



Boston Broadside

The Boston Chapter Newsletter

May 2006

In this Issue

Society Awards	1
From the President's Desk	1
Future Perfect?.....	3
Plan Now to Enter	4
Challenges Facing Documentation Teams	4
Answering the Technical Documentation Need:Turning Chinese English into English English	5
Use Your Resume To Help Negotiate a Higher Salary.....	8
Proposal Writing and Marketing Communications.....	9
Advanced FrameMaker.....	10
Boston Chapter Council.....	12
The Broadside Staff	12

From the President's Desk

STC Really Does Help Your Career!

by Greg Bartlett,
Boston Chapter President

The mission for the STC-Boston chapter is to

- Best serve our membership and nurture an active, involved, and growing member base.
- Provide professional development opportunities for technical communicators, especially around the technology of information design and delivery.
- Provide leadership in defining the needs for technical communication in the future and the job skills that will be required.

“...President's Desk (continued on page 2)”

Society Awards

John Garison and Hans Fenstermacher Named STC Associate Fellows

By Steven Jong

The Nominating Committee of the Boston Chapter is proud to announce that John Garison and Hans Fenstermacher have been named Associate Fellows of the Society for Technical Communication. John was honored for his contributions to help others understand the cutting edge of online information; for producing and managing numerous professional conferences; and for establishing technical writing groups at multiple companies, thereby creating opportunities for technical communicators. Hans was honored for his leadership, business savvy, wisdom, and friendship that inspire excellence in technical communications worldwide and raise the bar of quality in technical communications.

This honor is conferred upon a select group of senior STC members for outstanding service and leadership in promoting awareness of the technical communication profession. Members must be nominated by their chapter or community, and then approved by a committee composed of STC fellows and associate fellows. Less than one percent of STC's 18,000 members are associate fellows.

Professional Background



Hans, who lives in Andover, MA, received his BA degree, summa cum laude, in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Princeton University, and his MA in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He is also a member of the American Translators Association and the Professional Communication Society of IEEE. Hans began working in 1980 as a freelance translator of technical and other documentation; he also worked for All-Language Services, the Los Angeles Olympic Games of 1984, and the Department of Defense. In 1990 he joined Harvard Translation as a translator and production

manager and later worked at Poly-Lingua. In 1994 Hans founded ArchiText, a translation, localization, and globalization services company, where he remains as president.



John, who currently lives in Chester, VT, received his BA degree in English and Philosophy from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Starting in 1973, he worked as a technical writer at Interactive Data Corporation, Digital Equipment Corporation, and The Analytical Sciences Corporation. From 1982 to 1987 he was a program manager and supervisor at Wang Laboratories. He then began the documentation group at Fact International, Ltd., in Auckland, New Zealand. John returned to the US in 1989 and subsequently worked as a manager or director of documentation at Documentation Development Inc., Keyfile Corporation, AT&T New Media Services, and Centra Software. From 1995 to 1998 he

“Society Awards...(continued on page 2)”

“...President’s Desk”

- Develop a sense of community among STC members and technical communicators in the area.
- Increase visibility and perceived value of the technical communication profession within the industry.
- Encourage the pursuit of careers in technical communication.

All of these contribute to supporting your career opportunities and growth. I see that in action every day, as the President of the chapter and as a hiring manager at the MathWorks, Inc. Here are some of the key ways STC helps your career.

Job Bank

The STC-Boston Job Bank today has over 50 positions posted; 9 were added in the past two weeks, and the oldest is from January. In the current Web poll, 29% of respondents cited the Job Bank as the primary reason for being a member. (Another 19% said networking was their primary reason.)

As a hiring manager, I make sure our company’s technical writing positions and Web positions get posted on the Job Bank. We have hired several folks who have heard about our positions from the Job Bank.

Some companies have indicated that they post exclusively to our Job Bank.

Early Announcements at Meetings

At program meetings and SIG meetings, attendees are invited to announce job opportunities. Sometimes this is the first forum where the jobs are announced. At CIC SIG meetings, there are often exclusive announcements of contract positions.

Networking

As members get to know their fellow technical communicators through STC, they often exchange information about job opportunities, give background about companies they have worked for, etc. Sometimes one person will refer someone else they know who they think might be right for a position.

“...President’s Desk (continued on page 3)”

“Society Awards...”

worked at Help University, Inc. as director of corporate communications. From 1999 to 2005 he was a documentation manager at iDE, Inc. John currently works as an engineering project manager at Hewlett-Packard, leading a group documenting a network management reporting application.

Contributions to the Advancement of Technical Communication

In creating technical writing groups at multiple companies, John has created career opportunities for many technical communicators. Additionally, he has demonstrated his commitment to education as a teacher and mentor to many colleagues and employees. John started teaching a technical communications methodology course at Harvard Extension School in 1982, and for six years taught similar courses as part of a certificate program in applied sciences. He was one of the original faculty members in the University of Massachusetts-Lowell’s respected Technical Writing Certificate program, for 10 years teaching “Intro to Tech Writing,” as well as Online Help classes. He also suggested new curricula and recruited faculty members.

John has produced, managed, or presented at numerous professional conferences. He joined the InterChange Conference committee and served on it for 10 years, two as chair of the conference. He was a Principal in Help University and produced six conferences in three years in the US and Australia. He has also presented at the WinWriters’ Web Help Jumpstart conference, the Training Support and Management conference, several Help University Web and Help Developers conferences, and several STC Annual Conferences. John was the keynote speaker at the first New Zealand Technical Writers conference.

Hans founded the Globalization And Localization Association (GALA) in 2005. GALA is a fully representative, non-profit, international industry association for translation, internationalization, localization, and globalization. GALA started with 12 company members and has grown to over 170 members worldwide.

In addition, Hans has presented at over 40 conferences, chapter programs, workshops, and STC telephone seminars.

Service to the Society

Hans served as Administrative Council member at large, first vice president, and, in 2001, Boston chapter president. During his administration he successfully integrated the former Society for Documentation Professionals. He also brought the Administrative council to a new level of efficiency by hiring an administrative assistant, decreasing expenses, and initiating a yearly crossover meeting for incoming Council members. As a result of his efforts, the chapter won the Society’s Award of Distinction for the first time in 20 years.

Hans has also served the Boston chapter Competitions as a judge and as a member of the competitions, oversight, and PR committees.

Over the years John has served both the Boston and Northern New England chapters in a number of roles. Between 1996 and 1999 he served three terms on the Boston Chapter Administrative Council. He has made many program and SIG presentations, participated on panels, hosted events, presented awards, and even served as the entertainment. He has served as a judge, best-of-show judge, and best-of-show facilitator in the Boston/Northern New England Competitions.

At the Society level, from 1999 to the present John has served the International Online Communications Competition as a judge and best-of-show judge. In 2003 he served as the Tools and Technologies stem manager for the 50th Annual Conference. Beginning in 2004 he served a two-year term on the STC Nominating committee. In 2005 he served on the STC Governance Committee, looking at the Society Bylaws.

“Society Awards...(continued on page 3)”

Recently I received an inquiry from a hiring manager asking if I knew of anyone who might be good for a documentation manager position. Without hesitation, I recommended that he get in touch with someone with whom I’ve worked on STC activities for several years. Having seen that person in action as an STC volunteer gave me even more insights into his many strengths. The hiring manager interviewed my STC colleague.

Resume Building Through Volunteering

Simply including on your resume that you are a member of STC conveys to hiring managers that you are serious about your profession and in continuing to increase your knowledge and improve your skills.

Your resume looks even more impressive if you can add STC activities which you contributed to as a volunteer. Being a judge for competitions, organizing programs or SIGs, writing articles, etc. are all examples of your leadership and job skills, and your technical knowledge. Volunteer roles listed on a resume indicate to a hiring manager that you have a level of commitment to your profession and a willingness to go the extra mile.

Growth in Your Current Job

STC exposes you to new technologies and techniques that help you to take on initiatives in your current position. That, in turn, increases your value in your organization.

Expanding the kinds of roles you play in your current job not only benefits you in the short term, but also puts you in a better position in the future, if you seek a job elsewhere.

Invaluable Contributions

John is a popular and effective presenter and public speaker. He is always willing to share his knowledge and experience in an informative and entertaining manner.

John has often been one of the first people to join a company, and after creating early information content and delivery platforms, has set high standards and then hired people to continue the ongoing development of the content.

Hans is a person of integrity and enthusiasm. He looks at each day anticipating its opportunity. He mentors at ArchiText, STC, GALA, and other professional organizations. As anyone who has met him can attest, Hans oozes charisma, so when he gives a presentation, the audience hangs on his every word.

Due to Hans’s leadership, the STC Boston Chapter has exploded with new processes, checklists, action items, and accountability.

The Society welcomes both John and Hans to the ranks of Associate Fellows.



Future Perfect?

by Cindy Currie,
STC Region 1 Director

The Die is Cast! The voting period for the annual elections has ended. I can’t wait to learn whom we’ve chosen to help drive the STC to new levels of professional leadership and prestige in the near future. Look for the election results to be announced very soon!

Future View! And speaking of the future, did you know that the STC Strategic Planning Committee is starting to work on the creation of a new three-year strategic plan? The new plan will be for the 2007 – 2010 years. Strategic Planning committee volunteers are beginning to hold a series of focus groups with members around the world to gather your input about what the future of technical communication will look like. I have recently conducted two focus groups myself with the help of two of my board colleagues. And, I’m learning a great deal in the process!

When asked “What will the profession of technical communication look like in the future?” one focus group participant shared this vision: Technical communicators have ascended the corporate mountain to the summit, where they are viewed with tremendous respect (and maybe some awe) as key contributors to business success.

With this type of vision, the future will be bright, I’m sure of it. What do YOU see when you consider the future of technical communication?

Viva Las Vegas! The 53rd Annual Conference is fast approaching! The dates are May 7-10 this year and we will be in Las Vegas! There are many great reasons for attending the conference every year with all the unique educational and networking opportunities that are always present! For more information, please visit <http://www.stc.org/53rdConf/>.

Be sure to register by April 21 to take advantage of the early registration rates! Hope to see you in Vegas!

Kudos on Conferences! I recently attended two region 1 chapter conferences and both were exceptionally good events!

“Future Perfect?...(continued on page 4)”

About the Society for Technical Communication

Mission: *Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.*

For more information, visit us online:

Society for Technical Communication

www.stc.org

Boston Chapter

www.stc-boston.org

“Future Perfect?...”

On March 11, I was in Pennsylvania for the Philadelphia Metro chapter’s annual conference. The venue was superb – intimate enough to cater to everyone’s needs – and the program was great. The keynote speaker was Jon Warshawsky, co-author of a book on corporate communication titled “Why business people speak like idiots!” Jon’s main point was that jargon and “business speak” (or BS) abound! So, to really communicate to (and not confuse) your audience (whomever they may be), you need to keep it simple and straightforward, and above all, use plain English. Jon’s talk and the book are marvelous! I recommend them both!

On March 31, I was in New York for the Rochester chapter’s 47th (wow!) annual Spectrum Conference. The venue was terrific and the program was top notch. This time, there were two keynote speakers and a closing session speaker. Jared Spool, of User Interface Engineering, a world renowned web usability expert, gave us his take on how to discern what users really need. Suzanna Laurent, STC President, told us about what the future is likely to look like for technical communicators. And, the closing session speaker was Frank Cost, the associate dean of Rochester Institute of Technology’s College of Imaging Arts and Sciences and author of “A Pocket Guide to Digital Printing.” Frank is a noted expert in the future of digital publishing and gave everyone an understanding of what these changes mean to communicators. Frank discussed his (often quite humorous) experiences with book self-publishing through various web sites that offer the service. Frank has self-published numerous books of photographs, each with an interesting and highly creative reason for being. All three talks received high marks from this attendee!

Both conferences included an exhibit area complete with a showcase of winning entries from their annual competitions. Each chapter also set aside part of their conference program to honor their competitions winners by presenting award certificates and plaques!

Kudos to Steve Lungren of Philly Metro and Tom Moran of Rochester and their teams for planning and organizing these tremendous events!

Challenges Facing Documentation Teams

Request for participation in an STC Research Project

What are the Challenges Facing Technical Documentation Teams?

Michael O'Steen of Cedarwood Associates, a long-time member of NNE-STC, is conducting some research for an STC paper. The purpose of this research is to document and report the top ten challenges facing technical documenting teams today. The information is to be gathered from a number of managers of technical publications departments in a variety of companies. Some basic information about the company, technical department, tools, outputs, managers' background is included. The results are to be presented at the annual STC 2007 conference. Michael hopes this research will provide insight into some of the current trends and challenges facing technical writing professionals. If you are interested in participating in this research study, please contact Michael at either mosteen@cedarwoodassociates.com or (978) 251-4566

Plan Now to Enter

Announcing 2006 STC Online Communication Competition

By Dell Smith,
Publicity Manager, STC Online Communications Competition

“I meant to participate last year, but the deadline for entering came and went and I just wasn’t ready.”

Is that you? If so, don’t get caught off guard again. Start planning now for 2006. Last year’s online competition was such a great success that you won’t want to miss out this year. Here are some approaches to consider when thinking about your work:

What’s done? Add a discussion of competition-worthiness to the wrap-up session you hold at the end of your projects. If you decide that an online project is a good candidate for the competition, now is the time to ensure you have three copies to enter.

What’s old? Take a look at what you’ve done in the past year. What was the best? What was new? What could you use some feedback on? Keep it in mind when the 2006 registration starts later this summer.

What’s new? What new projects are coming your way? As you prepare, create, and finish projects, include entering the competition as one of your goals. Knowing a project is headed for the competition will give you that extra incentive to do a great job.

What’s hot? What does your marketing department think is cool? Is there a new help system technical support is anticipating? No doubt you put extra effort into these projects. Don’t forget to let these departments know when you receive an award!

What’s not? You can enter each project only once, so if you entered Online Tutorial version 3.0 in the competition last year, you won’t be able to enter version 3.2 this year. Maybe this is a good time to reconsider your projects. What’s missing? What could (or should!) be reworked? What would look best at this year’s competition?

See? You DO have material to enter! Stay tuned for more competition articles detailing event guidelines, registration deadlines, how to become a judge, and more. See you at the competition!

Answering the Technical Documentation Need: Turning Chinese English into English English

by Bill Pacino

The rewriting assignment came from a friend, a Chinese software developer who was involved in a side business selling Chinese audio amplifiers and speakers. This high-end audio equipment, imported from China, had an owner's manual prepared in China and written in English.

The problem in the manual was that the Chinese English was scrambled – the most important part of the sentence was at the end, much of the document was written in the past tense, and there was an oversupply of politeness and formality. This document needed a rewrite in order to move the nouns, verbs, and adjectives around so that this document written in Chinese English sounded like English English.

This was not an easy assignment. First I had to understand what was being said via the Chinese English descriptions, and I then had to rearrange the sentences in a way that did not corrupt the meaning of the delivered information.

Ten Samples

I have chosen to display ten samples from the original Chinese English document and what I did to rewrite these samples in English English.

The audience for this information is an American purchaser of high-end audio stereo equipment. The American user purchases this equipment to enhance the audio listening of recorded music via audio CDs or DVDs. Thus the document talks of a concept such as “sound image.” I could have rewritten such a phrase to “... the listener hears.” But I choose to leave some wording that dealt with the sensory experience of listening to music, rather than reducing it to nothing but a cold, hard description.

In the following ten examples, the first selection, marked CE1 to CE10, is from the original Chinese English owner's manual. The second selection, marked EE1 to EE10, is the rewritten English English.

CE1

Thank you for choosing the Multi-Channel Amplifier.

It was designed deliberately and inspected strictly in order to ensure your maximum enjoyment on perfect stereo music playback and high quality home theater sound.

EE1

Thank you for choosing the Multi-Channel Amplifier.

This product has undergone careful design and thorough inspection to ensure your maximum enjoyment of perfect stereo music playback and high quality home theater sound.

CE2

As a breakthrough, the frequency band climbed up to 100kHz easily, fitting the playback of beautiful and infinite harmonic of SACD or DVD-Audio software. The more important thing to audiophile is that it is easy for them to feel the sound timbre harmony, balance and naturalness from the unit's new design amplifier circuit.

EE2

In a breakthrough, the frequency band climbs up to 100kHz easily, fitting the playback of the beautiful and infinite harmonics of SACD or DVD-Audio software. The more important thing to audiophiles is that it is easy for to hear the sound timbre harmony, balance and naturalness from the unit's new design amplifier circuit.

CE3

Important Safety Issue

In order to reduce risk of fire and electric shock, never expose this unit to raining/shower or high humidity environment.

Warning

In order to reduce electric shock risk, please do not remove the unit cover. There is no part for user maintenance inside the unit. Always assign the repair job to the professional.

To keep high performance for a long time, please comply with the items as below

- Before operation, please read this manual book in detail, and pay attention to these notice issues relative.
- Do not expose the unit to the straight sunshine, nor to the extreme high or low temperature.
- Do not put this unit in raining/shower or high humidity environment, nor near vase, water pail or kitchen sink, etc. If there were fluid got into the unit, this may cause severe damage.
- Avoid to put the unit on the unstable platform or height with risk of falling, nor put the unit at the place where was easy to be shaken by speakers’ sound wave. Particularly do not put the unit on the speaker cabinet.
- There will be heat created while the unit is working. For working in normal, please ensure there are good ventilation and heat release condition for the unit. The ventilation holes on the top side and bottom side of the unit are used to prevent from temperature increasing abnormally.

Never block these holes, especially never use fabric or paper to cover these holes, nor put the unit on the rugged carpet, bed or couch while the unit is working, for it will lower the effective space of the bottom side of the unit, weaken the air convection and interfere the heat release in normal. If the unit was put inside the Hi-fi component cabinet which would block the ventilation and air flow, please ensure there is space larger than 100 mm width on the top side and both sides of the unit.

EE3

Important Safety Issue

In order to reduce risk of fire and electric shock, never expose this unit to water (rain/rain shower) or a high-humidity environment.

Warning

In order to avoid the risk of electric shock, do not remove the unit cover. There are no parts for user maintenance inside the unit.

To keep this product operating at a high-performance level for a long time, follow the steps below:

- Before operation, read this manual in detail, paying attention to warnings and other notices.
- Do not expose the unit to full sunlight, nor to extreme high or extreme low temperature.
- Do not expose this unit to water or a high-humidity environment.
- Avoid putting the unit on an unstable platform or at a height with a risk of falling. Do not place the unit where is can be shaken by the speakers’ sound wave. Do not place the unit on the speaker cabinet.
- There will be heat created while the unit is working. For normal operation, ensure there is good ventilation and heat release for the unit. The ventilation holes on the top and bottom of the unit are used to prevent an abnormal increase in temperature.

Never block these holes, especially never use fabric or paper to cover these holes, nor put the unit on a thick rug or carpet, bed or couch while the unit is working. If the unit is placed inside an cabinet with other Hi-fi components which blocks the ventilation and air flow, ensure that there is an air space larger than 100 mm on the top side and both sides of the unit and the component cabinet.

CE4

The unit’s function configuration was based on the enhanced principle of “User Friendly”. In addition to the basic design fundamental of “Absolute Sound Quality”, its function, display, and signal terminal are set up in the position of end user wholly. So there is most basic operation function on the front panel, i.e. Power On/Off, Volume Control, Input Signal Selection and relative display, maximizing the comfort of operation by friendly man-machine interface.

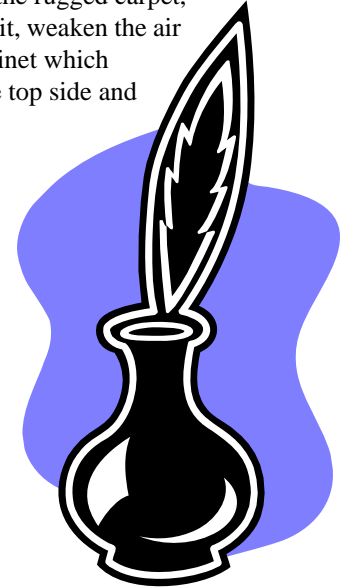
EE4

The unit’s configuration of features is based on the enhanced principle of “User Friendliness”. In addition to the basic design fundamental of “Absolute Sound Quality”, its features, display, and signal terminals are completely controlled by the end user. The most basic operation features are on the front panel of the unit, for example, Power On/Off, Volume Control, Input Signal Selection and relative display.

CE5

Mute Button

By pressing this button to reduce the master volume of the unit by preset attenuation rate and prohibit all other operation temporarily.



EE5

Mute Button

Press this button to reduce the master volume of the unit by the preset attenuation rate and prohibit all other operation.

CE6

If you used dipolar speakers, they should be set up at two sides of the listener at a higher position. Their sound was delivered to forward and afterward direction of the room. This kind of configuration made the listener not find out the sound source position but feel to be surrounded in a diffused soundstage. The height of these speakers should be more than 60 cm higher than the listener's ears and was better if a bit higher than a standing listener for your easy wandering in the room.

EE6

If you use dipolar speakers, they should be set up, at a higher position, on both sides of the listener. Their sound is delivered to both forward and backwards into the listening space. In this type of configuration, the listener is not aware of the sound source position, and instead feels surrounded by a diffused soundstage. The height of these speakers should be more than 60 cm higher than the listener's ears and is better if adjusted for a standing listener.

CE7

If traditional speakers were employed for playback surround sound, when setting up, please do your best to let their sound diffuse at the rear of the room for simulation of dipolar speakers' diffused soundstage. Usually it is easy to obtain the best performance if putting these surround speakers at the position a bit after the listener but with similar height, so that a lot of reflection sound was produced by these speakers facing to rear wall crosswise, and reached listener position with part of direct sound at same time.

EE7

If traditional speakers are used for playback surround sound, when setting up, try to let their sound diffuse to the rear of the room for a simulation of the dipolar speakers' diffused soundstage. Usually it is easy to obtain the best performance by putting these speakers at the position behind the listener but at a similar height, so that a great amount of reflected sound is produced by these speakers facing the rear wall, as well as direct sound reaching the listener at the same time.

CE8

Every powering on, its volume would adjust to your preset level automatically. The extreme high volume had adverse effect upon your speaker system and the unit. A proper preset low volume level would protect your speakers from the impact of high volume level when powering on the unit.

EE8

Upon every powering on of the unit, its volume will adjust to your preset level automatically. Extreme high volume will have an adverse effect upon your speaker system and the unit. A proper preset low volume level will protect your speakers from the impact of a high volume level when powering on the unit.

CE9

The unit was equipped with microcomputer inside aiming at complicated function operation. But under some rare condition, signal source or static from outside may bring strong interference and cause operation wrong. If it happened like so, please turn off the unit and wait for over 5 minutes, then power on the unit again, it was expected to be recovered to working normally.

EE9

The functions of the unit are controlled via a microcomputer inside the unit. In rare instances, signal sources or static from outside the unit can interfere with the normal operation of the unit.

If this happens, turn the unit off and wait for five (5) minutes and then power on again the unit. Normal operation is expected.

CE10

We are striving for better product quality and performance continuously. The unit design or specification was subject to change without notice probably.

EE10

Unit design and specification are subject to change without notice.



Use Your Resume To Help Negotiate a Higher Salary

by Deborah Walker, CCMC

Most job seekers believe that salary negotiation starts once they have an offer in hand, but nothing could be farther from the truth. In fact, your resume can make the difference between negotiating at the top end of the salary range—or the bottom end—in your next job offer. If that sounds strange to you, consider the following points:

- A prospective employer’s first impression of you is created entirely by your resume.
- The employer’s first impression of you will assign a value and build a level of urgency for the employer to contact you—before someone else does.
- First impressions are nearly impossible to change.

If your resume sells your skills short, then you can’t expect to receive offers at the upper end of your salary scale. Your current resume could be losing you thousands of dollars in income power. By making a few key changes in your resume now, you can position yourself for higher salaries in the future.

There are three resume strategies for promoting high salary negotiation success:

Show that you are a high return on investment with quantifiable results.

Many job seekers throw around the phrase “results oriented,” but they fail to back it up with concrete evidence—leaving the reader to conclude otherwise. You may feel that you have no quantifiable evidence of your value in previous jobs, but every job has quantifiable results that can better reflect your worth on your resume. Revenue, sales dollars and material costs are not the only results that use numbers.

Consider using the number of man-hours saved in process improvements, the percentage of repeat customers, or the number of peers helped by a particular efficiency to help reflect your abilities. Every employee is hired to solve problems, and most problems have some quantifiable element at their core.

Illustrate the breadth of your experience.

Notice the use of the word “breadth” rather than “length” of experience. Just because a candidate has been doing a job for a long time does not necessarily mean he is worth more. Breadth of experience focuses on quality, not quantity.

There are two key ways to express breadth of experience:

Industry knowledge—Since industry expertise is usually in high demand, you can show your value through insider understanding of industry issues.

Transferable skills—If your career spans many industries within the same occupation, highlight the transferable skills that have enabled you to bridge the gaps from industry to industry.

Entice the reader to want to know more about you.

Job seekers often make the mistake of assuming that the job of their resume is to inform the reader. Not so! The ONLY job of your resume is to entice the reader to want to know more about you.

What that translates to is an understanding of what to include and what to leave off your resume. Too much detail can distract the reader and lose his interest, but not enough information, and the reader will wonder what you have been doing with your life. A proper balance between detail and result will win the reader’s interest and leave them saying, “I’ve got to call this guy for an interview today!”

A professional resume writer can create a resume that sells you as a high return on investment. By portraying you as someone with great breadth of experience and a wide range of critical skills, potential employers will see you immediately as someone of high value, building their vision—and your self-confidence—of you in the upper end of the salary scale

Tip of the Month

In FrameMaker, use an anchored frame in a single-cell table to position a graphic with its caption. Keep in mind, however, that text does not wrap around tables.

Proposal Writing and Marketing Communications

The March 2006 program of the STC-Boston Chapter

by Bill Gruener, Broadside Staff

Rose Sachs and Buck Howe offered us a view of how technical writing skills can be used in two communication media: proposal writing and marketing communications. Rose is a proposal coordinator at General Dynamics, and Buck is an independent consultant providing market development and business development services.

For those of us entrenched in hardware, software, installation, and system guides, marketing and proposal writing may represent quite a change from our usual style of writing. Buck compared marketing and proposal writing by saying, “Proposal writing is coloring inside the box, and marketing communications is coloring outside the box. The skills are the same; choosing one over the other is more of a mind set.” Proposal writing is features writing; marketing communications stresses benefits. Proposal writing describes functionality, while marketing communication describes results.

What is a proposal?

Proposals are written in response to a request-for-proposal (RFP). An RFP incorporates four keywords: should, shall, must, will. The proposal must be compliant with and phrased similarly to the RFP.

Proposals can be as short as 50 pages or as long as 1500 pages. At General Dynamics, Rose’s department writes six proposals simultaneously. Each proposal requires 30 days to write. Besides responding to the four keywords (should, shall, must, will), a proposal should incorporate graphics and use them generously as needed.

Rose, a proposal coordinator, is a member of a 50-person team that works on proposals in a “War Room.” A significant number of proposals are products of large engineering organizations often working for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Some of the organizations that use proposals are academic institutions, not-for-profit organizations, or groups looking for foundation grants.

How proposals get written

The proposal team might consist of 10-60 people: engineers, proposal coordinator, proposal author (program manager), proposal writers, document designer, and graphic artist. A security clearance may be required, but you may not need clearance to start. So, if you’re interested, apply. Clearance can come later.

At General Dynamics, the tools used are Livelink from Open Text Corporation, an enterprise content management solution (<http://www.opentext.com>) and K4 Publishing System from Managing Editor Inc. (MEI), a collaborative writing workflow using Adobe InDesign (<http://www.maned.com/products/k4/k4.html>).

Helpful resources for proposal writers

For more information about proposal writing, visit the website of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP) at <http://www.apmp.org>.

What is marketing communication?

Marketing communication collaterals consist of published words that support the sale of a product. Some examples of marketing communication collaterals are advertising copy, collateral literature, press releases, case studies, testimonials, success stories, web content, blogs, and various media.

The team writing marketing communication documents often consists of two or three people: a writer, graphic artist, and subject matter expert (SME). Depending on the product, a car for example, the team could be an advertising agency of hundreds of people. A marketing communication piece could be written within hours or months. Buck stated that his favorite marketing piece is an ad for beef. The ad pictures a thick, juicy steak on a plate. The tag line reads, “Rare steak, done well.” That ad needed two months to develop.

Skills needed for marketing communication

The most important skill for a marketing communicator is to be great with a turn of a phrase. You must possess the ability to put words into spaces that fit. You must be willing to spend two months developing a marketing slogan. The word count is small, and the effort is large. Marketing communicators live with the fact that most of the assignments are “Work for Hire.”

Marketing communications touches every department in the organization. Therefore, you need to be patient with working through the labyrinth of signatures needed to get approvals.

How to get marketing communication assignments

Volunteer to write for anyone who will accept a submission such as chapter newsletter, religious school, or charity organization. Suggest writing the marketing collateral as you write the user guide for a company. Add all (more than just your best) writing samples to your portfolio. Write for trade magazines.

Advanced FrameMaker

The April 2006 program of the STC-Boston Chapter

by Bill Gruener, Broadside Staff

Deborah Sauer presented advanced FrameMaker techniques at the April program. Deborah divided the advanced FrameMaker topics into four clusters: creating templates, formatting generated files, single-sourcing using conditional text, and working with user variables.

Creating Templates

Creating templates involves many design decisions. It is helpful to be familiar with book design concepts or to read about this topic, look at samples of books, and keep up with industry book design standards.

Frames are the foundation of FrameMaker, and frames are objects into which text and graphics are inserted. The core FrameMaker file is the book file, which contains sub-files, usually chapters. This structure differentiates FrameMaker from Microsoft Word, which is single file, document, based. Within a FrameMaker book, there are files, called chapters (even if an appendix), and within each chapter there are three types of files (called pages): Master, Reference, and Body pages.

Master pages describe the formatting for the chapter; Reference pages contain constantly used elements such as header and footer rules; and Body pages are the place to write and insert graphics. You need a template for every part of the book: title page, TOC, lists of figures and tables, chapters, appendix, and glossary. Left, right, first and last pages may need to be dealt with separately. Allow about 80 hours for designing a FrameMaker book.

Deborah creates a template in seven steps:

- 1) Create a new document.
- 2) Define the column layout.
- 3) Change the standard master pages and/or create custom master pages.
- 4) Place background content, such as headers and footers, on the master pages.
- 5) Set up document numbering (chapters, multi-part page numbers).
- 6) Create paragraph tags.
- 7) Create additional templates for the table of contents, index, front matter, notice page, title pages, and any other unique elements.

Formatting Generated Files: TOC and Index

FrameMaker creates generated files by 1) searching the book file, 2) finding the marked paragraph tags, and 3) inserting the contents of the tags into the TOC or Index. When you design the book, you need to identify which paragraph tags are to appear in the TOC or index. TOC and index entries are hyperlinks to the source text.

Single-Sourcing Using Conditional Text

Single-sourcing involves using the same book file for multiple purposes (such as user guide, installation guide, system administrator's guide) or for different output, such as PDF or HTML help..

There are five steps for either of those two outputs:

- 1) Create the files with all the content for all versions.
- 2) Tag the contents for product, PDF, or help.
- 3) Turn off the content you don't want.
- 4) Generate.
- 5) Create the PDF or Help.
- 6) Use Web Works Publisher (a conversion tool) to convert the files to help



Working with User Variables

Deborah provided several hints for working with user-defined variables:

- Give variables generic names, such as "book title" or "author."
- Use character formats to format the text.
- Change the format back to the default form at the end of the text.
- Be aware that FrameMaker does not spell check variables.

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- You can change the text in system variables.
 - Current page number and Running H/F variables are available only on Master pages.
 - You must insert variables.
 - You must update variables.

User-defined variables are great for constantly changing product names. User-defined variables allow easy changes for every instance. You set the preferences for the different variables through different dialog boxes

Tips and Tricks: Making Frame Easier

Deborah also suggested a list of tips and tricks to make your FrameMaker life easier. Use these General Preferences options by selecting:

- Automatic Backup and Save
- Save Frame Image with Imported Graphics
- Network File Locking
- Remember Missing Font Names
- Product Interface

These features are also helpful:

- Find/Change
- Inconsistent Numbering Message
- Text Options
- View Options
- Table Heading Row
- Show Current Settings in a Table
- Paragraph Designer Table Cell tab
- Shrink wrapping graphics

Boston Chapter Council

Election Results

By Virginia Adams,
Membership Committee Manager

The Boston Broadside would like to congratulate those members of the Boston Chapter who have been elected to Council for the 2006-7 year. On behalf of the chapter, we would also like to thank everyone who participated in the voting.

Council
President: Michael Ball
1st VP: Steve Greffenius
2nd VP: Pamela Sarantos
Secretary: Barbara Bailey
Treasurer: Aaron Federman

At-Large Council
Linda Fritz
Lynda Schiff
Judy Stitt

The Broadside Staff

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Broadside Staff

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.....

Authors

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Bill Pacino: Thanks a bunch!

Jon Harvey
Managing Editor
Boston Broadside

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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@comcast.net.

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