Boston Broadside
The Boston Chapter Newsletter
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In this Issue

From the President's Desk

by Steve Jong
Boston Chapter President

A few days ago, I was startled to notice that the leaves had already turned and were falling. Autumn is my favorite season -- how did I miss it? I plead a hectic life. It's busy at work, at home, and in the Chapter as well. Our programs are in full swing, Chapter SIGs are meeting, and judges are looking over Competitions entries.

One more thing is happening. This month STC will be sending out renewal notices that describe the new dues structure. There are three renewal options:

"Classic" membership—The same benefits you now enjoy (including membership in the Boston Chapter and for the same price as last year

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6 Steps to Direct a Globalization Project

by Gaurang Kadakia

Introduction

Several years ago our software company sought an international audience and began the preliminary steps to globalize a key product. The development teams began removing hard-coded user interface (UI) text and localizing this data into separated, easily accessible properties files (e.g., text files). They also enabled users to choose their locale, thereby allowing the software to correctly display the target language and its number formats for date and time, currency, and distance. All that was left was to send off "everything" and wait for the gift-wrapped translation. Well, they actually

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Technical Communication: Working Internationally

by Paula Berger and Bill Gruener

Paula Berger and Bill Gruener, two technical communicators who grew up in the U.S. with English as their first and only speaking language, were the speakers at the October 20 STC – Boston Chapter monthly meeting. Both Paula and Bill are now involved in professional situations where communi-

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Eating for Energy at Work

By Joan Dedian, Holistic Health Counselor

Eating for energy is something we would all like to be doing. The first challenge is figuring out just exactly **what** we should be eating. The media is full of contradictory information. Should I be eating less carbs? More protein? Less fat? What about the old standbys of

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Career Networking Made Easy with SIGs

by Karen Giventer
STC-Boston Volunteer Coordinator and CIC SIG Leader

"I'm doomed." That's what I said to myself immediately after volunteering to run the CIC SIG for the Boston Chapter of STC last year. (For those of you who don't know, the CIC SIG is the Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group.) If you read my last article in *Broadside*, you know that I'm not a joiner. So there I was, the non-joiner, volunteering to run a SIG. If I could have taken back the words "I'll do it" right after I'd said them, believe me, I would have.

Mostly, I had fears. These were my fears:

- It would take so much time that I wouldn't have time for my paid work. (Never happened — it doesn't take that much time to plan, publicize, and run meetings.)

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"...President's Desk" (continued from page 1)

"E-" membership—Online-only (or paperless, depending on your point of view) access to Society publications, plus membership in the Boston Chapter and one SIG, for a reduced price

"Limited" membership—Society membership only, without SIG or Chapter benefits, for a minimum price

For the first time, membership in Chapters (and other "communities of practice") is optional, not automatic. You can choose whether or not to remain in the Boston Chapter. Our Chapter rebate is based on the number of members, so the continued financial health of the Chapter now depends on our providing you enough value to earn your continued membership.

Fortunately, we have a strong case. What's the price difference between the "limited" and "classic" memberships? Just $20. For the price of a sit-down lunch, a trade paperback, or a few movie rentals, you get a year of full access to the Boston Chapter (and a SIG of your choice), including our award-winning newsletter; our outstanding Web site and job bank; member rates at programs, workshops, and the Competitions for both the Boston and Northern New England Chapters; vibrant Chapter SIG meetings; the latest area salary information; and the networking opportunity that might land your next job. In fact, if you participate in almost any Chapter event next year, your membership will pay for itself. All for twenty bucks? That's a great deal! (If it's still too steep for you, the "E-" membership is only $10 more than the "limited" membership and includes Chapter membership.)

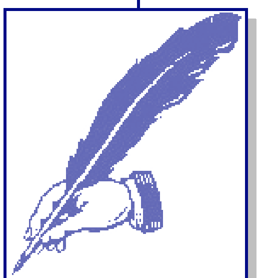
If you join in November, you'll receive 14 months of STC membership for the price of 12. Even if you choose not to join the Boston Chapter now, you can do so at any time during the year. How about at the next event you attend?

Don't let the seasons pass you by. It's good to escape the daily grind and meet with your fellow professionals at Chapter events. I hope to see you there soon! §

Job Transition Strategies for Technical Communicators

by Krista M. Guglielmetti

I was laid off from my job at Cadence Design Systems in July 2003, shortly after I finished training the three part-time, overseas writers who took over my job responsibilities – presumably at a significant cost savings to the company. But while I have since met several technical communicators who were laid off under similar circumstances, none of them has shared my reaction to the news.



I was pleased to have been recognized for my skill as a distance-learning trainer. I was delighted to have been given the opportunity to be paid to take time off, orchestrate a major career change, and start a consulting business. And I was proud to have become the founder of Chosen Path Coaching, a career coaching practice specializing in job and career transition coaching, entrepreneurial coaching, and ADD life coaching.

This is the kind of job transition experience that everyone should have – the kind that is supported by a plan. Unfortunately, most people only think about job transition planning when circumstances force them to change jobs. People who are experiencing a job-related crisis really do not need job transition plans, so they do not create them; instead they create and implement:

- Job loss contingency plans
- Emergency income replacement procedures

A good job transition plan is not designed to help you survive career emergencies; it is designed to help you create and capitalize on career opportunities. Changing jobs was a conscious choice for me, not a defensive maneuver. My job transition plan called for me to use the severance pay from any future layoff as a source of funding for (a) my coaching training/certification cost budget and/or (b) my coaching business start-up

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cost budget. If I had not been laid off in 2003, by 2005, my savings account probably would have grown big enough to serve as the sole source of funding for both cost elements of my job transition plan – and when that happened, I planned to quit my job at Cadence.

But you don't have to plan to quit your job and start a new career in order to create and implement a successful job transition plan. You can use your plan to change your job from the inside out. As technical communicators, we all work in industries in which we constantly market new technologies that reinvent countless jobs and create countless more. Why not spend some time reinventing your present job and/or creating your next job?

The secret is to make sure you manage the evolution of your job description so that the strategic decisions you must make will reflect your values and the job responsibilities you must assume will reflect your interests. Of course, if you are not really sure of what your career values and interests are, you need to create some time to reflect on who you are and what you want out of your job before you sit down to reinvent it.

Take a moment right now and think about your current job, if you are working, or think about your most recent job, if you are not working. Then, take out pen and paper or open a Word file and do the following exercise:

1.) Make a list of the core job responsibilities for your current or most recent position. Leave several inches of white space under each item in your list.
2.) In the space beneath each core job responsibility, list the specific tasks you perform/used to perform to fulfill that responsibility.
3.) Next to each task, write down the approximate percentage of your work time that you typically have/had to spend to complete each task.
4.) Add up the total percentage of your work time that you devote/devoted to each of your core job responsibilities in your current or most recent position, and write those totals next to the appropriate responsibilities.

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"Job Transition…" (continued from page 2)

This exercise helps you make the first step in any successful career transition – defining your starting point. After all, if you do not know how to recognize the starting point of a journey (career-related or otherwise), how will you know when you are traveling in circles or when you are needlessly retracing your steps?

Once you know where you are starting your journey, you need to decide on a destination. To do that, all you have to do is edit your current or most recent job description, as follows:

Note: If you are doing this exercise online, remember to save a copy of the original description or turn on "Track Changes" in Word.

1.) Delete any core job responsibilities and associated tasks/task lists that you do not want to have in your next job.
2.) Add any new core job responsibilities and associated tasks/task lists that you want to take on in your next job.
3.) Next to each core job responsibility on your revised list, write the approximate percentage of work time you want to devote to each responsibility in your next job. (Remember, the percentages for all your core job responsibilities should still add up to 100%.)
4.) For each task list associated with a core job responsibility, write down the percentage of work time you want to spend doing each task on that list, as part of your next job. (Remember, the time percentages for all the tasks under a single core job responsibility should add up to the total time percentage for that responsibility.)

You now have a detailed description of your job transition destination. Now comes the tough part – writing your job transition plan. Compare the job description for your current or most recent job to the revised job description you just created, and answer the following questions:

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If You are Working:

a.) What simple actions can you take right now to start changing your current job description to make it more similar to your revised job description?

b.) How can you word a proposal outlining the more complex changes you want to make in your current job description, such that your boss can see why making those changes would benefit your boss, your team, and you?

If You are not Working:

a.) How can you look for and identify available jobs whose descriptions are more like your revised job description than they are like your most recent job description?

b.) How can you revise your resume/cover letter so that you represent yourself as an even better fit for the above positions than you were for your most recent position?

If you are having difficulty answering any of these questions, or if any part of this process sounds a bit too complicated for you to tackle on your own, you will happy to know that you do not have to do it alone! A good career coach can help you focus your career goals and create a job transition plan that moves you towards your goals, whether by taking several small steps to reinvent your current job, or by taking one big step to land a brand new job.

So, if you've been struggling with a layoff situation, worrying about a possible layoff, or simply considering making a job change, you may want to meet with a career coach to help you get on track with a job transition plan.

As a job and career transition coach, my job is not just to help you make one career move, from your present job to your next job. My job is also to teach you to manage your career in such a way that no matter what job you decide to do and no matter what field you decide to work in, you will always know how to identify and evaluate your options, and ensure that every career move you make brings you great career satisfaction and success. §

Volunteer of the Month

Marie-Anne de Warren, *International SIG Leader*

A native of France, Marie-Anne has over 15 years of experience in product localization and translation. She currently manages all localization projects for the clinical diagnostic division of Bayer Healthcare. Prior to Bayer, Marie-Anne was Localization Director for MRO Software. Before "localization" was a word, Marie-Anne was a technical translator for the medical and IT industry.

As the International SIG leader for STC-Boston, Marie-Anne truly enjoys promoting the localization profession by organizing meetings to bring together business professionals, expand technical knowledge, and provide business contacts. The presentations at the International SIG meetings range from practical to analytical. Topics include selection of vendors, project management, and measurement of return-on-investment for localization projects. Marie-Anne can be reached at ma.dewarren@comcast.net and do not be surprised if you receive an invitation to her next meeting! §

Tip of the Month

Be sure to run a spell check on your document before you send it out for review. That way, your reviewers won't be distracted by misspelled words.

"6 Steps…"(continued from page 1)
found there was a bit more to it. This article outlines six steps for translation coordinators to establish the communication lines between the product owner and translation company. It does not address the cost benefits of translation in the first place, such as facilitating product use for non-native English speakers, reducing customer service calls, satisfying RFPs, and so forth.

Step 1 – Assuming the Project

Companies that begin the globalization process typically hand the coordination efforts to someone in program management. They begin with the assumption that once they externalize the UI labels from the code, all that remains is to process the quotation and purchase order (PO) and set expectations for the delivery date. There is often little or no consideration given to proper data preparation, ongoing translation assistance, follow-up validation, or database development, let alone documentation on the processes and procedures to manage the file exchange. Once they additionally realize that the bulk of the material to be translated is online help and administration manuals produced by the tech writers, they slowly shift the ownership of the tasks.

Step 2 – Assessing the Scope

From a source perspective, even after dedicated globalization efforts, what a user sees on the UI is not necessarily based on a simple construct. For example, our application maintains most UI data in properties files, but text also derives from other files that cannot be imported into a simple two-column Excel worksheet. We have some files that maintain the left navigation names, others that contain dynamic email text, and a few that are external tools used in conjunction with our application to manipulate and upload data. Meeting with developers early on to certify that all possible file types have been globalized into a text file—or at least identified—

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keeps the source content in scope.

Step 3 – Preparing the Data

While writing processes and procedures before translation begins reduces surprises, developing a glossary is the key to minimizing questions and rework costs. A glossary not only defines your company's jargon but also sets standards across the application and online help on how a concept is used. For example, in our application we treat warnings and alerts very differently. However, we received the words "warnings" and "alerts" identically translated as "Warnungen" in German. Had our personnel developed a glossary of commonly used terms and their recommended translation prior to the handoff, we would have saved rework costs in the long run.

In addition to the glossary, there are further preparation steps as well. These steps should be documented as guidelines for the translation company:

Data cleanup—Every word in every file must be reviewed not only to correct spelling errors, but also to enforce grammar, usage, and convention rules. Some rules, such as disallowing contractions, eliminating questions from field labels, and employing capitalization standards, may have to be applied for the first time.

Text length restrictions—When the number of characters in the target language is longer than the English, for example by about 20% in German, your UI may be adversely affected. You must establish guidelines covering what can and cannot be abbreviated, and roughly how much longer than the English the translation can be.

> "While writing processes and procedures before translation begins reduces surprises, developing a glossary is the key to minimizing questions and rework costs."

List exceptions for what not to translate—Some words must be ignored, such as module names, product names, country names, currency names, and math

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terms. In addition, some special characters must be ignored, such as asterisks for required fields, quotation marks for callouts, and placeholders for dynamic text or display settings.

List all abbreviations and acronyms—Each abbreviation and acronym must be listed and explained and identified as a candidate for translation or to be left alone.

Date/time, currency, and distance presentation—Examples in the supporting documentation, such as the online help, that contain units of measure need presentation rules established, especially if computations are involved.

Concatenated messages—Some applications generate messages by grouping together portions of different labels based on a particular condition. For example, a sentence might be "The status is <placeholder>," where <placeholder> can be "Active" or "Inactive," depending on the condition. Some languages may not easily allow translating fragments.

Images and drawings—Some documentation, such as online help, contains image files with text. You must decide if the translation company translates only the text for you to create the image, or if they are to create the image, in which case you must provide the source file, such as a Visio® drawing.

Step 4 – Communicating with the Translation Company

As with most business relationships, it is best for the product owner to establish as few points of contact with the translation company as possible. With language translation you should need only two: a project coordinator and target language expert. The project coordinator facilitates all communication, which usually proceeds as follows:

1.) Check out English files from development repositories.
2.) Clean up data and prepare guidelines document.
3.) Count words to gauge quotation.
4.) Send data and guidelines document for quotation, which includes expectations on delivery dates.

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"6 Steps…" (continued from page 4)

5.) Review quotation to verify that costs and delivery dates are within expected tolerances.
6.) Generate PO, attain approvals, and send PO to translation company.
7.) Provide ongoing support to translators throughout translation process. Some support is straightforward research, such as identifying a word as a noun or verb, explaining a concept not identified in the glossary, and so forth. Other support requires coordination with your target language expert to determine what is the best translation approach.
8.) Create images and drawings, as required, using target language text.
9.) Check in translated files to development repositories.
10.) Assist with smoke test validation to confirm that UI and online help display text as expected.

As time and resources permit, it is best to stagger the translation process with the translation company to build up the memory file and incorporate validation. For example, if you have three key components to be translated (the left navigation names, UI labels, and online help systems), it is best to have the left navigation translated, reviewed, and corrected before beginning the UI labels, and then to follow suit prior to the online help translation. This incremental process minimizes future corrections and maximizes the translator's memory file for each subsequent task. Because most translation companies charge on a word-matching basis (e.g., 75% to 100% = $0.25, 50% to 74% = $0.30, and <50% = $0.40), staggering the translation to build up the memory file saves money exponentially.

Step 5 – Validating the Translation

Under most circumstances you should have one or more in-house validation resources who are fluent in both English and the target language. These resources may assist you during three phases:

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1.) Glossary preparation – See "Preparing the Data" section above.
2.) Incremental validation – See "Communicating with the Translation Company" above.
3.) Business-centric validation – These resources know not only the target language, as does the translation company, but also your product, customer, and industry-specific expertise.

What is most important is to perform validation often, and especially to perform an end-to-end validation of all translated material prior to beginning new releases.

Step 6 – Preparing for the Next Release

Once you have checked in all files to support your application and online help systems, the final step relates to preparing the data for the next release. For this I leave you with a checklist of questions that have different answers depending on the translation company and your own file maintenance structure:

- How will you identify the deltas between releases? Change control software works well in identifying the additions from one release to the next in terms of properties files, but how will you address changes to the online help? This answer governs your data maintenance structure and frequency of translation updates.
- What is the translation company's cost structure for dealing with new material? In other words, do they charge only for the deltas between releases, or is there a cost to reprocess prior translations even if no changes are made? This answer dictates how much of the prior material you send, and the time implications of breaking apart the source files.
- If you are about to support multiple languages, is a database the right solution to minimize the manual processing? Do you have DBA resources that can work with you to create a graphic interface to the database?

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Conclusion

Your first translation assignment may be rocky, especially for a large application, unless the appropriate financial and planning resources are allocated well in advance. There is no perfect translation checklist to follow, only considerations that you may find helpful. When I was first assigned the translation coordination role, I began the data preparation process overwhelmed by how much cleanup effort there would be. With each subsequent translation round, however, the effort grew smaller by a sizeable margin. The first time is always most difficult, as you find your niche with process and procedure. Eventually, though, if you are a technical writer as I am, it may become the most enjoyable and challenging aspect of your job.

About the Author

Gaurang Kadakia is a senior technical writer at Atlanta-based Manhattan Associates, Inc., and has been coordinating language translation efforts since 2003. He has ten years of experience as a project manager, business analyst, and technical writer, and is a senior member of the STC's Boston Chapter. He can be reached at gkadakia@charter.net. §

"...SIGs" (continued from page 1)

- No one would show up for meetings. (Never happened — lots of people attend.)
- The Sheraton would forget to assign us a room. (Never happened — the Sheraton staff is very professional.)
- The speaker would be a no-show. (Never happened — we've had terrific, enthusiastic speakers.)
- There would be a snow storm and we wouldn't know if there was a meeting or not. (Never happened — but I can't take credit for the weather.)
- I'd schedule a meeting for the night of a big Red Sox game. (This happened — but people came anyway and were home in time for the bottom of the first.)
- I'd have toilet paper dragging from my shoe at the meeting. (This happens all the time.)

Why am I telling you all this? My hidden agenda is that I'd like to motivate you to become active with SIGs in any of three ways:

- Attend SIG meetings
- Plan one meeting
- Become a SIG leader

Attendance Counts

The success of a SIG depends on the people who attend. Simply put, an organization is only as strong as its members. You can help by choosing a SIG that interests you and just showing up for the meetings.

What will you get out of it? Exactly what you need, I promise. SIGs are tailor-made to your specific area of interest. Are you a technical editor? Share ideas and learn techniques at the Technical Editing SIG. Do you struggle with single-sourcing? Learn about tools and trade technical tips at the Online Information SIG. Are you a contractor wondering about rates? Come to the CIC SIG to meet others who share your concerns.

It's also great to attend a SIG meeting that may be completely outside your area of interest. Personally, I dislike dealing with matters of localization and

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translation. Last year, I finally went to a meeting of the International SIG. Frankly, I wasn't particularly interested in the topic. I went simply because I wanted to see how the International SIG meetings were run and possibly cannibalize ideas for my own CIC SIG. I was in for a surprise. The topic that night (working with translation vendors) was so interesting and informative that I learned a lot in spite of my prior lack of enthusiasm.

Exchanging advice and ideas. Attendees of the October Contracting and Independent Consulting SIG discuss rates and other thorny issues.

There are quite a few existing SIGs to entice you. Here's a list of the currently active SIGs. (There's room for more if you'd like to create a new SIG.)

- Accessibility SIG
- Contracting and Independent Consulting SIG
- Idea Watch SIG
- Online Information SIG
- Technical Editing SIG

To learn more about each SIG, go to http://www.stc-boston.org and select Events/SIGs.

A One Shot Deal

Would you like to get your feet wet without committing to SIG leadership? No problem. You can plan one single SIG program. The basic, most important tasks involved in planning a program are to think of a topic and invite a speaker. Approach the relevant SIG leader about your idea. Believe me, no SIG leader will turn you down. We are always on the lookout for topics and speakers. Your offer of help will be met with cheers and confetti.

Here's how it might work. Perhaps someone at your company is a single-sourcing genius. Ask your resident genius if he or she would be willing to speak. Then approach the relevant SIG leader with your idea. Together, you'll settle on a date. Confirm with your speaker and you're good to go.

If your idea doesn't fit in with any currently active SIG, use it for the Idea Watch SIG. The Idea Watch SIG is very flexible in its subject matter so you can easily add

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your topic to the schedule.

You can also plan a meeting based on your own needs. Why not put yourself first? Here's what I mean. Suppose you're a lone writer and you really need to learn more about content management. Call around and find out who the experts are. Then make some more calls to the experts to find one who's willing to speak at a SIG (for free). Chances are there's a consultant, vendor, or enthusiastic employee out there who will jump at the chance. Talk about killing 4 birds with one stone — by finding the speaker you've accomplished:

- Learning more about a topic about which you're desperate for information.
- Making one or more important network contacts (the speaker and everyone else you contacted).
- Adding meeting planning and STC-involvement to your list of accomplishments on your resume or performance review.
- Helping STC and your friendly neighborhood SIG leader.

Ready for the Big Leagues

I admit, being a SIG leader is more of a commitment than attending a meeting or planning one program. However, it's not as complicated as running the Democratic National Convention. Here are the basic tasks (remember, others will help you):

a.) Think of a topic and speaker.

b.) Invite the speaker and get a commitment.

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"...SIGs" (continued from page 6)

c.) Choose a meeting date.
d.) Reserve the date on the STC calendar.
e.) Contact the Sheraton to reserve a room.
f.) Publicize the meeting through the SIG page, STC-info announcements, News Flash, and other sources.
g.) Attend the meeting, introduce the speaker, collect the money, and enjoy the evening.

What SIGs are available for you to run? The choices are really unlimited (because you can suggest your own SIG theme), but here are some SIGs that you may want to consider leading:

- Employment
- Idea Watch
- Instructional Design & Learning
- Lone Writer
- Biotech and Medical Writing
- Management
- Marketing Communication

If you're interested in getting involved, feel free to contact me (Karen Giventer, Volunteer Coordinator) at kkgg123@hotmail.com. Or simply chat with me at the next program meeting or SIG meeting. You'll be there, won't you? §

"Eating for..." (continued from page 1)

sugar, coffee, and chocolate? The second challenge is having the time to make healthy eating a priority. How to fit it in. The good news is, with a little preparation you can have healthy, delicious meals, and snacks that give you energy to sustain you throughout your busy day.

Let's start at the beginning, looking at how the different food categories fuel your body. Nutrients that provide energy to the body come from: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. Simple carbohydrates break down into sugar immediately (pasta, bagels, bread). Complex carbohydrates break into sugar more slowly, and are released into the blood stream slower (grains, green leafy vegetables). Complex carbohydrates give us the best kind of fuel for our muscles and brain functions. Protein (lean meats, eggs, fish, soy) supports our bodies' tissue growth and repair, immune integrity, and metabolism . High-quality fats (olive oil, nuts, and seeds) balance blood sugar, and provide long-term energy. Ideally, each meal or snack should have an almost equal balance of complex carbohydrates, protein, and high-quality fats.

When eating for energy, be wary of simple sugars. What feels like a quick boost of energy often is a temporary jolt, which perpetuates continuous cravings for more sugar. If you start your day with coffee and a donut, you'll be hungry for additional sweets within a few hours. This creates blood sugar swings and puts stress on the body. Coffee is another addictive stimulant that taxes the endocrine system. Not a healthy way to fuel the body. What you need is a daily dose of foods that provide complex carbohydrates. This includes whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits. Are you eating oatmeal, brown rice, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, and green leafy vegetables?

That brings us to the second challenge – how to fit healthy eating into a busy schedule. The key here is in preparing your fridge, cabinets, and desk drawers so they can provide a healthy alternative to fast foods or junk foods. You

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wouldn't expect to get fit without putting in the time to exercise. Similarly, you can't really eat healthy without some preparation. Activities such as a trip to the grocery store to stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables, preparing home cooked meals that can double as lunches during the week, chopping carrots, celery, or fresh fruit to have healthy snacks available, need to be part of your routine. It's helpful to start off slowly, incorporating one or two items into your day. Healthy eating is an addictive behavior. Once you are able to implement it into your life and feel the positive effects you will naturally want it to continue.

Here are a few strategies to maintain your energy during the work day:

Drink more water—Dehydration causes lethargy and drowsiness. Try drinking water throughout your day. Water hydrates your body.

Enjoy the fresh air—A walk around the block is often what you need to calm the body down and re-energize. This is especially helpful after lunch. So walk past the vending machine and grab a breath of fresh air instead of a chocolate bar.

Increase your physical activity—Take the stairs rather than the elevator, park in the back of the office parking lot. These small changes will make a difference once they become a habit.

Have healthy snacks on hand—Keep a bag of baby carrots with humus, or celery and peanut butter in your office refrigerator. Trail mix, in single portion servings, is convenient to have at your desk. Fruit is the all-time convenience food.

Being informed and prepared helps you make smarter, healthier choices.

About the Author

Joan Dedian is a Holistic Health Counselor. She practices in Natick, MA and can be reached at www.NourishmentforLiving.com. §

"Technical Comm…" (continued from page 1)

cating with non-native English speakers is important. Bill, who is also an author of this article, believes that as both the EU and Pacific Rim become economically stronger, more and more of us will need to communicate with business associates and decision makers for whom English is a second or even third or fourth language.

The theme of the program was that although we, as American English speakers, may not learn to speak several languages, we can enhance multi-cultural communication by making word and syntax choices and by understanding and respecting non-U.S. cultures. Also, as the balance of power and economic influence becomes more global and as we must make decisions with, or even report to, nonnative English speakers, the need to communicate effectively and precisely becomes ever more important.

Bill talked about the words, phrases, and sentences to use when working with nonnative speakers, and Paula addressed cultural issues and adapting to new work styles.

Both worked in Europe, Paula in Italy for one and a half years and Bill in France for a month, and both believe that even if a technical communicator does not travel overseas in a working capacity, our global village creates the increased and often frequent need to communicate by telephone or video conference. Both agree that conducting business, making decisions, and obtaining agreement and approvals become far more challenging when the chances for misinterpretation and misunderstanding are greater because of different word choices, different pronunciations, and different cultural expectations. But, even if the culture and communication are different, both agree and Paula stresses: many things are different, but more things are the same.

Bill addressed five major areas of communication that fall into two parts: interpersonal communication and language choices. Interpersonal communication involves communicating person-to-person, communicating by telephone, and communicating by email. He

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stresses using the English language in constructions that enhance communication and choosing words that reduce the chance of misinterpretation and misunderstanding.

Communicating Person-to-Person and by Telephone

- Have face-to-face conversations whenever possible because body language adds meaning.
- Enunciate clearly and speak slowly when giving a phone number, address, or some other number.
- Avoid noisy locations where multiple conversations may happen.
- Speak up and ask for the speaker to repeat or explain when you don't understand. Being shy does not help.
- Repeat important concepts and ask again whether the listener understands.

Working in a global environment. Bill Gruener talks about the cultural and language differences that professionals must often overcome when working together in the international community.

Writing Email Messages and Other Documentation

- Reread and edit everything including email messages.
- Spell check everything including email messages, and remember that spell checkers accept the words "to" and "too" so rereading is important.
- Delete words and sentences even if you think an added explanation is important. Less is more.

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Using the English Language Effectively

- Use simple sentences in subject-verb-object constructions, and avoid compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence constructions.
- Avoid pronouns even if repeating the noun is cumbersome.
- Ask questions that can be answered yes or no.

Choosing Words

- Use common English words found in small, simpler dictionaries, and choose the first definition.
- Avoid phrasal verbs ending with off, up, or on.
- Avoid using the verbs get, look, take, or put because these verbs have many varied meanings.
- Avoid idioms, idiomatic phrases, metaphors, everyday jargon, and local expressions.
- Use zero instead of O.

Paula examined the worlds of business, culture, and people. Her strongest suggestion is to learn not to judge—accept that many things are "different," not better or worse, just different. She stresses that no matter where you go people are more alike than different. That's the good news. The bad news is that the differences can make life difficult. The following lists highlight major things that will be different and that need to be noted and respected if working with non-U.S. folks.

The World of Business

- The style of American business is starting to dominate business worldwide, but that doesn't mean anything actually works the same way as it does in the U.S. Find a mentor who knows both worlds and let your mentor guide you.
- The words "international" and "overseas" mean something completely different outside the U.S.
- Outside the U.S. everyone knows a lot about the American culture, however,

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"Technical Comm…" (continued from page 8)

we tend to know little about other cultures.

- The work day is often different, including everything from hours to eating meals at work to what coffee breaks are like.
- Meeting styles may be very different. Acknowledging the importance of staff hierarchies and team structure may dictate a different approach to interpersonal interactions. Priorities are often quite different, too.
- Be aware of the differences in legal systems that can affect contracts and recourse in case of problems.
- Remember that financial issues often come into play. Different currencies are the easy part. More complicated can be handling banking, payment terms, and payment methods.
- It is more common outside the US for people to work only during work hours. If they do happen to have email at home (which may be uncommon, depending on the country), they often will not even think of answering an email at night.
- Vacations are quite different, particularly in Europe. A vacation shorter than two weeks is uncommon. Generally, people take off a minimum of three weeks during the summer and often take five or six weeks. Many businesses close down completely for the month of August in Europe.

The World of Culture

- Be respectful, be open-minded, and be aware of how little you really know. You are not working in Kansas any more.
- Follow the communication standards in the country you are working in. What is the proper way to answer the phone? Do people use text messaging instead of cell phone calls (often texting is much less expensive)?
- What should you wear? Apparel choices, jewelry, even polished nails can deliver unintended messages. Find out what the standards are and make conservative choices.

(continued on next column)

- Day-to-day living can be unfamiliar. Dryers are uncommon in parts of the world, as are freezers. Locks and keys may work differently. Do you need a ticket to get on the bus? Is there anywhere to buy one after 6 pm? Do you also need a ticket to get off? Small things can trip you up.
- Never address anyone by their first name until you are told to do so. Americans are quite casual about this, and it can get you in trouble. Titles are much more important, too. Paula was constantly addressed as "Doctor", simply because that was a standard title for a respected professional.
- Remember to adapt your units of measurement. Learning to think in centimeters and grams is critical in much of the world.

The World of People

- Follow the lead of your colleagues. Watch and listen to everyone around you. And, smile as much as you can, because smiling will usually overcome the errors you make.
- Physical interactions are different. Find out what's expected—handshakes, bows, or hugs? What are the guidelines for touching and personal space?
- Watch for differences in body language. Nodding may mean "no"! Eye contact may be very acceptable or totally unacceptable.
- People who speak the same native language often make identical errors when speaking English. Learn to recognize common errors, so you understand what is actually meant. Don't keep correcting people.
- Don't correct anyone's English unless they specifically ask you to (and make them ask more than once). Always do it privately and in a positive way. §

Upcoming STC Seminars

The 2004–2005 seminar series is the Society's most ambitious to date. Among the scheduled presenters are members who have published widely, served at high levels in the Society, and received outstanding scores for their conference presentations. The following seminar is scheduled for December (To view the complete seminar schedule, please visit stc.webex.com):

December 8—*Highlighting Hazards: Mastering Warnings and Error Messages*

Presenter Leah Guren's experience as a writer, editor, technical publications manager, and consultant allowed her to develop a variety of specialized training programs in the field. She currently trains new writers through the course she developed for In Other WORDS, Israel's leading technical communication company. A senior STC member, Leah is a popular speaker at STC and other international technical communication conferences.

All seminars are held from 1–2:30 PM Eastern Time. Each seminar costs $99 per site for STC members; the nonmember rate is $149 per site. A site can have only one phone connection and one computer connection. Registrants will be issued an enrollment ID, passcode, and phone number when they register and pay for the seminar. If registrants forward their ID, passcode, and/or phone number to others, or use this information on more than one computer or phone connection, they will be billed $150 for each additional connection used.

In addition to offering high-quality training at an affordable price, STC's seminar series features a quick and simple online registration process. Members can sign up for seminars and view detailed descriptions online.

More information about presenters and seminars will appear in upcoming issues of the society publication *Tieline* and on the STC Web site. Be sure to check the Web site frequently for an up-to-date list of seminars. §

Society Dues Renewal Deadline and Rates

Editor's Note: *STC members will soon have the opportunity to renew their annual society dues. The information below appears on the society* Web site.

The STC office is currently developing an online dues renewal form for the Society Web site. The office has notified members via e-mail that the online renewal form is ready.

Printed dues renewal invoices will be mailed in late November to all members who do not renew their memberships online. For membership dues, STC accepts checks in U.S. dollars or Canadian equivalent, and American Express, MasterCard, and VISA payments. Dues payments must be received by January 1, 2005. (A grace period extends to February 28, 2005.) Note that only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2005, will be eligible to vote in the STC election.

The renewal invoices for 2005 allow members to choose one of four new individual membership categories approved by the STC board of directors. (For more information on the new categories, visit the Transformation Web site.) §

The Broadside Staff

The *Boston Broadside* is published six times throughout the calendar year and would not be possible without the hard work of dedicated volunteers. I would like to thank the following people for their contributions.

Broadside Staff

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Bill Gruener,
Columnist/Photographer

Christine Jacobs,
Copy Editor

Len Rizzy,
Copy Editor

Authors

Paula Berger

Joan Dedian

Karen Giventer

Bill Gruener

Krista M. Guglielmetti

Steve Jong

Gaurang Kadakia

Thanks a bunch!

Jon Harvey
Managing Editor
Boston Broadside

Write for the Broadside

The *Boston Broadside* encourages Chapter members to share their skills, thoughts, and ideas with other professionals in the Chapter.

If you would like to write for an upcoming issue of the *Boston Broadside*, send an email message to bostonbroadside@yahoo.com.

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