



Quill & Disk

SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION
SAN GABRIEL VALLEY CHAPTER

October, 2002
Volume 11, Issue 11

October Topic: Making It As An Independent

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Quote of the Month:

"If I had to sum up in one word what makes a good manager, I'd say decisiveness. You can use the fanciest computers to gather the numbers, but in the end you have to set a timetable and act."

- Lee Iacocca

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

- October 28
- November 25
- Dec. 9—Holiday Party!

Or... "How to start your own tech writing company whether you planned to or not!"

About the Presentation

More and more technical communicators are starting their own technical writing companies. Whether this is the next step in your career path or an unfortunate result of being laid off, you need to know the basics about how to make it as an independent contractor or small business owner.

Topics to be addressed

include:

- Transitioning from being a writer to being a business owner--is it right for you?
- The differences between being an employee, a "temporary employee," an independent contractor, and small business owner.
- Taking the plunge—better to ease in and make a few ripples, or jump in with a big splash?
- Steps to success—how to start and grow your practice: Contracts—what they are,

how to write them and why they are IMPORTANT.

If you have ever thought about becoming an independent contractor or starting your own company, this is the meeting for you!

About The Speaker

Jack Molisani has been a project officer in the Space Division of the USAF, the manager of training and documentation of a multi-million dollar software firm, and currently is the owner of ProSpring, Inc., a

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It's Time To Start Thinking About The Holidays!

With November well on its way, it's time once again to start thinking about the holidays—including those diet-busting parties!

This year, the San Gabriel Valley STC chapter will keep with tradition and have its annual holiday party at McCormick

and Schmick's Seafood Restaurant, 111 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena. Cocktail hour starts at 6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 9. As in previous years, the cost for each STC member and one guest will be subsidized by the chapter, so you pay only \$15 per person for your meal, which includes

dessert. Dinner choices are Atlantic salmon stuffed with shrimp, crab and brie, or chicken breast with marsala mushroom sauce, or capanelli pasta with roma tomatoes, garlic and basil. Email your entrée choice(s) to cindy.kight@gilbarco.com by Dec. 3.

Technical Communication Scholarships Offered

By Lenore S. Ridgway

Associate Fellow, Mid-Hudson Chapter,
and Manager, Scholarships Committee

STC is now offering scholarships for the 2003-2004 academic year, and once again we are looking for qualified applicants. Please think about whether you might be eligible for a scholarship or whether you know someone who should be encouraged to apply. As the skills and knowledge needed in the field of technical communication continue to grow, the education of technical communicators becomes more important.

STC awards scholarships to students who are enrolled full-time in undergraduate or graduate technical communication programs and studying for an academic or commercial career in technical communication.

Technical communication includes graphical and online information presentation as well as written and oral communication. It may include "smart programs" or expert systems development, in which the candidate's concern is the presentation of information rather than computer programming. It does not include ordinary journalism, general broadcasting, or fine arts.

All scholarships are for the same amount, and the money is paid directly to the school for tuition or other expenses the school will pay.

Applicants need not be STC members, though they must have completed one year of post-secondary education before fall 2003. Students completing an undergraduate degree are eligible to apply for their first year of graduate school.

Students will be evaluated on

their potential for contributing to the technical communication profession, their accomplishments as technical communicators, their academic records, the content of their application letters, and recommendations of faculty members. Individual financial need is considered when applicants are judged comparable in the preceding areas. Usually, students are granted only one year of the scholarship, but those who have received the scholarship in the past are not disqualified from applying again.

To apply, students must submit a completed application package by **February 15, 2003**. The application information can be obtained from the student's department chair, the STC Web site (<http://www.stc.org>), or by contacting me at stcleer@cs.com.

STC Announces New SIG For Special Needs

The new Special Needs special-interest group is dedicated to providing information to assist technical communicators with disabilities; furnishing *all* technical communicators with information to help them make communication products more accessible for users with disabilities; and offering strategic leadership, to help harness technology and methodology to assist people with disabilities in the general population.

These are lofty goals, but the SIG has a highly committed and energetic team to pursue them. They have already built a comprehensive Web site, a soon-to-be-released dynamic new online newsletter (*Achieve!*), published *Guidelines for Persons with Special Needs* at the 49th annual conference, presented a highly successful progression at the same conference, and published several articles.

But, there is still a lot to do, and the SIG needs more people. If you have a disability, if you don't have a disability but prepare communication products for users

who do, or if you are committed to the concept of helping people take the "dis" out "disabilities," then consider joining the SIG.

As a Special Needs SIG member, you will (with your permission, of course) be added to the group's robust and spirited listserv, receive the online newsletter, and join efforts to fulfill the SIG's mission. Even if you are not in a position to contribute time as an Active participant, you can still show your support by joining as a Patron, thereby committing to include your SNSIG affiliation when you submit your STC membership renewal later this fall.

To join, go to the SIG Web site at:

<http://www.stcsig.org/sn/>

and click the **Join this SIG** button. You can also contact Lori Gillen, lori.gillen@McKesson.com, or Dan Voss, daniel.w.voss@lmco.com.



Notices

New Members-Only Section of STC.org Includes Ever-Popular Salary Survey

This year, STC's annual technical communicator salary survey, which in the past has been mailed as an insert to the September/October issue of *Intercom*, will be available exclusively from the STC Web site. This is just one of the features that is being moved to the new "members-only" section of STC's Web site.

Other features reserved for dues-paying members include:

- Membership directory
- Job database
- *Intercom/Proceedings* search feature
- Membership renewal and update pages

Restricted-access areas are marked with a special "M" icon throughout STC's Web site, which can be found at: <http://www.stc.org/>. Simply log in with the username and password sent to you by STC's international office.



Classes

STC Telephone Seminar: Getting Into Instructional Design

When: 1-2:30 p.m. EST, Nov. 7

Cost: \$145 (\$10 additional if registering 5 days before the seminar)

Are you ready to move into the challenging and creative field of instructional design? This seminar uses a self-assessment exercise to evaluate your current skill set and readiness for the move. It is conducted over the phone, much like a large conference call where the speaker makes his or her presentation over the phone.

You simply dial the toll-free 800 number from your phone, enter your personal identification number, and you're connected! This option is handy for those on tight training budgets because there is no associated travel time costs, and you pay per site rather than per person.

To register, go to:

<http://www.stc.org/seminars.asp>



Sites to See

Desperately Seeking Proofreaders

Have you ever read instructions or words on a sign that were so badly written you just had to laugh out loud? The mistake may be a simple typo, or just translating software (or lack of) gone awry.

Engrish.com pokes fun at woe-fully poor but hysterically funny examples of technical writing created by non-native English speakers. Although originally defined as "Japanese English," Engrish now encompasses any attempt at writing English for public consumption that falls short—and humorously—of its goals.

For some comic relief after a grueling day slaving over Microsoft Word, go to:

<http://www.english.com/>.

Writer's Resources Web Site

SharpWriter.com is a handy, one-stop resource shop for writers, and best of all—it's free! Its extensive collection of links can help any type of writer get the right words to paper (or pixel). Go to:

<http://www.sharpwriter.com/>

eHelp Sponsors One-Day Help Authoring Seminar

eHelp is offering a one-day seminar on Help authoring technology to be held Nov. 14 in Los Angeles. Attendees will learn about existing Help-related technologies, current trends in the industry, and emerging technologies that promise to dramatically influence Help authoring. Topics include browser-based Help, the impact of .NET and XML, ways to enhance your Help systems, integrating FrameMaker documents into a Help system, the latest innovations in Help authoring, and popular tips and tricks.

The last day to get the \$79 (regular \$149) STC member discount is Oct. 31. You must mention priority code **OSTC11E** when registering. For more information, go to <http://www.ehelp.com/seminar>

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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL
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We're on the Web!

HTTP://WWW.STCSGV.ORG

San Gabriel

STC

Valley Chapter

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technical recruiting and documentation firm, www.ProSpring.net. Jack is also a past-president of the LA and OC STC chapters, and was the chair of the year 2000 Region 7 & 8 Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii

About The Location

The dinner meeting begins at 6 p.m. Monday, Oct. 28 at The Old Spaghetti Factory, located on the corner of Central and Buena Vista, just off the 210 Freeway in Duarte. The phone number is (626) 358-2115. We will be ordering off the menu with a 15% gratuity.

If you're heading west: From the 210 west, exit at Buena Vista. At the stop sign, turn left onto Central. Turn right onto Buena Vista, and turn left into the parking lot.

If you're heading east: From the 210 east, exit at Buena Vista and continue east on Evergreen. Turn left at Buena Vista, cross Central, and turn left into the parking lot.

For more information, email 1st VP – Programs Lynne Sexton at lynnksexton@earthlink.net.

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