



CAPITAL LETTER

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Quotable Quote:

“We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year’s Day.”

– Edith Lovejoy Pierce

Event Summary: Documentation Project Management Workshop

by Russell Woolard, Washington, DC Chapter Member

What are the keys to seeing a documentation project through? How do you, as a project manager, allocate your resources to meet your deadline? How can you plan for contingencies, like “scope creep” or staffing changes that can derail a project?

Among the keys to success, according to Charles Fisher, documentation manager of Datatel, Inc.: start planning early, gather as much information as you can, break down tasks into manageable chunks, and be willing to revisit and revise estimates when needed.

The “Introduction to Documentation Project Management” workshop, held November 18 at ASET International Services Corporation in Arlington, VA, gave Washington, DC STC chapter members and guests the basics of project management for software documentation projects. It was geared to both

experienced project managers and technical communicators interested in learning how to develop and execute project plans and covered areas such as resource allocation, estimate development, scheduling, and risk management.

According to Fisher, thorough planning beforehand is crucial. He said Datatel, which is based in Fairfax, VA, already has documentation plans for all of 2005 and part of 2006, “so it’s never too early to start planning for software development.”

“My rule is that you should get a plan and estimates in the first 10 percent of the time you’ve budgeted for the project,” Fisher said. “It should be done in about a week. If it’s long, that’s a yellow flag. It means the project will be bigger than I thought.”

(Continued on page 11)

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication

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The *Capital Letter* is published six times per year by the Washington, DC Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. Its purpose is to provide articles and essays in the field of technical communication as well as inform chapter members about special functions and regular activities of the chapter and Society. Material for publication should be submitted to the editor:

Kathy Bell at news@stcfdc.org

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they wish to be considered for publication.

Kathy's Korner: Letter from the Editor

Kathy Bell

Happy New Year! In this issue we highlight the success of December events and look forward to some of the planned activities for 2005.

January is a time of reflection on the events and circumstances of 2004 and a time to consider how we want to carve out 2005. Take a moment in the next few days or weeks to consider your professional resolutions for the coming year, whether it be to make new professional contacts, attend an event to educate yourself on a new practice or industry trend, publish an article in the newsletter, or participate in the national conference. Seek ways and opportunities to become a better professional and more desirable employee.

I am always grateful to members that agree to write articles for the newsletter. I would especially like to thank Russell Woolard and Ann Ray for so willingly writing the articles for the December events, especially given the time pressures of that time of year.

I hope you enjoy the articles on the Documentation Project Management Workshop and on the Tales of Frustrated Job Seekers. Anticipate the information on the Strategic Planning your Life Workshop and the Content Management Workshop at the Competition Banquet in February.

May 2005 and the field of technical communications experience growth and prosperity in the year to come.

We Want Letters to the Editor

Do you have something to say about a recently published article? Was there incorrect information we printed that you want to point out? Do you have an idea that you would like to share that may make the newsletter be a more useful and enjoyable resource?

From the President

Kathy Bine



Learning New Wrinkles in Project Management

Every wrinkle and gray hair shows a lesson learned,

whether by listening to another person's war stories or earning them yourself. If you think that writing, editing, and designing present challenges, just wait until you are in charge of people who do the work.

Charles Fisher, a Society Fellow and a member of our chapter, shared his knowledge of project management with a documentation twist at our November meeting. This issue of *The Capital Letter* has a summary of that meeting, but I'll share something I learned: project management is the practice of optimism about completing the project, and pessimism about the number of people and amount of time needed to accomplish the task. When you figure that a year has 8,760 hours, a full-time employee can be expected at work for only 23 percent of that time, and is actively working on projects for only 1,456 of those hours (on average), and suddenly the challenge of getting much of anything done becomes very clear. A two percent drop in productivity can make or break a schedule, a project, or even the profitability of a group. Your project managers face these issues and others every day.

Much of project management requires that you tolerate criticism without dishing it out; provide correction

without criticism; and continually plan for the worst. There is a very human cost to these qualities: stress, lost sleep, those aforementioned wrinkles and gray hairs, the 10 pounds (or more) that cling to our bodies because exercise and a good diet take time. Finding a balance where we achieve our goals, professional and personal, requires planning. Judy Glick-Smith's presentation about strategic planning for your life is very aptly named. Finding 30 minutes a day for a walk may save your vascular system and your sanity so that, in the long run, you can take that three-year trip around the world when you retire at age 55. Judy will address this idea of life management at our January 13, 2005 meeting.

The rewards of project management can be excellent, however: the employee who turns out to be nearly psychic and brings skills you didn't imagine to the project; the project that presents technical challenges that resolve surprisingly easily; and especially that client who says, "We are very, very, very happy with what we see from you," all seem to point out why I like project management. The pay associated with the added responsibility is an incentive, too: managing the work means a pay increase of \$5,000 to as much as \$20,000. I'm still trying to love the gray hairs that increase each year as I manage more projects. I am trying to see them as precious silver symbols of my experience. Perhaps that's just the optimist that balances the pessimist.

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Chapter Chatter

Member News

David Dick has recently switched from the Belgium Chapter and is relocating to Virginia/DC in May.

If you would like to volunteer to be a sponsor (i.e., to correspond with David about life and working in Virginia and Washington, DC), please contact him at david.dick@telenet.be.

Don't Lose Touch with STC

Have you moved? Changed jobs? Changed your email address? Be sure to update your STC contact information so that you continue to benefit from your membership.

To update your membership information, either use the change of address form at <http://www.stc.org/formAddressChange.asp> or call (703) 522-4114.

Procedures for STC's 2005 Election

The annual STC election will be held in early 2005, and only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2005 will be eligible to vote. An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2005 allows members to receive their election materials via email. In March, members who selected this option

will be emailed the slate, candidate biographies, and voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive these materials by first-class mail. The election closes at noon Eastern time on April 15, 2005. Be sure to renew your membership by February 28 to have a say in STC's future!

Save Time and Money: Renew Your STC Membership Online

The Society office is always trying to find ways to provide better service for lower costs—meaning that our dues stay lower. One way you can help them operate efficiently is to renew your STC membership online instead of by mail. Online renewal reduces printing and postage costs, as well as environmental costs. To renew

online, go to http://www.stc.org/online_renewal/stcLogin.aspx. You will need your membership number (found on your copy of Intercom or Technical Communication, directly above your name) and password (which you can reset on the website if you've forgotten it).

Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for these upcoming STC events:

- **January 12, 2005:** STC Telephone Seminar: Preemptive Project Planning (speaker: John Hedtke). 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT.
- **January 26, 2005:** STC Telephone Seminar: A Pound of Salt, A Pint of Blood—Getting the Most Out of Your Contractors to Ensure Project Success (speaker: Tom White). 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT.
- **February 2, 2005:** STC Telephone Seminar: Sentence Diagramming (speaker: Ann Jennings). 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT.

Watch for more information at <http://www.stcwc.org/calendar.shtml>.

Upcoming Chapter Events



Event: Strategic Planning for Your Life

When: Thursday, January 13, 2005, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Where: Group1 Software, 4200 Parliament Place, Lanham, MD 20706

Cost: \$10 STC confirmed present event volunteers **
\$10 Chapter officers and chapter nonevent volunteers
\$20 STC members
\$25 Nonmembers
\$30 Walk-ins (food and entrance are not guaranteed)

** Please contact events@stcfdc.org if you are interested in volunteering for this event to confirm your volunteer role. Only confirmed volunteers are eligible for the event volunteer rate.

RSVP: Reservations are required for this event and must be made by Monday, 10 January 2005. To reserve, complete the online reservation form at http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_resrv_jan05.shtml.

Info: Motivational speaker Wayne Dyer says “It’s amazing how ‘lucky’ you can get when you work hard, persist, believe in your dreams, are willing to take risks, care about others, and genuinely desire to make a difference in the world.”

So you’re not a planner, you say. What would you say if I told you that you could have anything, achieve anything, if you only spend 15 minutes a day planning? This workshop teaches you how to develop a personal mission statement and sets out a proven methodology for planning your life through goal setting. In this workshop you will learn how to give yourself the gift of time and happiness. You will learn how to take the time to dream and how to turn dreams into reality.

For those of you who have taken this workshop in the past, Judy Glick-Smith has completely revamped the workshop to include techniques on how to readjust your plan if you get blindsided by the economy, your health, your life.

For more information about the event and the speaker, go to http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_jan05.shtml.

Don’t forget your business cards for networking!



Event: 2004-2005 Competition Awards Celebration and Content Management Workshop

When: Saturday, February 5 2005, 9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Where: Capitol Hilton, Washington, DC, 101 16th Street, NW

Cost: For fee options, see http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_banquet_feb05.shtml.

RSVP: Reservations are required for this event and must be made by Monday, January 31, 2005. Complete the online reservation form at http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_resrv_banquet_feb05.shtml.

Info: You are invited to our Competition Awards Banquet and Content Management Workshop on Saturday, February 5, 2005. Similar to last year, you can register to attend either the workshop or banquet, or register to attend both for a discount.

Workshop

The day begins with the Content Management Workshop, facilitated by Leslie O'Flahavan, co-founder of E-WRITE. This workshop will present suggestions on how to help content contributors write well within the limits placed by a Content Management System (CMS). You'll learn about different CMS user interfaces and what makes writing within them easy or difficult. You'll also learn about effective ways to use the CMS to establish and illustrate web writing standards (and make it more likely that people will follow them). Finally, you'll review examples of CMS-published web content and to see how the CMS affects what gets published online.

Banquet

Thom Haller, founder of Info.Design (a consultancy and think tank) will speak about applying the science of information architecture in the workplace. Read more about Thom at <http://www.infodn.com>. The Competition Awards Banquet is held after the workshop. A full sit-down lunch will be served during the Banquet.

Winning Competition Entries

As always, the winning competition entries will be on display throughout the workshop and banquet. We encourage you to come and cheer for the winners, look at the winning entries, and network with your colleagues!

For more information about the event, go to http://www.stcfdc.org/prgm_banquet_feb05.shtml.

Don't forget your business cards for networking!

STC Annual Conference, May 8-11, 2005, Seattle, Washington

It is hard to think spring when you're still vacuuming tinsel and staring at the Valentine's Day cards that suddenly replaced all the red and green stuff in the stores. Start planning ahead: May and the STC Annual Conference will be here sooner than you think.

The December issue of *Intercom* provides the following letter for people who want to attend the conference, but need to state the business case for their attendance:

Dear *[your supervisor's name]*:

To help provide *[your company]* with the most current professional methods and technological advances in editing/ writing and report/publication management, I would like to attend the Society for Technical Communication's 52nd Annual Conference in Seattle, Washington, May 8-11, 2005. The conference will offer approximately 200 sessions with topics covering all aspects of technical writing, editing, project management, and publication production. There are four time slots per day for seminars and workshops, of which the following are of particular relevance to the company:

[List the sessions that will provide the greatest benefit to the company. Refer to the list of sessions in the conference Preliminary Program, which will be mailed with the February issue of Intercom. A complete and updated list of sessions will also appear on the Society website at <http://www.stc.org>.] Although I will try to attend these particular sessions, some of the most popular may be closed because of limited seating. In that case, I will choose alternates.

Even if I cannot attend some of the sessions, our company can benefit from the conference *Proceedings*, which includes papers from many conference sessions and is provided free to all full-conference registrants.

Costs:

[List transportation costs, registration fee, cost of meals, and the price per night of the hotel room. These will be posted on the Society website.]

Summary of Benefits for *[your company]*:

The sessions will provide me with more knowledge of report production, editing, writing, management concepts, and government contracting. This knowledge will enable me to handle *[a particular project]* with more professionalism and confidence, which will reflect favorably on *[your company]*. I will be able to pass on much of this information to co-workers, and my notes and copy of the *Proceedings* will be available for reference.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

You may wish to attach a copy of *STC Can Help*, a brochure highlighting how STC benefits employers as well as technical communicators. A PDF version of the

brochure can be downloaded from the web at <http://www.stc.org/brochures.asp>.

Members can register for STC's annual conference using the form provided in the *Preliminary Program*, which will be mailed with the February issue of *Intercom*. Online registration is not yet open, but will be available

from <http://www.stc.org>. Full-conference and one-day registration rates appear below. The last day to register for the conference at the advance rates is April 22, 2005.

Membership	Onsite	Advance (after April 22)
Member	\$495	\$570
Nonmember	\$655	\$730
Student/Retired	\$120	\$175
Member, One-Day	\$255	\$330
Nonmember, One-Day	\$335	\$410
Student/Retired, One-Day	\$120	\$175

Thank you...

Many thanks to EEI (<http://www.eecomunications.com>) for providing the meeting space and computer equipment for the Competitions Consensus Day on Saturday, December 4. If you have a need for training, we encourage you to check out their offerings, which are listed on their website.

We are also grateful to the following organizations for hosting chapter events:

- ASET International Services Corporation, 2009 N. 14th Street, Suite 100, Arlington, VA 22201
- ICF Consulting, 9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax VA 22031

Call for Proposals: Special Issue on Accessibility and Technical Communication

Technical Communication, the peer-reviewed journal of the Society for Technical Communication, is pleased to announce a special issue exploring accessibility and technical communication, to be published in February 2006. The guest editors are Gail Lippincott of RGL Solutions and Kathryn Riley of the Illinois Institute of Technology.

Description

Researchers in fields ranging from human factors to cognitive psychology have studied ways to produce interfaces, adaptive technology, and design guidelines for accessible communication. Policy planners in many countries wrangle with legislation aimed at accommodating citizens with disabilities, including the growing senior population.

Too often, however, technical communicators are missing from these multidisciplinary discussions. To ensure accessible communication, we must incorporate the findings of other disciplines into our own teaching, research, and practice, and we must bring our audience expertise to bear on research and legislation. This special

issue focuses on accessibility and the technical communication profession.

Possible Topics for this Special Issue

We welcome articles that will help practitioners, teachers, and researchers understand communication principles, technologies, organizational dynamics, and legislation related to accessibility. We seek articles that offer new insight into the audience traits that accessibility studies investigate: physical (e.g., sight, hearing, mobility), cognitive (e.g., learning, reasoning), and social (e.g., resources, access, training, attitudes). In addition, we seek articles that discuss the consequences of adopting—or ignoring—accessibility initiatives in practice, education, or research. Questions of particular interest include the following:

- What are the social, economic, legal, and organizational impacts of accessibility?
- What practical difficulties arise in implementing accessibility in technical documents?
- How can we apply international guidelines or national legislation to accessibility?

- What is the writer's role in ensuring accessibility?
- How can awareness of accessibility issues best be taught in academic programs and the workplace?
- How can writers influence interface design to ensure accessibility?
- What new tools or technologies can we use to meet audiences' needs for accessible documents?
- How can we apply our expertise in audience-centered communication to accessibility studies?
- How does legislation about accessibility change the economics and practice of producing publications?
- How do accessibility issues relate to ethical questions in technical communication?

Types of Submissions

We welcome all standard methodological approaches, including (but not limited to) case studies, experimental research, ethnographic and observational research, and literature reviews and annotated bibliographies. All proposals and manuscripts will be peer-reviewed. Acceptance of a proposal does not guarantee acceptance of the final article.

Schedule

The schedule for the special issue is as follows:

<i>Deadline</i>	<i>What's due</i>
15 January 2005	500-word proposal due
15 February 2005	Acceptances sent to authors
15 April 2005	Draft manuscript due
15 June 2005	Comments sent to authors
1 August 2005	Final manuscript due
15 January 2006	Issue published

Send proposals by email to both editors:

- Gail Lippincott at glippincott@earthlink.net
- Kathryn Riley at riley@iit.edu

Membership News

New Members Who Joined Between October 16, 2003 and December 15, 2004

Meghan M. Donohue	Patrina Moore
Francis Glosser	Sharon Murphy
Darnia Jackson	Peter Rabley

Welcome to STC!

According to the *STC Bylaws*, the grade of senior member is conferred upon those who have held the grade of member in STC for five years. We congratulate the following new senior members of the Washington, DC chapter.

Member Totals

Total STC Members: 18,385

Total STC WDC Members: 663

Newsletter Events

Important Newsletter Deadlines

- All Content: 10th of even numbered months
- All Edits to Production Designer: 20th of even numbered months
- Final Review of Layout: 25th of even numbered months
- Publish Online and Send to Printer: 1st of odd numbered months

Themes for Editorial Calendar 2004-2005 (six issues per year)

- September: Volunteerism
- November: Outsourcing
- January: The face of technical communications: A management perspective
- March: Job strategies
- May: Technology trends
- July: Lessons learned

You Shop Amazon, We All Win!

Keep the STC Washington, DC chapter in mind when you make your purchases on Amazon.com. Links from <http://www.stcfdc.org> to Amazon.com contain our chapter's ID for the Amazon Associates program. Without adding a penny to your cost, the chapter earns a referral fee on items offered by Amazon or third parties. Gift certificates and items sold through auctions, zShops, and sites to which Amazon.com links, such as CarsDirect.com, are excluded from the referral bonus.

Since the chapter became a member of this program in April 2001, the chapter has earned over \$220. To boost our sales, we recently added a page of reference books with direct links to their purchase pages on Amazon.com. You can peruse this list of books at http://www.stcfdc.org/refbooks-1_answer.shtml.

Books purchased through these links or by making a selection in the Amazon.com box on our site provide us with up to 15% of each sale, which is used to help

support the scholarship fund for the Austin T. Brown Technical Communication Scholarship Competition for high school students and the Shirley G. Carter Memorial Scholarship for college undergraduate and graduate students. Proceeds may also support chapter operations such as printing and mailing.

To help the chapter, all you must do is enter Amazon.com through the link on our home page or elsewhere on our site, and add items to your shopping cart within 24 hours of your arrival at Amazon.com via the link. Even if you don't purchase the items in your shopping cart immediately, as long as they are added to the shopping cart within that first 24-hour window, they contribute to the chapter's referral bonus if you place your order before the shopping cart expires (usually after 90 days).

Thanks in advance for your support of this program!

(Continued from page 1)

Part of that process, Fisher said, is getting as much information as possible about the software rollout ahead of time—what is being introduced, whether the software will be brought out at once or in phases, how long it will take to develop, or whether the software has any bugs to be worked out. It's also helpful if a project manager has any records of documentation projects similar to the new one being planned. This information can often provide clues as to how long a project will take to complete and what kind of resources will be needed to finish it.

Gathering this information sets the stage for the next steps—developing the project plan (which differs from a content plan in that it refers to the entire project, not just the documentation), determining the schedule for finishing the project, and putting together the team to carry it out. A project plan should include:

- scope
- deliverables
- assumptions
- major milestones and delivery points
- approach

- estimates and schedules

A key part of the plan is determining how much productive time the writers have, or time devoted to the actual documentation. As an example, Fisher offered his own typical estimate for his team of writers: 30 hours a week, or approximately 70 percent of the time a writer spends at work. Fisher also said no task in a project should take more than 40 hours to complete; any task going over that limit, he said, should be broken down into smaller chunks, so that project managers will find it easier to monitor progress.

Project managers must also assess and manage risk factors that could throw the project behind schedule—including “scope creep” (a project that snowballs as it moves forward) and changes to the project team because of vacations, staffing changes, or other factors. According to Fisher, project managers should identify risks and the likelihood that they will occur, develop a contingency plan, and develop criteria that help the manager recognize when a crisis hits.

Should a project fall behind schedule, Fisher said, there are only three options for finishing it:

- extend the due date
- add more resources
- cut the scope of the project

Throughout the workshop, Fisher mentioned methods his own company uses to keep documentation projects on track. One is a record Dataler keeps of previous projects, which allows project managers to compare estimates with the actual time needed to produce documentation. He also showed workshop participants a project spreadsheet that help managers develop time estimates and track the actual hours devoted to different tasks.

The workshop also included several exercises in which participants tried to develop ways to address a number of scenarios that could affect a project cycle. One of the scenarios went like this: “Your lead writer broke his ankle bungee-jumping while on vacation. He will be out of the office for two more weeks. What are some options for completing the project?”

Event Summary: Tales from Frustrated Job Seekers

by Ann Ray, Washington, DC Chapter Member

On December 7, STC members and nonmembers from the Washington, DC chapter attended the *Tales from Frustrated Job Seekers* event in revitalized downtown Silver Spring. Lisa Wiley-Parker, a recruiter who specializes in placing accounting, financial, and technical professionals, shared what she has learned during her years of matching people with suitable jobs.

The crowd gathered at Eggspectation restaurant, where we dined on our

choice of the Eggspection Omelette, Mixed Greens and Tomato Salad with fresh and steamed vegetables, ham and asparagus Crepes Bretonnes, and a potato latke dish called *Oy Vegg*.

After dinner and dessert, Kristen Sweet picked names for the door prizes and announced upcoming events. Our local STC President, Kathy Bine, introduced the speaker. Lisa began by saying that she wanted to focus on the job hunt process and

how it relates to the job seeker. She said that the tips she was about to share were based on the frustrations experienced by job seekers and on the feedback she has received from employers. She cautioned that the remarks might sting, but hoped they would be entertaining, ring true, and be helpful to those currently in the job market.

The themes that job seekers have reported to Lisa over and over again are:

- None of the jobs on the Internet or in the newspaper match my background.
- Hiring managers tell me that I am over-qualified.
- I send my resume to companies and never hear anything.
- The interview process does not seem to go anywhere.
- I think I have to wait until the economy improves before I can get a job.

In addition, job applicants say they worry about not having the right credentials, not finding an employer who is flexible in terms of part-time work, and having employers place too much emphasis on tools.

Lisa advised job seekers to establish a relationship with one or more recruiters so that multiple sets of eyes can be looking for good employment matches. Your overall strategy should stress that you are a good investment because you can make a commitment to the right position and to your own self-improvement.

None of the jobs on the Internet or in the paper match my background.

Your strategy for overcoming this frustration is to discover positions that are not currently in newspapers or on the Internet. Employers hesitate to advertise open positions in these outlets because of the high cost of dealing with a deluge of responses. Often their job postings result in hundreds of solicitations, in addition to piles of resumes from unqualified people. Someone has to spend time sorting through all of this. Instead, companies rely on networking and referrals.

Lisa believes that employers announce only their most pressing personnel needs. The Human Resources department is the last to know what specific jobs need to be

filled. You will be ahead of the pack if you can determine who will be supervising the position you want and communicate with that person.

The job seeker needs to develop a referral network. Lisa estimates that it may take you twelve to eighteen months to develop a good network. Include friends and family in your referral network, people who will promote you, people you respect, and others who have access to employment information, such as journalists and beauticians. Get in touch with visible professionals in accounting, law, churches, schools, banks, and, of course, recruiting firms. Even personal trainers know lots of people!

Distribute your resume to your network of contacts, but let them know that it is for their reference only. You may want to put a line or a watermark through your resume so your contacts aren't tempted to distribute it willy-nilly. Coach your contacts on what would be a good opportunity for you. When leads start coming in, don't rule anything out; keep multiple balls in the air.

Use newspapers, periodicals, and news outlets for clues. Who is launching a new product? What new contracts are being awarded? Which companies need staff? Who has been promoted, leaving a possible opening? Ask your contacts if they know anyone at companies that interest you.

Finally, remember to send thank-you notes to your contacts whenever they make a referral.

Hiring managers tell me that I am over-qualified.

You may experience this frustration if you have been working for a long time, if you make a high salary, or if you have held senior positions. Your strategy for overcoming this

frustration is to identify your transferable skills so you don't look over-qualified. Tone down how you present yourself for positions that are not quite at the level of your previous experience. Let your references know what you are applying for and which skills are relevant.

Also, consider whether you are over-qualified (or under-qualified) for a particular job. Maybe you are. It's reasonable to expect that the employer will be able to figure it out. Seek advice by talking it over with contacts in your referral network.

When preparing your resume and cover letter, showcase the talents for which you'll be hired. Avoid a generic objective; use bulleted summaries. Be careful about the acronyms and jargon you use. Resumes are scanned, by machine or by eyes, searching for buzzwords. Remember your audience and make sure you really understand what you are saying to them. Prove that you are qualified by stressing skills that are relevant to the job you want. Weed out the irrelevant. As Lisa said: put your right foot (not your best foot) forward!

Again, it's important to do your homework. Try to determine the salary range and the name of the position's supervisor. Copy the supervisor on your cover letter to HR and MAIL it with your resume. Snail mail is more effective than email. If you are not right for the job, ask if someone else in the organization may need you.

Apply the same principles to the interview, if you land one. Plan your wardrobe to reflect the level of the position. If you dress the part, you will look "retainable." Develop a closing statement that highlights the relevance of your skills and experience.

I send my resume to companies and never hear anything.

Your strategy for overcoming this frustration is to manage the job application process so you are more likely to hear back from employers.

It is your job to follow up.

Lisa shared more tips for increasing the response to your resume. She emphasized that you must tailor your resume to the qualifications of each position. Don't rely on the cover letter. Personalize your submission whenever possible. If you know a name, use it. If you know only a title, do some research to determine the name of the person in that position.

Proof your resume! Have someone else read it, looking for errors you may have missed. You should also test the quality of your faxes and emails. Does your contact information show clearly on the fax? Use professional email handles. As Lisa mentioned, AOL sometimes zips email attachments. If you use AOL, test the submission on a friend. Also, review your voicemail message for professionalism and

coach members of your household on how to handle calls for you.

Create a tracking system for all the positions you apply for. Include the dates of resume submissions and conversations you have with employers. Establish a follow-up plan for each resume submission and contact.

The interview process does not seem to go anywhere.

Standing out in the interview will increase your chance of getting a second interview or a job offer. Think about whether a particular job is a good fit for you. Find out as much as you can about the organization and the position. If you decide that the job is a good fit, plan how you want to come across in the interview. Practice interviewing and get honest feedback on your demeanor.

Try to arrange an interview time that won't leave you rushed. Once there, don't dwell on what you don't have; get to the positive as quickly as possible, stressing the solutions that you can provide. Be sure to convey

your relevant skills. Tell each interviewer that you are interested in the job. Ask about a timeline for follow up, possibly a second interview.

Send a thank-you letter after the interview. Get in touch with your references to be sure they are ready for the call. If you are not selected for the job, send a post-rejection letter restating your interest in the organization.

I think I have to wait until the economy improves before I can get a job.

According to Lisa, a poor local economy doesn't have to have a negative impact on your job search. Some company out there is doing well. You need to determine which organizations need people and gear your job hunt strategies to them.

Lisa left us with one important thing to remember regarding the job search: Everything is your job! Don't wait for people to do things for you. Research, tailor, keep in touch, refine, and follow up!

Advertise in this Newsletter

If you would like to advertise your business in our newsletter, please send a message to Kathy Bell at news@stcwdc.org. Please include your phone number in the message. Advertising rates are as follows: Full page—\$140, Half page—\$75, Quarter page—\$40, Business card—\$25. Discounts are available if the same ad runs in two or more issues within 6 months.



SIGs Revealed

This column explores selected Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and discusses how you can benefit from joining one. If you have feedback or would like to write an article for this column, contact Jennifer Reed at jlreed4@aol.com.

JENNIFER REED, Column Editor

SIG Resources

by Jennifer Weaver

This month I wanted to share some resources for a few SIGs that I haven't featured in my column yet. The three SIGs cover important areas of communication that are often overlooked in our current high-tech environment.

Whether you're currently involved in one of these areas, or interested in learning about another communication area, please take a few moments to visit some of these sites.

Marketing Communication SIG

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

<http://www.writing-etc.com/tiparchivelist.htm>

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

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

<http://www.fullcirc.com/rlc/rlcindex.htm>

Scientific Communication SIG

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

http://pubs.acs.org/subscribe/journals/ci/31/special/02sb_inet.html

<http://www.sciencekomm.at/advice/presenting.html>

<http://nasw.org/csn/>

<http://www.cnbcmu.edu/Resources/sfnEthicsGuidelinesFinal.pdf>

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~carpenh/links.htm>

Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication SIG

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

<http://www.cwa-union.org/osh/links.asp>

<http://www.ehsc.orst.edu/outreach/webresources.htm>

<http://www.healthandsafety.co.uk/inflib.htm>

<http://www.osh.net/>

http://www.qnet.mb.ca/resources/ehs_resource3.pdf

Independent Technical Communication Consultants Wanted For Networking

Did you know that our chapter has a special interest group for independent technical communication consultants? See http://www.stewdc.org/sigs/sig_cic.shtml to find out more. If you are an independent and are looking to network or just relax on occasion with others like yourself, consider joining the Washington, DC chapter's branch of the STC Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC SIG). Consider joining the 50 others that have already subscribed to the stewdc_cicsig Yahoo! Group discussion forum and even stepping up as the SIG's assistant manager. The current manager, Carolyn Kelley Klinger, is looking for an assistant beginning February 2005. For more information, contact Carolyn at carolyn.klinger@verizon.net.