of us. Whether you're a captive or a contractor, if you're looking for work or you think you might be looking for work soon, this presentation will present dozens of ideas that can improve your own financial outlook.

**2009 Membership Renewal**

Don't forget to renew your STC membership by December 31, 2008. Rates have stayed the same as last year's.

Your membership must be current in order for you to vote in the 2009 elections in March.

**STC Annual Conference**

The Technical Communication Summit, STC's 56th Annual Conference, will be held May 3-6, 2009, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Online registration will open in late January at http://conference.stc.org/.

Early bird rates will be available until February 18, 2009. Members will receive a rate of $795, saving

$200 off advanced registration rates. The early bird rate is $1095 for nonmembers and $175 for student members. For student nonmembers and retired members or retired nonmembers, it is $325.

More information about conference hotel amenities is available at http://conference.stc.org/. The official conference hotel is the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, where all sessions will also take place. The per-night rate for a single or double room at the Hyatt is $174 before tax. Attendees who stay at the Hyatt throughout the days of the conference will be eligible to win exciting prizes. More information on how to make reservations for the conference will also be included in the Preliminary Program, which will be available in late January.

# Patent Careers for Technical Writers, pt. 2 of 2 - *by Steven C. Oppenheimer, Licensed U.S. Patent Agent*

*Part 1 of this article, published in the November 2008* Blue Pencil*, covered the definition of a patent agent and the type of training needed to become one. Here, Steven discusses the opportunities available.*

## What are the career opportunities as a patent agent?

I was surprised, after getting my license from the USPTO, that some law firms, including both general-practice law firms and intellectual property boutiques, seem to be more interested in recent law school grads than in experienced tech writers. Partly, I think it's because they are simply not familiar with technical writers; not many people make the transition from tech writing to patent work.

That said, some law firms will hire technical specialists, meaning people who have technical backgrounds, even if they are not licensed as patent agents. (Some firms use titles other than "technical specialist," but the idea is the same.) Often, they are seeking people with advanced degrees (M.S., Ph.D., or M.D.), but some of them will be open to candidates with a B.A., B.S., or B.S.E., especially if you do have the technical writing experience on top of that. Extensive experience as an engineer, scientist, or medical professional can also be highly attractive to some of these firms.

If you've passed the PTO's certification test (informally called the "patent bar") prior to even applying for work—so you are a patent agent, instead of just a technical specialist—that can elevate you above other candidates for technical specialist jobs. On the other hand, even if you have not yet passed the patent bar, some firms will hire you as a technical specialist. The experience you get at the law firm can help you

understand the legal and administrative issues that you will encounter on the test itself.

So the bottom line is, not all law firms engaged in patent work will be open to patent agents (or technical specialists), but some will. In addition, some private corporations draft their own patents in-house, and will be open to working with patent agents/tech specialists.

Another issue is experience. Many law firms, and probably some private companies, want someone who is experienced in drafting claims and prosecuting the patent through the actual award of the patent. So, as with work in many fields, getting that first job may take some real persistence. (In my case, it took about six months from getting my license to getting an actual

job offer.) But it's pretty clear to me that once you've gotten experience on that first job, more opportunities will open up if you decide to move on.

Also, the money-earning potential is very good. A starting position as a licensed patent agent could easily afford you the same kind of earnings usually seen by senior level technical writers. (I've checked the salary stats on this – a patent agent at two years can make as much or more as a technical writer at ten or fifteen years.) The mere fact that a license is required to do the job (and a license that requires passing a hard test!) elevates the position from non-licensed tech writing work. I'm not as sure how the patent agent salaries compare to salaries for engineers or

medical professionals, but I'll bet the patent agent salaries easily match what most scientists can earn.

**Working as a Patent Agent**

I have been employed as a patent agent for over two years now, but in some respects I'm still learning what the job is about. (There's a lot to learn!) But, there are at least a few things I can share:

First, if you work at a law firm, expect to juggle many projects for many clients at the same time. You will not be working on one patent; you will be working on six or eight or possibly twenty. The work tends to be stop-and-go in nature.

As a beginner, you will do some work on a project and then have it reviewed by more senior staff before continuing. But even as an experienced patent agent, the work has breaks and pauses. A client may send you preliminary information about an invention, and you can start to do some researching and writing, but then put the project on hold until you can interview the inventor or another subject matter expert. Once you've drafted the patent, it will probably be reviewed by another, more experienced legal professional, as well as by the client, before finishing touches are put in place. So, you can see the need to have multiple projects in the pipeline.

In addition to drafting patents, you can also expect to be involved in patent prosecution, meaning you will reply to correspondence from the patent office. As indicated previously, the work entails determining whether rejections raised by the patent office are in fact valid, and then either revising the claims in your patent or arguing the merits of the patent vs. the prior references (prior inventions cited by the patent office).

The writing itself is also different from technical writing. There are a host of legal requirements, both formal (meaning things you must do in drafting a patent) and prudent (meaning things that are not legally mandatory, but that make for a better, stronger patent application). You can expect to constantly encounter new technologies, and you will be called upon to grasp the essence of those technologies quickly.

One thing that I've found particularly challenging is the need to sometimes be more general in my writing. As a technical writer, filling in the details—and filling them in early

in a document—was often crucial to clearly conveying an understanding of a technology. With patents, by contrast, the goal is to define the invention clearly, but at the same time to not narrow the invention too much; the ideal patent "claims" the invention as broadly as possible. (The objective is to exclude competitors from gaining patents on inventions that are essentially or substantially the same, with only minor differences).

Broadly speaking, however, the work calls upon the same kinds of writing skills, thinking skills, and people skills as technical writing, while providing a somewhat different challenge, and significantly better opportunities for pay.

====================

*Steven Oppenheimer is a patent agent at a boutique law firm specializing in intellectual property. Mr. Oppenheimer specializes in electronics, software, mechanical, and business method patents. He may be reached at* steveqdr@yahoo.com.

*Notice is served that while Mr. Oppenheimer is employed as a patent agent at a law firm, and while he maintains a Web site for his (currently dormant) technical writing services, doing business as "Oppenheimer Communications", there is no association between Oppenheimer Communications and the law firm. Further, the law firm is not responsible for the content of this article, and does not endorse any of the contents of this article.*

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

## STC Year in Review - *by Nicky Bleiel, STC Director-At-Large (and STC Pittsburgh Member)*

It's been a very busy year at STC, and there are a number of exciting events and opportunities coming up, as well as ongoing progress on a number of important projects. Here's a "Quick Tour" of what's going on and what STC members should be keeping an eye on.

**On the horizon:**

- It's membership renewal time … please take a minute to renew online. Dues for 2009 are the same as 2008 – lots of value for your career without a price increase. Go to http://www.stc.org/membership/join01.asp By the way, STC has put together a list of resources that STC provides members during tough times. See http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/member-resources.asp .

**Coming up:**

- The **STC Technical Communication Summit** – May 3-6, 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia. The program and rates will be announced soon, but you can get the hotel details and other information at http://conference.stc.org/.

- **Voting** in the STC election starts in March 2009. Look for your email notice and vote online. This has been a record year for voter participation; let's do the same for STC. (You must renew your membership by Feb. 28th to be eligible to vote.)

**Ongoing:**

- The **Body of Knowledge Task Force** is working to create a knowledge base for information about the technical communication profession. See http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/bok-index.asp to look at the progress on the portal map and personas to date on this ambitious project.

- The **Leadership Community Resource** (LCR) continues to expand its library of information for STC Community Leaders, plus STC has a staff member at headquarters (Community Relations Manager Diana Buttram) focused on this area. See http://www.stc.org/LCR/.

**FYI:**

- The **Salary Database** is a great resource for members. This reliable and expansive information was gathered by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics and available at http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/salaryDatabase01.asp.

- STC has partnered with the **Aberdeen Group** to bring members the latest research and business analysis from this prominent market research firm. To access this information go to http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/aberdeen.asp.

- In case you hadn't noticed, the **STC logo** has been freshened up and modernized. For more background and to take a look, see http://www.stc.org/about/new-logo-index.asp .

- **Discounts on software** are available for some products to STC members. See the list at http://www.stc.org/membership/discount.asp .

Everything accomplished and in the works at the International level is due to the hard work of the STC Board, the many dedicated committee heads and members, and the STC Headquarters staff. STC Community Leaders work to provide networking opportunities and other services for members geographically (Chapters) or by interest (SIGs). Together, we are all a powerful force to promote and advance the profession of technical communication.

It's been an eventful 2008; I'm looking forward to the challenges and rewards of 2009 with all of you. Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!

# Single-Sourcing Content with Word 2007 - *by Robert P. Mohr*

Having the ability to single-source content for reuse in multiple documents has many advantages. Word has had this capability for a long time, and it can be done with any of four methods:

1.  **Insert** tab > **Object** > **Text from File** > **Range**

2.  **Insert** tab > **Object** > **Text from File**

3.  **Insert** tab > **Object**

4.  **Home** tab > **Page** > **Paste Special**

Though the methods listed all have advantages and disadvantages, the concept of how to use them is basically the same: Content (in whole or in part) from one or more source files is linked or copied into a target document, as illustrated by the diagram below.
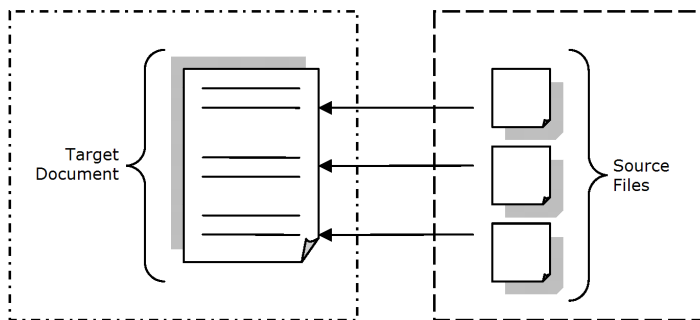


Suppose the target document is a proposal. Personnel in the Human Resources Dept. are likely to maintain the biographies on key personnel that you can link into your document. Likewise, the cost and technical sections are created by accounting and technical personnel and also linked into your document.

Which of the four methods is best? As always, it depends.

### Method 1: Using Insert tab > Object > Text from File > Range

The advantage to this method is that it relies on bookmarked text in the source files. This is good when the source file is lengthy, acting as a container for many chunks of text, tables, graphics, etc. Each chunk is encapsulated by a bookmark. You can also specify the connection between the two files to be dynamic. Pressing **F9** refreshes the link to the bookmarked text and assures your target document is current. The disadvantage to this method is that you must know the name

of the bookmark you're linking to prior to establishing the link. Here's the procedure for using method 1:

1.  Open the target document and position the insertion point where the source text is to be inserted.

2.  Select **Insert** tab **> Object > Text from File > Range**.

3.  Select the source file and click the **Range** button.

4.  Type the name of the bookmark encapsulating the text in the source file that you want.

5.  Select **Insert as link** from the **Link** drop-down list. Word copies the text into the target document.

6.  At any time you can highlight the text in the target document and press **F9** to refresh it.

### Method 2: Using Insert tab > Object > Text from File

The advantage to this method is that it does not rely on bookmarked text in the source files. This is good when the source files are themselves individual chunks of text, tables, graphics, etc. This method also uses dynamic links. The disadvantage to this method is that unless the content of a source file is *exactly* what you want, you may get more than you really need and will have to manually delete excess content. Here's the procedure for using method 2:

1.  Open the target document and position the insertion point where the source text is to be inserted.

2.  Select **Insert** tab **> Object > Text from File**.

3.  Select the source file and select **Insert as link** from the **Link** drop-down list. Word copies the file into the target document.

4.  At any time you can highlight the inserted text in the target document and press **F9** to refresh it.

### Method 3: Using Insert tab > Object

This method is a variation on the previous method. The advantages and disadvantages are basically the same. Here's the procedure for using method 3:

1.  Open the target document and position the insertion point where the source text is to be inserted.

2.  Select **Insert** tab **> Object**.

3.  Click the **Create from File** tab.

4. Click **Browse** and select a file using the dialog box.

5. Click the **Link to File** check box to establish the link. Word copies the file into the target document.

6. At any time you can highlight the inserted text in the target document and press **F9** to refresh it.

### Method 4: Using Home tab > Paste > Paste Special

This method is probably the most familiar. The advantage to this method is that it's simple and visual. You see what you're selecting. The disadvantage to this method is that you have to open the source file then close it again after you glean what you want from it. Here's the procedure for using method 4:

1. Open a source file and select the content you want.

2. Select **Home** tab > **Copy**.

3. Open the target document and position the insertion point where the source text is to be inserted.

4. Select **Home** tab > **Paste > Paste Special**.

5. Select **Microsoft Office Word Document Object** in the **As** list box.

6. Click the **Paste Link** radio button.

7. Click **OK**.

8. At any time you can highlight the inserted text in the target document and press **F9** to refresh it.

### Summary

Word offers several ways to skin the single-source cat. However, consistency and discipline are crucial. If you work with others who are responsible for content that you rely on, be sure they stick to a few simple conventions regarding file names/locations, bookmark names, graphic types, table sizes, etc. And remember, if the source files should be renamed or moved to another folder, then the links to those files must be recreated to reflect the new locations and names. A little instruction from you on chunking and organizing content will be a big help in the long run.

Relying on templates is also important and you can add a level of automation in some of your documents by starting from templates with the "links" to bookmarks or merge fields already embedded in the templates. Start a new document from a template, press **F9**, and presto! Your new document suddenly comes alive with pages of content.

*Robert Mohr is a senior member of STC and can be reached at* rpmohr@writemohr.com.

**2008-2009**
**STC Pittsburgh Officers**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *President* | *Bryce Walat* | *412-779-1795* | *president@stcpgh.org* |
| *Vice President* | *open* | | *vicepresident@stcpgh.org* |
| *Secretary* | *Kathleen Kuvinka* | *412-365-1063* | *secretary@stcpgh.org* |
| *Treasurer/Historian* | *Beverly Spagnolo* | *412-766-7200 (W)* | *treasurer@stcpgh.org* |
| *Immediate Past President* | *Nancy Carpenter* | *412-820-2221 (W)* | *pastpresident@stcpgh.org* |
| **Committees** | | | |
| *Publicity* | *Martin Houser* | | *publicity@stcpgh.org* |
| *Web Site Coordinator* | *Erin Hill* | | *webmaster@stcpgh.org* |
| *Publications Competition* | *Heather Lum* | *412-823-0151 (H)* | *pizzercat@pobox.com* |
| *Employment Liaison* | *open* | | *employment@stcpgh.org* |
| *Student Liaison* | *open* | | *studentliaison@stcpgh.org* |
| *Special Projects Coordinator* | *open* | | *specialprojects@stcpgh.org* |
| *WorkQuest™ Chairman* | *Chuck Lanigan* | *412-473-3119 (W)* | *workquestchairman@stcpgh.org* |
| *WorkQuest™ Executive Director* | *Janis Ramey* | *412-833-5548 (W/H)* | *workquestdirector@stcpgh.org* |
| *Blue Pencil Managing Editor* | *Meg Papa* | *412-243-3026 (W/H)* | *newsletter@stcpgh.org* |

**STC** SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION