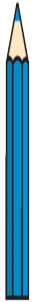## Pick of the Issue

Who would think, at first pass, that the challenges of the dating scene would have anything to do with finding a job? Well, Stephanie Goode has found some interesting parallels between the two activities – and gives some hints that may help you be more successful when searching for either love or work. Check out her article on page 6.

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Decoding Human Performance Technology
by Brad Cohen

Walking into the October 8 meeting of STC Pittsburgh, an attendee could have easily expected to hear a presentation on increasing organizational performance through innovative software solutions. The discussion became much more dynamic as Dan Hupp, of Five Star Development, began his presentation on Human Performance Technology.

Technology, as it applies to Human Performance Technology, is not about the latest and greatest software or hardware application, but rather, a systematic methodology for understanding the performance of people. Working under the direction of Dana and Jim Robinson, founders of the research-based firm Partners in Change and authors of the book *Performance Consulting*, Hupp first became familiar with the concept of Human Performance Technology, which can most easily be understood by defining each of the words individually:

Human - in HPT terms deals with the performance of people operating within a fixed system.

Performance - refers to the outcomes and accomplishments valued by the system in which one works.

Technology - refers to the application of procedures derived from scientific research for solving problems.

Simply put, Human Performance Technology is a field that attempts to bring about changes to a system, and in such a way that the system is improved in terms of the achievement of its values.

How is this done? The HPT practitioner brings about change to the system by addressing the performance of humans, the intellectual capital of an organization. In fact, during his presentation, Hupp cited a much used quote in the field of Organizational Development, "Anytime a person faces a flawed system, the system will win every time." This suggests that HPT

President's Column - *by Nancy Carpenter*

Our chapter has a lot to gain and give through forming relationships with other societies and with local companies that work in areas related to technical writing. We do have Special Interest Groups, but not in all the areas in which we work, and not always nearby.

I admit to being selfish in this regard. There are lots of things I want to learn and I don't have enough time or money to join the societies related to those skills. Fortunately, the chapter as a whole has always had the same desire to learn and has helped to bring other resources into our meetings.

For instance, my indexes for multivolume sets are terrible. They have three nested levels and I have no idea whether people actually search an index the way I designed it. STC no longer has an indexing SIG, but not to worry. The local chapter of the American Society of Indexers can teach us a lot about this topic. In fact, their representative Laura Shelley will start this task at our November meeting. I'll keep watching their meetings for topics that I want to learn, and also will let you know what ASI is doing. And I'm sure that if there is a topic we can present at an ASI meeting, Laura will call us.

I also want to learn more about training. The manuals I write are essentially reference documents for the supervisor who has to train the other employees. I also write procedures, again aimed at the supervisor. Now, I wrote my first training guide at the request of a trainer, but I've never been given time or permission to do usability testing or even talk to an actual user. And I never did hear how well that training went! The recent talk by Dan Hupp of Five Star Development gave me a good start on improving my manuals. And the American Society for Training and Development might be a good source for another chapter meeting. Or perhaps I'll attend some of their meetings.

Then, there's the January Roundtable, a regular event for many years. Sometimes it focuses on employment, sometimes on career as a whole, but it has always drawn on experts both inside and outside STC. This year the focus will be on "Hire-Ability."

What would you like to learn? If our chapter members don't have the skills to offer you a meeting on this topic, are there local societies that do have those skills? Please let anyone on the board know what you'd like to learn and we'll do our best to provide it.

See you at a meeting, somewhere!

Welcome!

Five Star Development has become a corporate sponsor of our chapter. Thank you to Bryce for introducing them to us. Five Star joins current corporate sponsors Component One and Group Wellesley.

Happy Thanksgiving
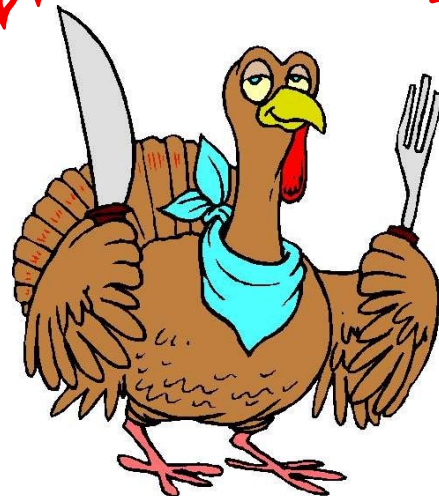
Society for Technical Communication

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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. STC Members, Member Directory, Address/Restriction Change Form link: (http://www.stc.org/stcmembers/formAddressChange01.asp).

Notes from the National Office

New Dues Structure for 2008: Q&A

By how much are my dues increasing?

It depends on where you're located and what membership category you choose. Most STC members (about 75 percent) will see an increase of $25. Others will see more or less, depending on their circumstances. For members in the United States, the new dues rates will be:

* Classic: $175

* E-Membership: $165

* Student: $60

* Retired: $75

Can I join extra chapters and SIGs?

Extra chapters are $25 each. Extra SIGs are $10 each.

Why are my dues increasing?

Two reasons: the rising costs of running a nonprofit organization, and the new services and benefits STC is creating for its members. Examples of the latter in the past year include:

* Improved financial support for STC chapters

* Improved staff support for STC communities

* Increased communication

* Improved salary database information

* Representation in an increasingly competitive market

* An international model of action

* Streamlined services

What does STC do with member dues?

STC works to deliver the best possible services and benefits to its members.

Therefore, it spends the money it receives on things that are necessary to reach this goal. Publications require editing, design, and printing. Conferences require advertising and meeting room rentals. Live Web seminars require an IT infrastructure. Just keeping a nonprofit organization running requires an office and staff—which means salaries and office space rental costs. STC staff has put together an article titled "Where do my STC dues go?" to provide more details on STC finances. Look for it on the STC Web site.

If I renew now, can I get the old renewal rate?

Unfortunately, STC cannot afford to offer renewal at the old rates.

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Honing Your Hire-Ability - *by Laurel Patterson*

Do you have a list of abilities that outshines your competitors? When you size up your talents and gifts, do they pack a punch? Or are they weak and wimpy? When an employer or potential client reviews your career-related attributes, are they impressed and anxious to sign you up?

If I were hiring someone, I'd want the best I could find for a reasonable rate. I'd be looking for a person who enjoys their work and stays involved and wrapped up in it. I'd want someone who knows their stuff and delivers excellence, but also who relates well with fellow employees, customers or clients. I would also feel more comfortable if he or she came highly recommended. If you were hiring, isn't that what you would shoot for?

So how do we stack up? What would we say our hire-ability rate is? Whether we're currently employed, self-employed, or unemployed, developing and keeping hire-ability skills just makes sense. We need to be in the top of our field; we can't afford to be complacent. It could mean the difference between snagging our dream job or accepting something less…the difference between earning a great reputation with clients or watching their business go to a competitor.

Some areas to consider include: Technical Skills, Networking Skills, Demonstration of a Positive Attitude, Global Awareness, and Quality Resumes and Interviews.

> It could mean the difference between snagging our dream job or accepting something less…

We already have some knowledge of these topics, but revisiting them periodically allows us to build on that knowledge and expand our horizons. After all, what was in demand five years ago may differ greatly from what's needed five years in the future.

At STC's Annual Employment Meeting, presenters will share information on various aspects of hire-ability. Mark your calendars for the evening of January 7, 2008, and watch for more details in our next issue of the *Blue Pencil*. It promises to be a worthwhile night—good food, plenty of people, capable speakers, and usable information—all geared toward helping us hone our Hire-Ability.

practitioners must look at the system and the human interactions within that system holistically. To better understand this, Hupp used the example of a doctor's visit. Why does a patient have to wait in a doctor's office for so long before being treated? To answer this question, the HPT practitioner might videotape all the behaviors and interactions that take place within the doctor's office. The HPT practitioner then looks at all the human performance gaps and views them as elements of systems that work with other systems.

Human Performance Technology is not new, but rather, is a methodology that has evolved from a number of other disciplines. Some of these disciplines include behavioral psychology, instructional design, cognitive engineering, and information technology. Hupp explained that, above all, HPT uses a systematic approach to analysis that includes such things as:

- Identifying opportunities and needs
- Analyzing functions or tasks
- Analyzing causes
- Designing interventions/solutions
- Developing interventions/solutions
- Implementing interventions/solutions
- Evaluating interventions/solutions and results

As Hupp highlighted these points it became very evident that Human Performance Technology is a discipline with roots in the past. In fact, as Hupp stated the points of the systematic nature of HPT, one attendee

commented that it sounded very much like the ADDIE process. ADDIE (Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate) is the analytical method commonly used by instructional designers.

As the presentation progressed, Hupp pointed out that HPT is about forming partnerships. "Partnering with clients is done to enhance human performance in support of business needs and goals," Hupp explained.

The meeting was packed with information, and as it came to a close, Hupp discussed the analytical nature of HPT, which is focused on something known as GAPS:

- Go for the should
- Analyze the is
- Pin down the causes
- Select the right solutions

Career Advice from the Singles Scene - *by Stephanie Goode*

I was looking for love and looking for work, though not in the same places. Boy, was that a lot of looking! What I didn't realize at the time was how similar they were. Networking events, singles events, job hunting online, online dating…

Here are a few lessons I learned while searching for my Mr. Right to help you in your career.

Lesson 1: Know what you're looking for and what is important to you.

Of all the methods I tried in my search for Mr. Right, the one I found most helpful used personality matching and guided communication. The step that has closest parallels in career development is what they call Must Haves/Can't Stands. In this step, each person selects ten characteristics that are absolute requirements for a romantic partner as well as ten deal-breakers. Most people accept that no one will meet all their requirements for an ideal partner; this step focuses each person on what is most important to him or her. Likewise, taking the time to consider what is most important to you in your career will help you tailor your work life to your priorities. What job traits are a must have? What are you unwilling to tolerate? What are slight positives or slight negatives? What characteristics are not important to you? Writing them down either as lists or in a table can help you focus on your priorities while job hunting or planning the next stage in your career.

Lesson 2: Be yourself.

At a recent WorkQuest meeting, one of the members commented that one of the things he most enjoyed about the meetings was the relaxed environment. Unlike other networking events, he didn't feel the need to always be "on." Having attended a wide variety of singles events, I know that feeling well. It's the idea that you have to be at your best, most fascinating, most dazzling, most attractive… all of which adds up to most exhausting. Not only is it exhausting, but taken to its extreme, you can inadvertently misrepresent yourself. Any relationship, whether professional or romantic, based on a false image of who you are will eventually become uncomfortable. Whether you are networking for career contacts or searching to meet that special someone, be yourself. That certainly doesn't mean that you don't need to present yourself well, but don't try to be someone that you are not.

Lesson 3: Be open to unexpected opportunities.

I had a pretty good idea of what Mr. Right would be like, and I thought I knew how we would meet. Reality proved me wrong. My Mr. Right is someone I had known casually for years; when we reconnected, we discovered a much stronger connection than either of us had imagined. At first, though, I struggled with being attracted to someone who, on the surface, seemed so different from my idea of Mr. Right. If I hadn't been willing to give him a chance, I would have missed out on a wonderful relationship. A WorkQuest alumnus made a similar observation about his current position: if he had seen a job listing, he would not have given it a second look, but because he heard of it through a networking contact, he was more open to the possibility. Though it was not what he thought he was looking for, it has proven to be a good fit. By being open to unexpected opportunities, you may find yourself someplace you never imagined that nonetheless is fulfilling to you.

Thought For The Month: Giving Thanks

As Thanksgiving approaches, the importance of being thankful comes front and center. But sometimes it's hard to be thankful, especially when it seems that everything is going wrong. Furthermore, we take so many things for granted, especially things like our health and our relationships, because we think they'll always be there.

To be more thankful this Thanksgiving, try an "attitude of gratitude." Take a second look at what's right with your life. You'll be more thankful when you focus on the positive.

-Bryce Walat

December Chapter Meeting: Cool Tools for Tech Writers for Under $100

Speaker: Nicky Bleiel

Date: Monday, December 10

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

Technical Writers write, yes – but producing information requires a number of other tools that aren't specifically publishing tools. We need to create and edit graphics, create wikis, manage knowledge – as well as perform more non-traditional functions, such as creating audio files and icons.

This talk will discuss and demonstrate a number of low cost (or free) tools that technical communicators can use to perform a variety of tasks, including: graphic/screen capture creation and editing, icon creation and editing, building a wiki/knowledge management system, create special font characters, creating text-to-speech audio files for use in demonstration files, automated file backup, podcasting, source control, and bug tracking.

Location: Pittsburgh Technology Center (see http://www.pghtech.org/aboutus/directions.asp for directions)

Cost (includes dinner and beverages): $12 STC members; $15 non-STC members; $10 students and unemployed

RSVP: By December 5 to Bryce Walat at 412-779-1795 or vicepresident@stcpgh.org. Please include your name, phone number, and email address.

Nicky Bleiel is a Senior Information Developer at ComponentOne. She has more than 11 years experience in technical communication; writing for products in the documentation, media, industrial automation, simulation, and pharmaceutical industries. She is a Director At Large of the Society for Technical Communication and has presented talks at STC's annual meeting, as well as regional conferences and chapter meetings. She has also presented at the last four WritersUA conferences and at LavaCon.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Annual Employment Meeting

Date: Monday, January 7, 2008

Topic: Honing Your Hire-Ability

Software Saturday: Adobe Acrobat and Captivate

Date: Saturday, January 26, 2008

Place: ProTech Training, Monroeville

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Cost: $45 student/unemployed; $60 STC members; $75 non-members.

SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION