

2012 State of the Chapter Survey Results

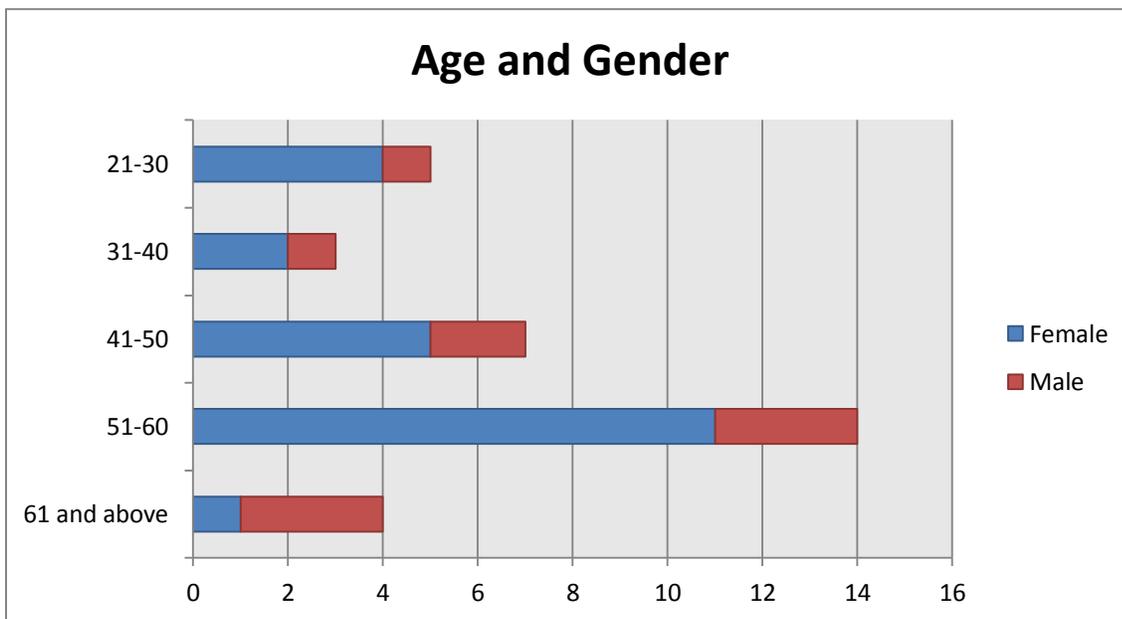
From the Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter

Completed between August 22 and September 25, 2012, the 2012 State of the Chapter Survey shows responses from members of the Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter and interested nonmembers. This electronic survey and its results will serve as a guide for chapter leaders to better understand our community and its current professional interests and to plan programs that will be of interest to as many technical communicators as possible.

The survey had 33 total responses, six of which are from former or nonmembers. Please note that the statistics in this report are based on the answers of the survey respondents and do not necessarily reflect the views and data of the entire chapter membership.

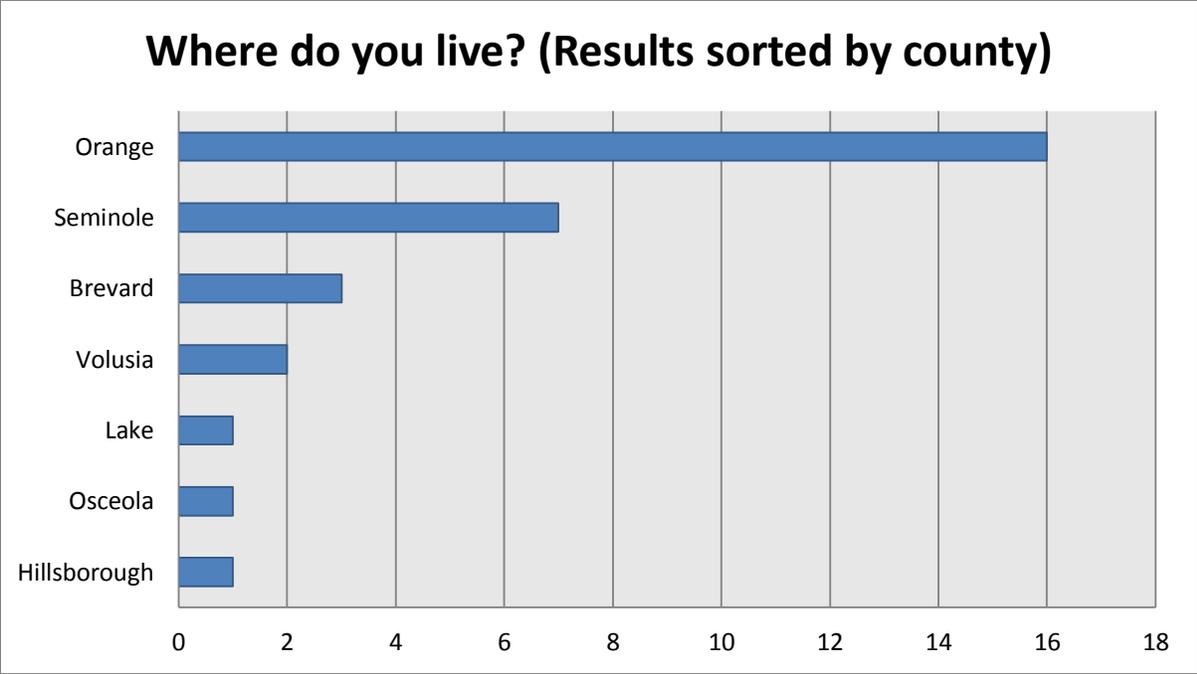
Also note that **the percentages for each question do not always add up to 100%**, because respondents were free to skip questions they did not wish to answer. Allowing respondents to skip questions encouraged frank and useful responses.

Part 1: Respondent Demographics

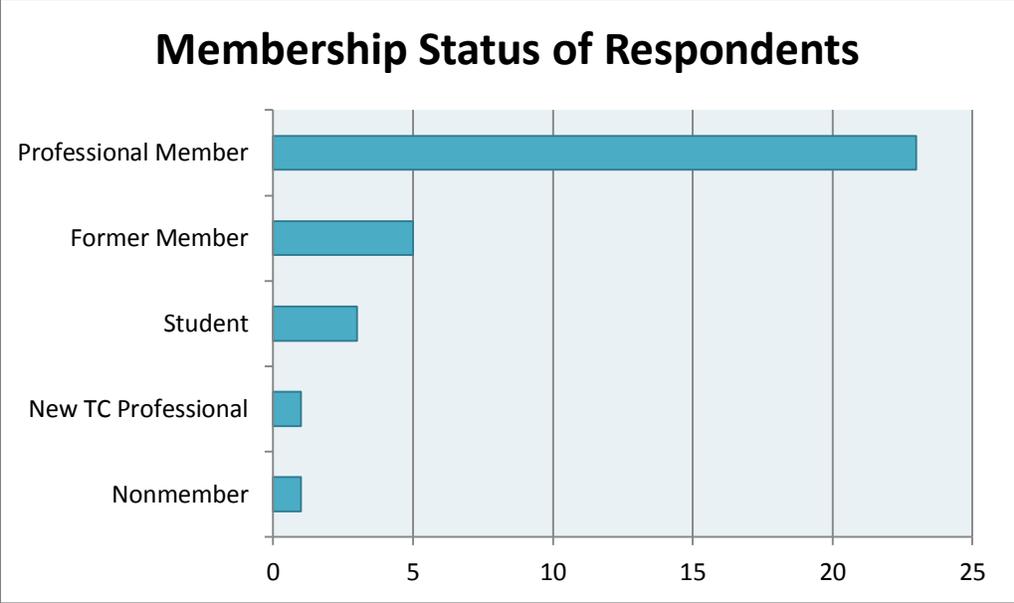


The majority of survey respondents are 51 years and above, and nearly two-thirds are between 41 and 60 years old.

While 70% of respondents are female, only 62% of chapter members are female. So the male point of view is slightly under-represented in these results.



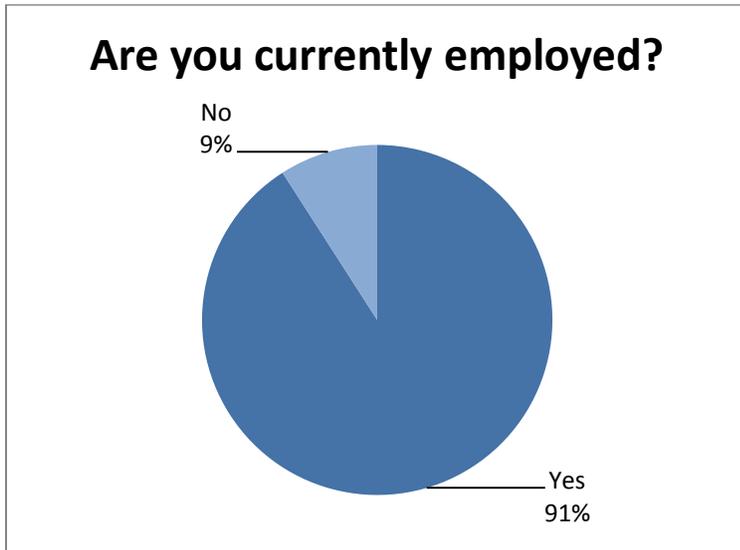
Orange County has the greatest percentage of respondents (52%), followed by Seminole (23%).



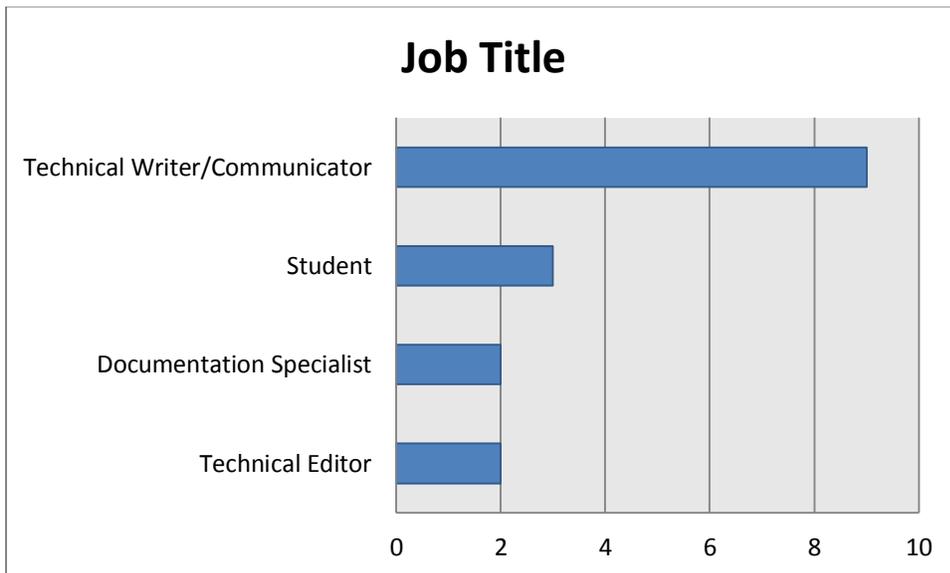
Professional members make up about 70% of respondents. Although only three students responded to the survey, students actually represent slightly over one-fourth of chapter members.

The total number of former and nonmember respondents has doubled since last year's survey. Meanwhile, student membership has dropped from 30% of chapter members to 26.5%.

Part 2: Work and Education

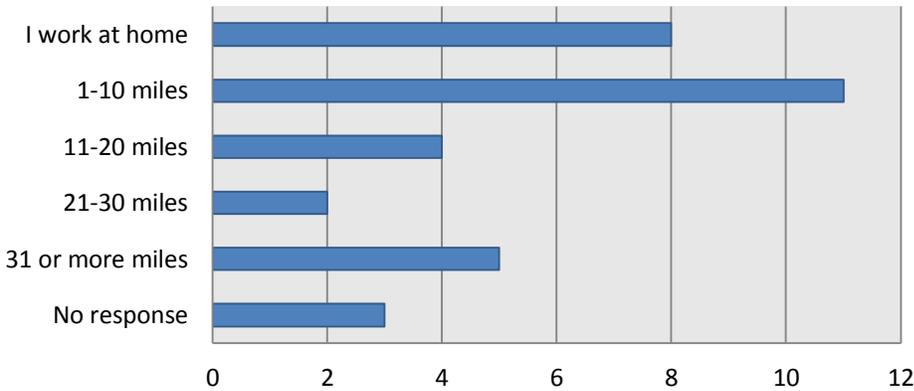


The majority of respondents are employed.



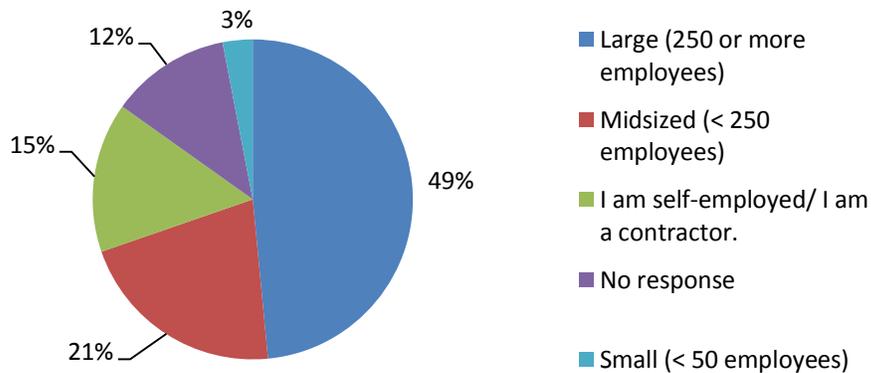
The most common job title is simply “Technical Writer/Communicator.” After that, there are many other titles such as student; documentation specialist; and various editors, managers/directors, analysts, and designers.

How far is your place of employment from your residence?



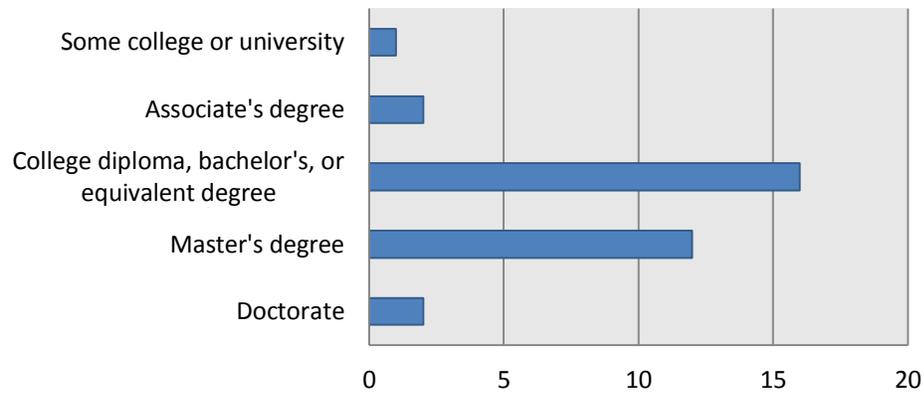
About one-fourth of the respondents work at home, and one-third commute 11 or more miles to work.

What is the size of the company you work for?



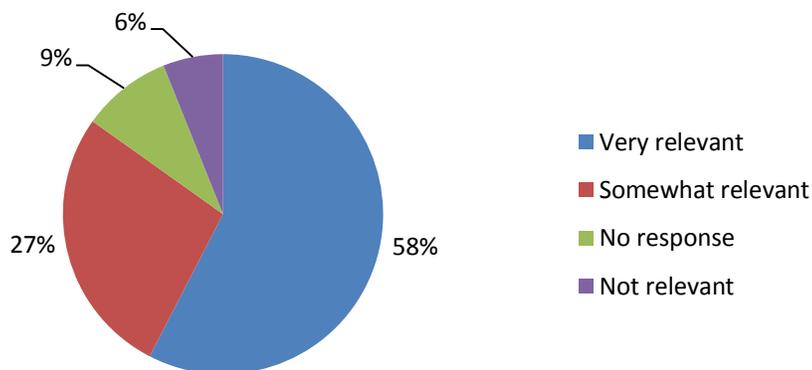
Nearly half of the respondents work for a large company.

What is the highest level of education you have attained?



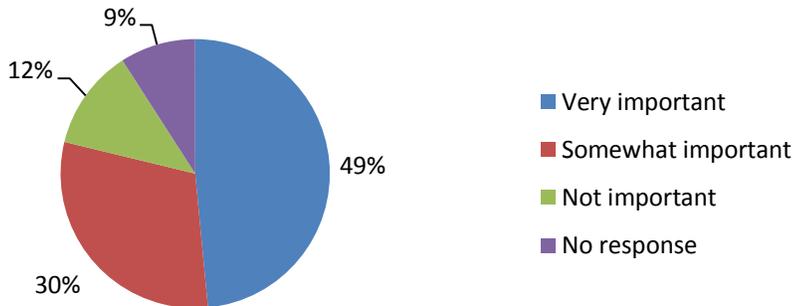
Nearly half (49%) hold bachelor's degrees, and 91% hold bachelor's degrees or higher.

How relevant has your education been to your present career?



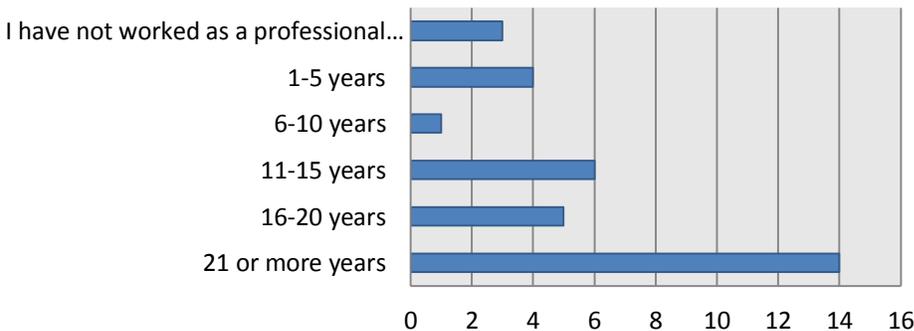
Most respondents believe that their education has been pertinent to their career.

In your opinion, how important is post-college education to a technical communication career?



Seventy-nine percent believe post-college education to be at least somewhat important to a technical communication career.

For how many years have you been working as a professional technical communicator?



A majority of the respondents are experienced technical communicators. Seventy-five percent have had more than ten years' experience in the field.

What software tools do you use on the job?

Respondents use a wide variety of software tools on the job, including:

Adobe products (such as Photoshop, Illustrator, Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Premiere)

Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, etc.)

Publishing and help software (Arbortext, Author-it, Flare, Framemaker, Doc-to-Help, RoboHelp, HEAT)

Web publishing software (WordPress, HTML/XML editors)

Collaboration tools (Sharepoint, Project, CVS, SVN)

Courseware (Captivate)

Graphics software (Fireworks, Adobe products, Snagit, Visio)

Project management tools (Clarity, Project, Rally)

Software development tools (CM Synergy, Oxygen)

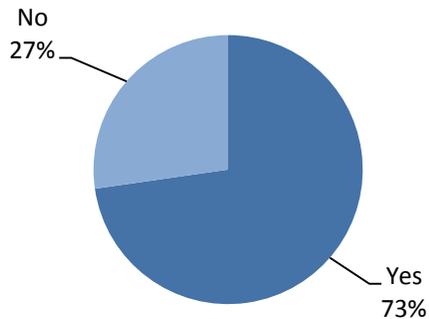
Report software (Crystal Reports)

Text editors (Notepad, TextPad, WordPad)

Database tools (SQL Server)

Conferencing tools (Webex)

Would you be interested in tool-focused meetings or workshops?



In rough order of frequency of mention, the following tools were requested. Note that some products appear in more than one category, as respondents emphasized different aspects of the applications. For example, several people asked for general training in Adobe products. Others concentrated on specific functionality (such as graphics editing) that encompassed both Adobe and non-Adobe products.

Acrobat products (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Flash, etc.)

Graphics editors (Photoshop, Illustrator, Fireworks, etc.)

Publishing tools (Arbortext, Acrobat, Flare, Framemaker, etc.)

Content management tools (Author-it, DITA, etc.)

XML editors for writing in DITA, other Help tools

Help products (Doc-To-Help, RoboHelp, Flare, etc.)

Courseware (Captive)

Collaboration platform (Sharepoint)

Snagit (screen capture and effects)

Oxygen (cellphone software)

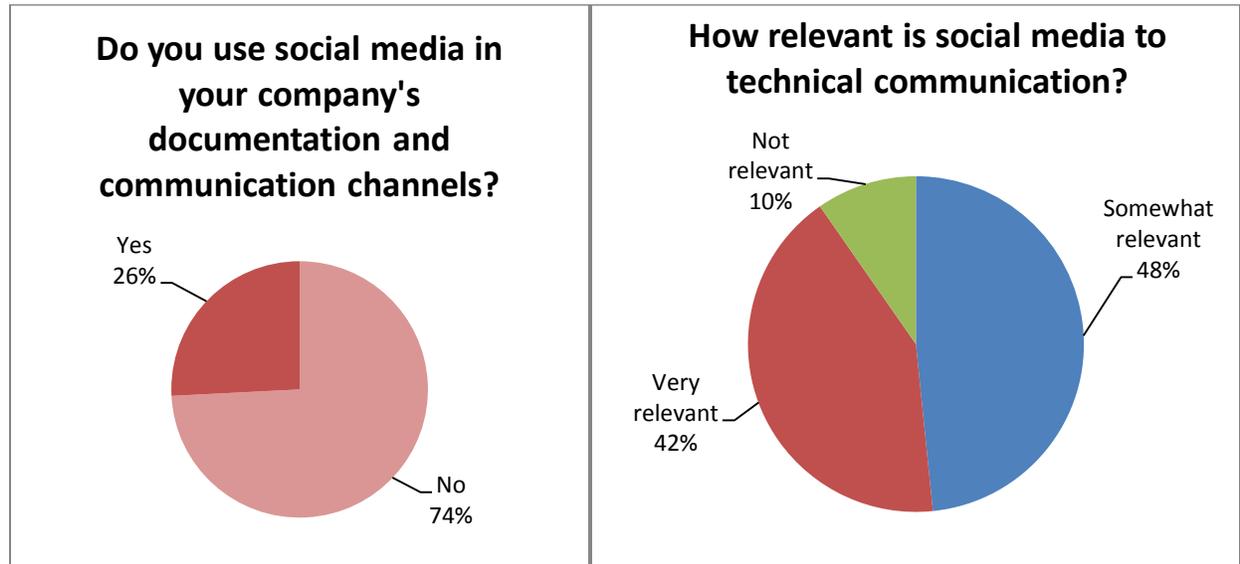
HTML/XML

Social media

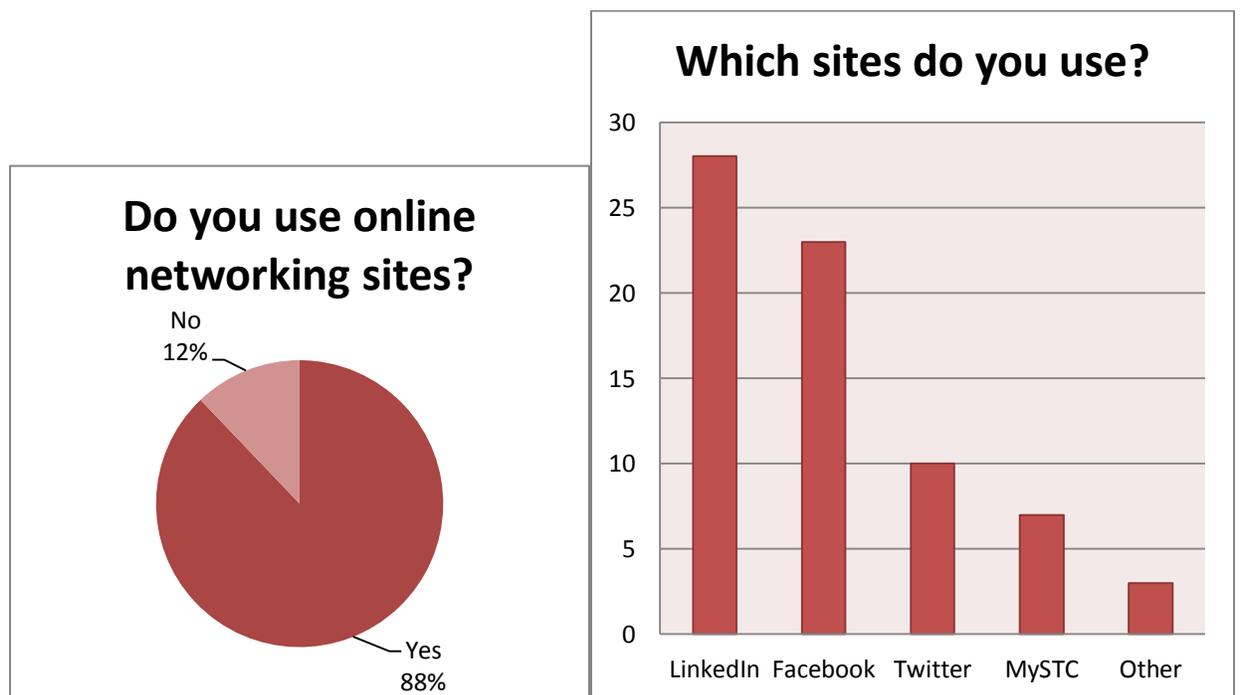
Proposal software

Analytical tools; BI; process analysis

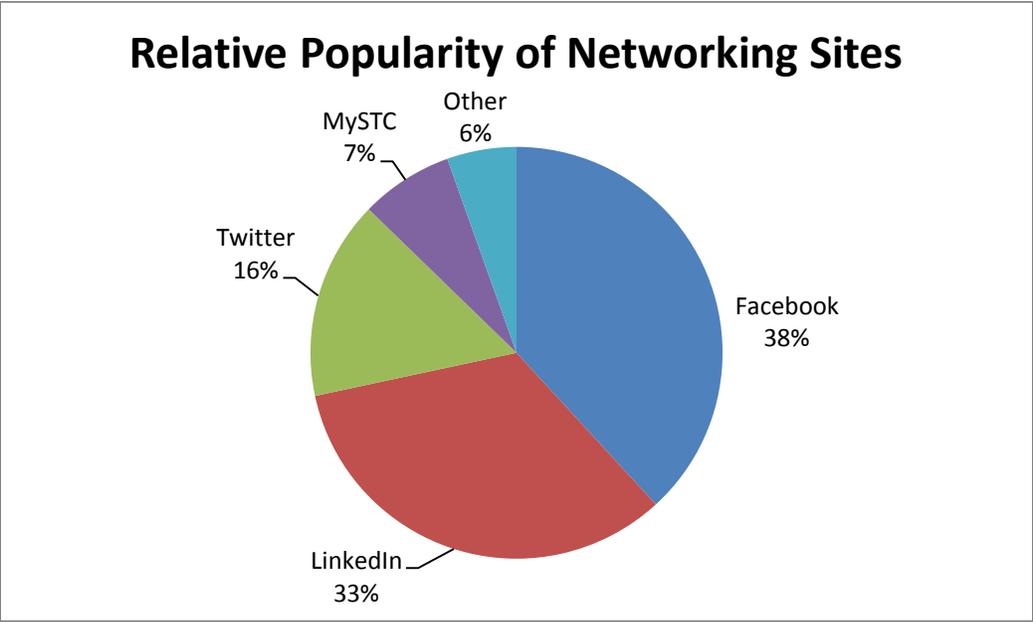
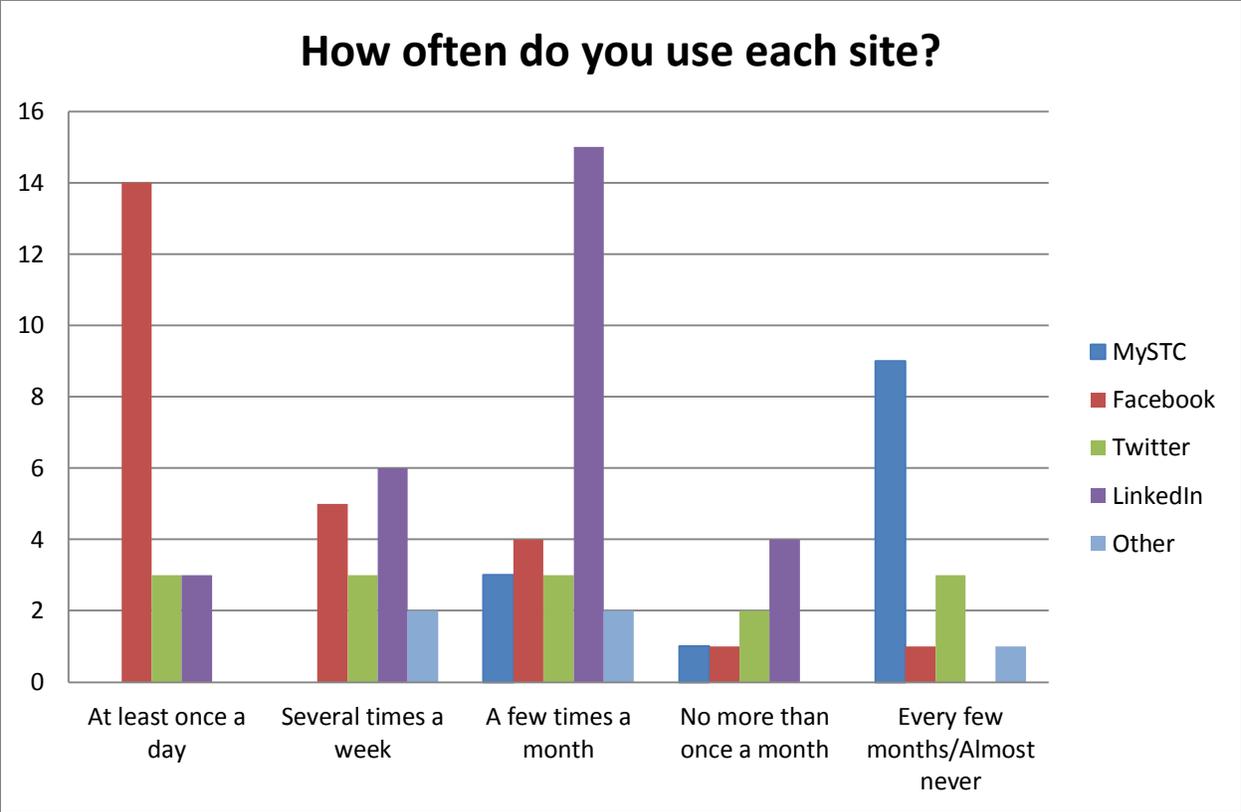
Part 3: Social Media



While only 26% of the respondent's companies use social media in their documentation and communication channels, 90% believe it to be relevant to technical communication.

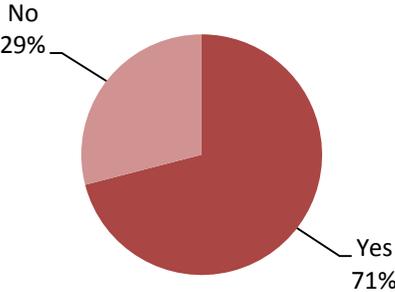


Among the 88% who use online networking sites, LinkedIn is the most popular, followed closely by Facebook.



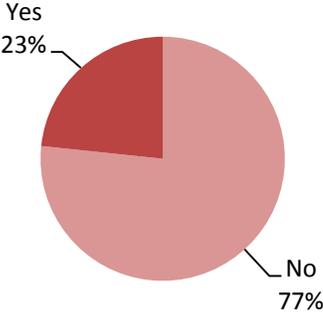
Note that while LinkedIn is used by the greatest number of respondents, Facebook is overwhelmingly used the most frequently. This is likely because Facebook also has personal uses, while LinkedIn is mostly a “professional network.” The majority of users check or update LinkedIn only “a few times a month.” Other sites include Google+ and Pinterest.

Do you use software or web-based tools on the job that enable multiple authors to work on the same document?



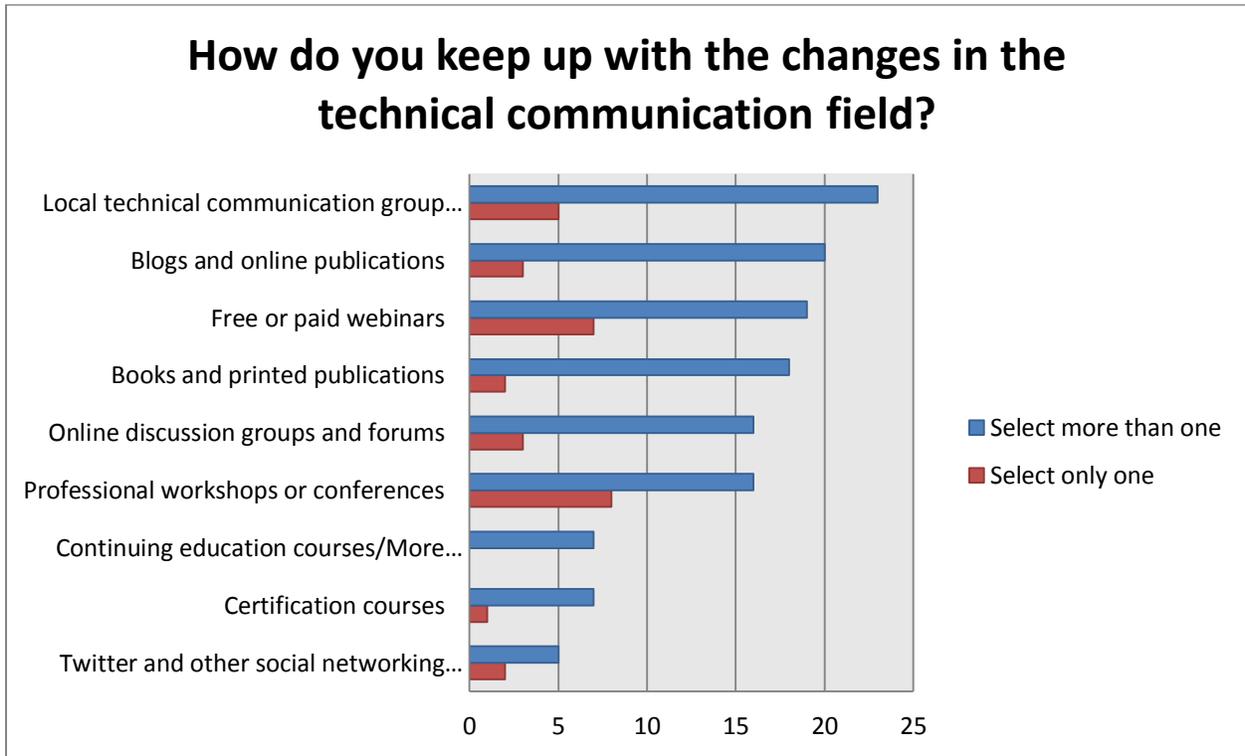
Seventy-one percent of respondents collaborate with other authors in the workplace through software or tools that allow multiple authoring.

Are your company's customers able to contribute to the documentation (through an official company blog, wiki, or help website)?



Seventy-seven percent of respondents handle documentation without the direct help of their company's customers.

Part 4: Staying current with your profession

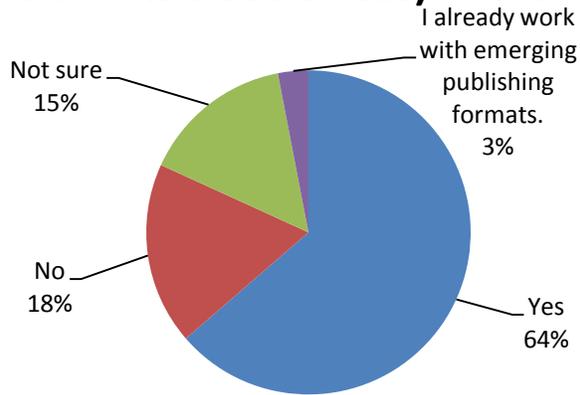


The top three sources that respondents use to keep up with the technical communication field are

- Local technical communication groups (e.g., STC)
- Blogs and online publications
- Free or paid webinars

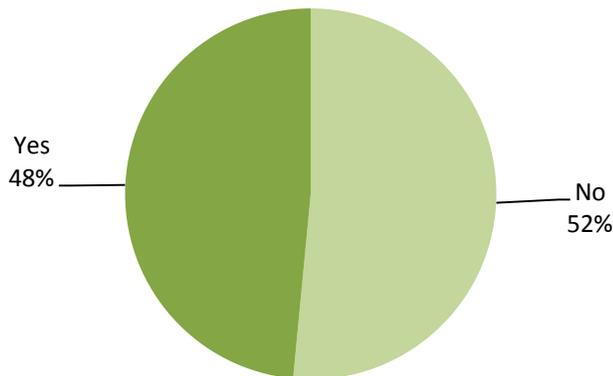
The most preferred method, however, is attending professional workshops or conferences.

Do you see yourself taking on a technical communication role that involves emerging publishing formats (e-books, mobile and tablet devices) in the future?



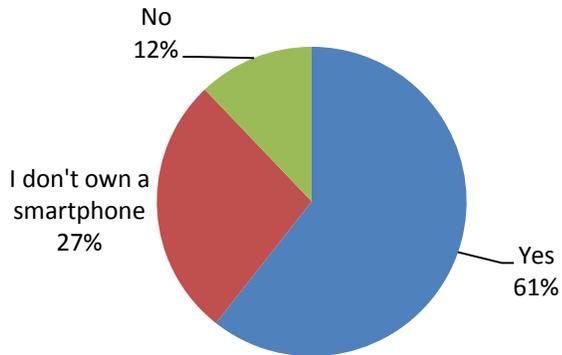
Although only 3% of respondents currently work with emerging publishing formats, 64% expect their role to shift in the future.

Do you own a tablet or an e-reader?



While 67% of respondents already work with, or expect to work with, emerging publishing formats, only 48% personally own a tablet or an e-reader. This figure has increased from 29% in 2011.

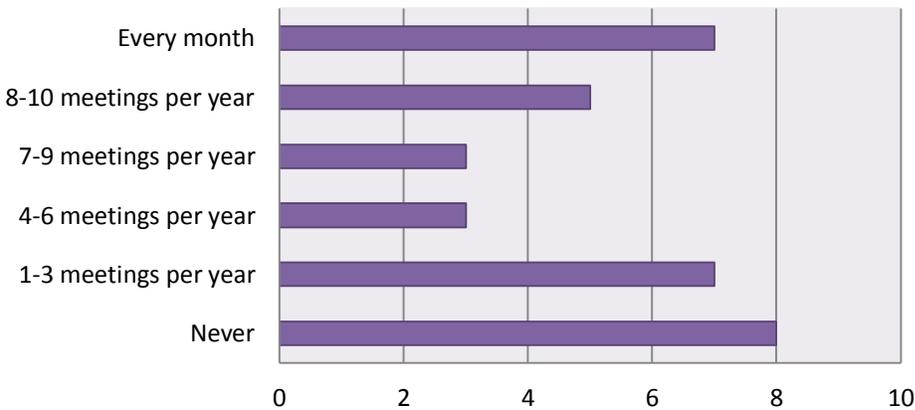
Do you use your smartphone regularly to access online content?



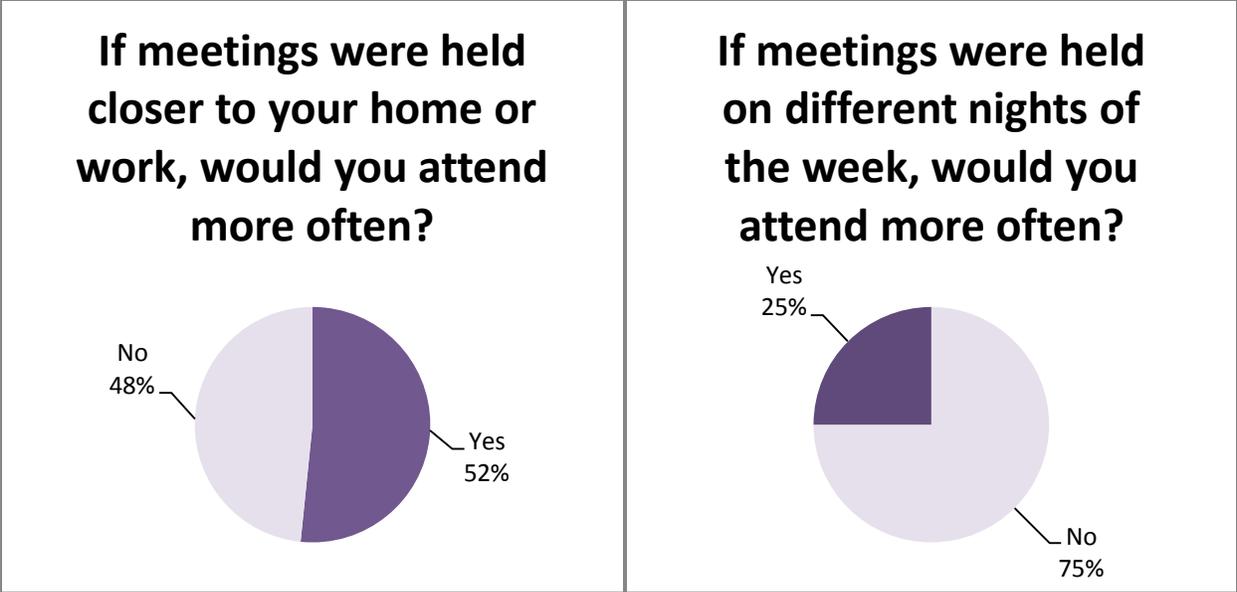
Over half of the respondents own a smartphone and use it regularly to access online content.

Part 5: Chapter Meetings

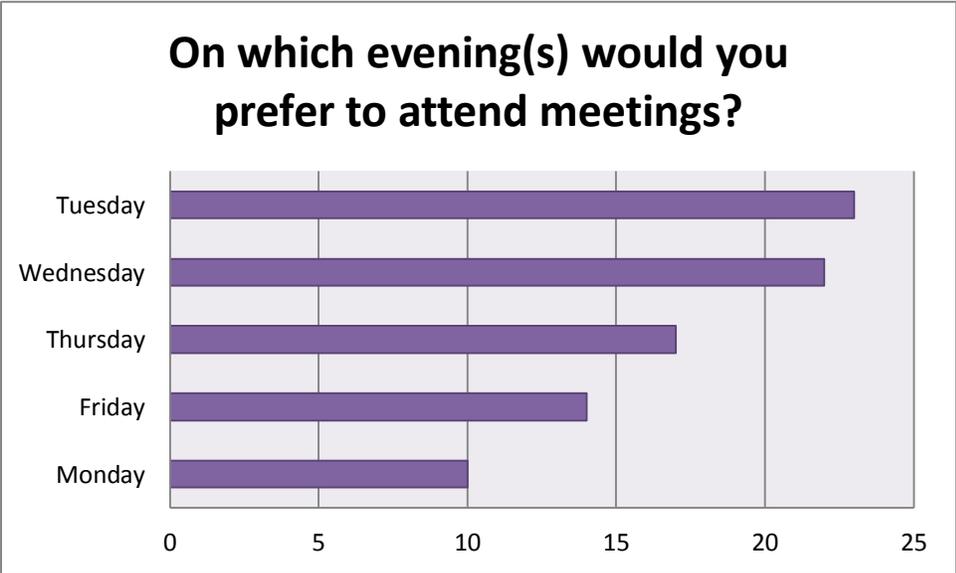
How often do you attend Orlando Central Florida chapter meetings?



About a quarter of the respondents never attend chapter meetings. Orlando Central Florida chapter leaders hope to use these survey results to encourage attendance through online access (in the case of geographic inconvenience), recorded distant access (in the case of scheduling inconvenience), or by expanding content offerings to include more appealing or useful content.

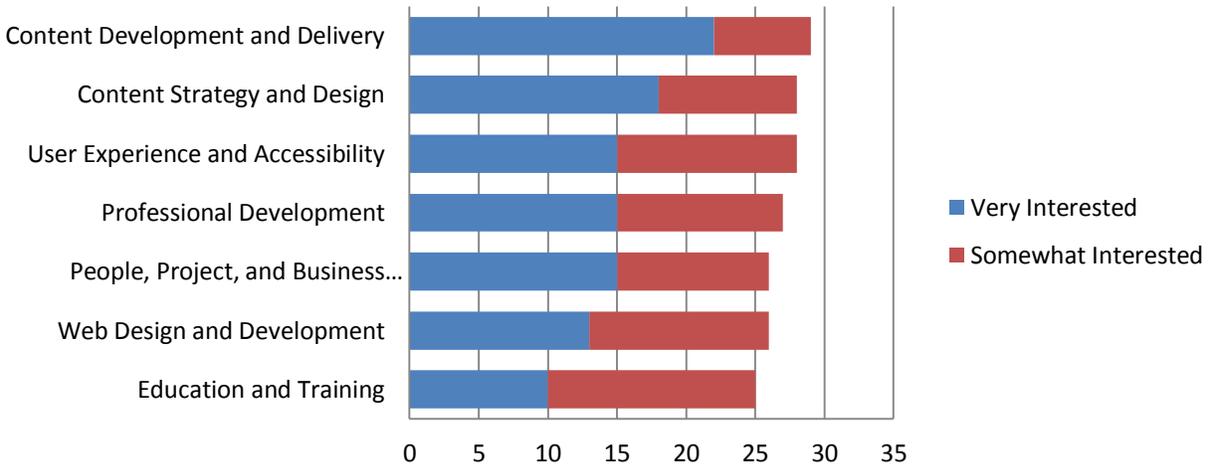


While location is a key factor to 52% of the respondents, only 25% would attend more if meetings were held on other days of the week.



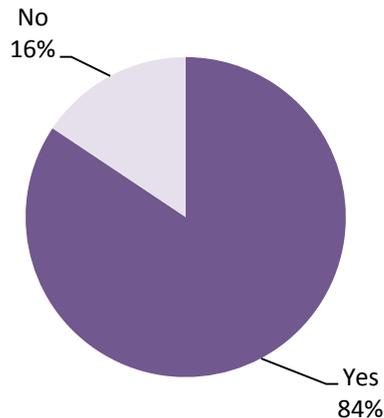
The preferred day is still Tuesday, but Wednesday is only one vote behind. Although alternating meeting days has been discussed, meeting on a consistent day of the week has been shown to be more conducive to steady attendance.

What program topics would you like to see in future chapter meetings?



Chapter leaders will consider these results along with the specific topic suggestions when planning future meetings.

Would you be interested in a webinar-style meeting?



Chapter leaders are investigating options for providing webinars, both pre-recorded and live, including original material generated at the chapter level and Society-created webinars. Distant access using MeetingBurner or other technologies could increase member access to chapter programming.