

Newsbrief

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Summer Break

by Amy Hollister, Editor



Hey, if all those lucky students can get a summer break, so can we. That's right, your local STC chapter is taking a few months off! Wahoo! Yippee! Okay, I suppose that is enough celebration.

Enjoy your summer: catch some waves, some rays and a beach ball, or two! Be productive in whatever you do and most importantly, be safe.

"See you in September" at our next meeting. The date, time, and place will be announced in a later edition of Newsbrief. ☺

Editor's note...

Newsbrief will no longer contain Job Postings. Our Jobs Coordinator, Teresa Johnson will now post these on the STC Mid-South Chapter Mailing List, which can be accessed through:
<http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=midsouth-1>



I Survived Conference and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt!

by Amy Hollister, Editor

The sand, the sun, the Disney Boardwalk, The Flying Fish restaurant...er, I mean, the sessions, the speakers, the award winners, and the progressions and panels. The STC 47th Annual Conference was a plethora of all these things.



Paige, Steve, Amy, Joe, Jackie & Nell

Jackie Walters, Paige Marshall, Joe Lakey, Steve Gillespie, Nell Johnson, David Armbruster, Elizabeth Wall, and Amy Hollister attended the conference and represented the Mid-South Chapter. These eight went, saw, and conquered the mass of information concerning technical communication and where it and we as communicators are headed in the millennium.



Joe, checking out one of the Vendors

The opening speaker, Thomas Koulopoulos, set the stage for what would follow during the next two days when he referred to technical communication as an "art form". I suppose that this makes all of us "artisans" of a sort. He went on to describe it as the "DNA of economic evolution", where we as the "base", are to keep up with the rest of the social scheme, but not forget the past. By doing so, we can "navigate through time using information by looking backwards". If we interact with this information as if it were that point in time, we can go

forward in time. We must have a perfect memory, so that we can battle past successes so that they don't stand in the way of our future successes.

Each of us came back with our own interpretations of the conference's sessions and its many speakers. A more detailed outline of sessions and topics will be shared by the five during the September meeting. ☺

What is PMI®?



by Amy Hollister, Editor

If you were one of the twenty lucky folks who attended last month's meeting, then you know that PMI® is the Project Management Institute. Our Chapter was honored to have Roger Day, manager of System Design & Development in FedEx's PowerPad Project Management group.

Roger explained that PMI® is the organization behind the profession and hosts over 59,000 members worldwide and can be found on the web at www.pmi.org. The core competencies of PMI® include:

- Certification
- Education
- Publications

CONTENTS

Ten Common Mistakes People Make When Looking for a Job 2

What's New in Your World? 3

Writer's Block 4

- Research
- Standards
- Worldwide Component Affairs

The *PMBOK Guide* provides a basic structure for understanding project management and the environment in which projects operate. Simply stated, it is a generalized view of how various project management processes commonly interact.

The Project Lead of Project Communications Management is the “facilitator” of the project and manages a “program”, rather than people. The Project Lead has to be flexible, provide educational experiences, such as coursework, books, and training to the team that he or she “coaches”. The breakdown of the qualifications are: 20% Science (How do I accomplish earned value?) and 80% Human Factor (How do I interact with people?). The Project Lead is required to: generate, collect, store, and disseminate project information. Four processes are used to accomplish this:

1 Communications Planning

One must build certain inputs into the planning factors and identify the risk(s). Inputs may include: communications requirements, communications technology, constraints, and assumptions. A great communications planning tool is the “Stakeholder Analysis”. The project lead should survey and interview the Stakeholder in order to learn on the **front end** what is expected from the project. This saves time and money in the long run. From this information, the project lead can then produce a detailed plan as to how the project will be communicated, called the Communications Management Plan.

2 Information Distribution

The project lead must gather, capture, and distribute the work results. Using the Communications Management Plan, these results can drive and direct the plan. The Project Plan will provide input to distribution. In order to accomplish

all these tasks, the project lead must have good communication skills, and effective information retrieval/distribution systems for the project records. How do the Stakeholders want to view this information? CD? Website? Hard copy?

3 Performance Reporting

How are we doing in our work results depends on the scale and size of the project. The Project Plan will provide check sheets for this determination. Other project records will offer budget information. Performance reviews will give an indication as to how well we are doing, if there are any issues or problems, and the performance of the personnel and the project itself. Several analysis are used as tools/techniques to determine performance: variance, trend, and earned value. These analysis can provide the cost of the project for a day, a week, etc. Other reports can change the scope of the project, such as: performance reports and change requests.

4 Administrative Closure

The project is complete, now let’s communicate it to the Stakeholders. How well did we do or not do? Did we produce what we promised? Most of this information is derived from performance measurement documentation, documentation of the product of the project, and other project records. Other than the actual product itself, the project management team has other outputs, such as: project archives, formal acceptance documents, and any lessons learned during the completing of the said project.



Roger Day, Thursday, May 4th, 2000

Project Communications Management (PMI) is a critical element in that it provides a framework for managing the gathering and dissemination of information, and the structure and processes to ensure that each project team member is provided the information that they need, when they need it. 📄

Ten Common Mistakes People Make When Looking for a Job

by Jack Molisani, President
Clarity Technical Services, Inc.



Recruiters (both HR and agency recruiters) receive tens if not hundreds of resumes a day, each of which must be read, evaluated against current job requirements, processed, clarified, and filed. If you want them to help you find a job, help them do their jobs.

The Common Mistakes are presented in order of chronology, not severity. The less applicable experience you have, the fewer mistakes you can get away with. We’ll look at solutions to the problems as well.

1. Not Following Submission Directions

- Read the directions!
- First Impressions Last
- E-mail, Fax or Snail Mail?
- Formatted or ASCII Resume?

2. Not Building Personal Relationships

- Develop a personal relationship with your recruiter. You want someone who will sing your praises to the next person in the hiring process...especially if you are not an exact match or have some other special situation. Plus, when a cool job comes in, who do you think they will call first?

3. Bad Manners

- It’s poor form to mail your resume to 45 recruiters in one e-mail ... especially when you display them all in the “To:” field!

- Keep a log of where your resume has been sent.
- Don't insult the recruiter. (I'm not kidding - it happens!)

4. Applying When You Are Not Even Remotely Qualified

- Don't apply without considering the requirements.
- Do apply for jobs that are a bit of a stretch, but at least be in the ballpark!
- Don't do "shotgun" applications.
- Pay attention to the "must have" vs. "nice to have" requirements.

5. Not Summarizing Skills vs. Requirements

- Recruiters get tens if not hundreds of resumes a day.
- Not all recruiters have the time to read your resume from top to bottom—some just skim for keywords and needed skills.
- If you are qualified, the recruiter will write a summary of how your skills match the job requirements before passing it on.
- However, they are not professional technical writers. Do you really want them to decide if you are a good enough match to pass on?
- Be pro-active: send a matrix of the job requirements vs. your skills so they don't have to do it for you.
- If you don't have one of the needed skills, this is where you say, "I don't have XYZ, but I do have ABC, which is very similar."
- Suddenly, you are the recruiter's best friend: They didn't have to search for the information. You typed the summary for them. You pointed out important information they may have missed. All they had to do is verify the information and pass it on.

6. Misnaming Your Resume

- Remember, recruiters get tens if not hundreds of electronic resumes a day.
- Put yourself in the recruiter's shoes.
- Would you want to receive 100 resumes a day named "resume.doc"?
- Name your resume so it can be found easily: for example, "Joe_Jones.doc"

7. Poorly Writing or Formatting Your Resume

- Your resume is the first sample of your writing skill.
- Programmers can get away with bad writing and formatting, but technical writers cannot!
- Documentation managers judge candidates based on their resumes ... and will disqualify you if you don't apply the same standards to your resume that you do your documentation.

Pay attention to:

- Headers, Indentation and White Space
- Poor Use of Authoring Tool
- Misspellings (including the name of STC!)

8. Mis-evaluation of Importances

- Highlight your strengths.
- Minimize your weaknesses

For example:

- Put the most applicable information, experience or skills near the **top** of your resume.
- Put less or non-applicable experience near the bottom.

9. Not Anticipating and Answering Questions

- Recruiters wonder about oddities in resumes, so be pro-active and explain them.

Examples:

- Gaps in Your Work History
- Your Citizenship or Work Visa Status
- Moving from Contract to Perm
- Moving from Perm to Contract (to a lesser degree)
- Need Relocation Assistance if Out-of-state?

10. Not Keeping Your Skills Current

- Not Knowing Latest Authoring Tools
- "If you can really just pick them up in a week, how come you haven't already done so?"
- Between chapter meetings, chapter mentor programs, and regional/international conferences, there is no reason not to stay current.

Summary:

1. Follow submission directions.

2. Build personal relationships.
3. Use good manners and netiquette.
4. Apply for jobs for which you are qualified.
5. Include a summary of how your skills match the job requirements when you submit your resume.
6. Name your electronic resume so it can be identified.
7. Apply usability factors to your resume like you do to manuals.
8. Highlight your strength, minimize your weaknesses.
9. Anticipate and answer questions.
10. Keep your skills current. 🐶



What's New in Your World?

by Amy Hollister, Editor

Congratulations are in order for **Ferris Hooshmand**, as he received his Executive MBA from the University of Memphis in May. Way to go!

Joseph R. Riley, 75, of Memphis, retired University of Memphis English professor and director of the Honors Program, died of cancer. He was a World War II Army veteran, a graduate of Memphis State and Vanderbilt University and was a consulting rosarian for the American Rose Society. 🐶

Writer's Block

from Edmond H. Weiss, *Writing Remedies: Practical Exercises for Technical Writing* (Oyrx Press, 1990)



Overblown Nouns

Do not automatically choose long and fancy nouns when short, familiar nouns will do just as well. Whenever you use a noun with three or more syllables, check to see if it can be replaced with a shorter, lighter noun.

For example:

Replace This	With This
application, task	job
capability	ability
commencement	beginning
compensation, remuneration	pay
conceptualization	idea, draft, plan
condition, situation	status, state
determination	choice
finalization	end
implementation	start, use
indication	sign
interaction, interface	discussions
linkage	link
location	site, place
methodology	method
prioritization	ranking
requirement	need, wish
reservation	doubt
utilization	use

Of course, sometimes we all prefer the words on the left. But, unless there is some powerful reason, choose the one on the right. 🐾

Editor’s note...

I stumbled across a great website, appropriately titled “The Writer’s Block” ... thought that you might want to check it out:

<http://www.sff.net/people/LisaRC/>

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The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide. 🐾

