



# Memo to Members

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### Special points of interest:

- The [2003 Annual Conference](#) for STC Region 8 will be held January 12-14, 2003 in Las Vegas, Nevada.
- Last month it was misprinted that [Dr. Dan Jones](#) received the Blicq Award in September. We have almost another year to keep congratulating Dr. Jones because he will not receive this award until September 2003!

## These Are My Reasons, What are Yours?

by Mike Murray, Chapter President

When I spoke at the October chapter meeting about why it's so important to renew your STC membership, and especially important during tough economic times, little did I know that the very next day the Society office would distribute e-mail invitations to begin renewing online right away!



Renewing was easy for **Christina Payne**, chapter newsletter editor, and me. Throughout the year, we mention STC and how it benefits what we do at our jobs at Lockheed Martin. When it came time to renew, it was just a matter of confirming the obvious. A brief e-mail to our supervisor resulted in an immediate "Yes!"

It really doesn't take much thought to realize why, regardless of how good or bad the economic conditions, severing your ties with STC is a very bad move. If, for some reason, Lockheed Martin had been unwilling to pay my \$125 renewal, I would have done whatever it took to renew it myself—whatever it took! Why?

### Lifeline

I think of STC as my lifeline to the technical communication profession. If not for the connections that come from mailing lists, meetings, and public-ations, I would feel like I'm on a

desert island, wondering what wonderful new things were developing in the world around me. I couldn't stand that! I pride

I think of STC as my lifeline to the technical communication profession.

—Mike Murray

myself in delivering the best possible products and services to my customers, and if I'm not keeping in touch, I can never be sure if I'm doing that. I owe myself and my customers a lot more!

### Networking

I don't know that I ever really valued networking quite as much as I do since joining STC. I've found out again and again just how small this world is as I've met people with similar interests who have energized me and changed my life in so many

ways. I've seen time and time again members who have persistently networked and found technical communication jobs that make them excited to get up in the morning and start their work day. You can see it in their eyes in the chapter meetings. It's extremely fulfilling, and I want more!

### Friendships

While I certainly expected to develop new friendships in STC, I never ever expected that the friendships I would make in STC would become the best and richest I would have anywhere. The next time you see me, I invite you to look into my eyes and ask me about the friendships I've made in STC, and you'll know that I'm not exaggerating in the slightest. I want to hang

*Continued on Page 2*



## Time to Renew, cont'd

around these people for a long time, so you can be sure I'll always renew my membership.

Well, those are my reasons; what are yours? Is it the high-quality publications? I literally read *Intercom* cover-to-cover every month. What a great magazine! Is it the Annual Conference? I think I've been

to seven or eight, but who's counting? Is it our chapter meetings with the quality content that you've asked for in the pre-chapter-year surveys? Is it the Orlando chapter members themselves who are so energetic and who seemingly would do anything in the world they could to help you? Whatever

the reason, it doesn't take much thought to know that renewing your STC membership as soon as possible is a "no-brainer."

Whatever it takes...

### Renew Your STC Membership Now!

- Visit <http://www.stc.org>.
- Under *What's New*, select *Online Renewal*.
- Remember to change your address if needed.

## The Benefits of STC

After you renew your membership, take a moment to appreciate some of the benefits that you experience as a member, including:

- Award-winning publications to keep you up-to-date on current trends, tools, and practices vital to the industry.
- Networking opportunities through STC's 150 local chapters.
- Educational conferences and seminars at reduced member rates.
- The opportunity to join STC's two dozen Special Interest Groups (SIGs).
- Forums for sharing your expertise, expressing your professional opinion, and building a reputation within the industry.
- Access to STC's Jobs Database—containing thousands of current job openings specifically geared toward the technical communication field.
- STC's Annual Salary Survey, which provides vital statistics on pay and benefits for technical writers and editors in the U.S. and Canada.
- Association Group Rate Insurance.
- Mailings from local chapters, meeting announcements, and newsletters.
- Unrestricted access to STC's award-winning Web site.

Is there somebody you know that could benefit from STC? Check out [10 Reasons to Join STC](#).



*Intercom*, STC's award-winning publication, is available to members, providing practical examples and applications of technical communication.

## Mentors Needed

Over the years, members of the University of Central Florida (UCF) technical writing faculty have advised many graduating technical writing majors concerning preparing their resumes, applying for and interviewing

for jobs, negotiating the details once a job is offered, and under-

standing other important matters related to the job search.

Now the faculty wants to initiate an informal mentoring program by recruiting experienced members of Orlando STC to volunteer as mentors.

Instituting this coaching process is one of the goals of the Board of Advisors for the UCF technical writing program.

Each volunteer would be assigned one student to work with

beginning this December or next May. (Approximately eight students are completing the requirements for their B.A. this December, with another eight doing so in May.)

Your mission, if you choose to volunteer for this assignment, would simply be to keep in touch with the student via e-mail and by phone and to provide advice on all aspects of the job search. And once the student obtains a job, you would

be expected to provide advice on how to succeed in the workplace.

If you are interested in being a mentor for a student, please e-mail **Dr. Dan Jones** at [djones@ucf.edu](mailto:djones@ucf.edu). You can also learn more about mentoring from STC's [Guidelines for Mentoring Programs](#).



## September Board Meeting Held in Boston

Membership, budget, and member services were the focus of the STC Board of Directors meeting in Boston held September 26-28, 2002. As with many organizations, STC is feeling the effects of a weak economy—membership, the value of our investments, and conference attendance are lower this year. Despite the challenges from the economy, the board spent a significant amount of time addressing ways to increase membership and improve the quality of member services.

### The following actions were taken at the September board meeting:

- Approved the new strategic plan. You can see the plan at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org) (under About STC).
- Approved the budget for fiscal year 2003.
- Revised the way that the Society pro-rates dues. Dues will now be pro-rated by month rather than only at the end of the year. The effect on new members is that they can join at any time during the year and receive at least 12 months of membership. During the transition, members joining through the end of this year will receive membership through December 31, 2003.
- Changed the way that chapter rebates will be paid for 2004 on. In the future, half of the rebate will be paid upon receipt and approval of the chapter's financial report and 990EZ (if applicable) and the remaining half will be paid the following January. The main reason this action was taken is to reduce the drain on the cash flow for the Society during the year. Chapters should plan ahead since they will receive two smaller rebates during the year rather than one large amount.
- Approved previously committed support for INTECOM (The International Council for Technical Communication), an organization of 15 international societies focusing on technical communication.
- Increased support for Society representation at the standards organizations related to our profession: National Information Standards Organization (NISO), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
- Updated the Chapter Achievement Award to increase the profile of membership activities in chapters of all sizes. The revisions apply to chapters submitting this year (2002-2003), so make sure you get a copy of the revised guidelines from the Society Web site.

### The following items were discussed at the board meeting:

- The Society Web site initiated a “members only” area starting October 1, 2002. The purpose of this move is to increase the value of membership in STC. We will be monitoring the success of this effort closely over the next 6 months.
- The board discussed ways to increase the role of the SIGs in the Society. The SIGs represent the diversity of our membership and are important communities for technical communicators.
- Membership was discussed throughout the board meeting. You will see more of a focus on recruiting new members in the months to come. We also discussed retaining existing members, which is important; however, the biggest drop off is in the number of new members. In preparation, start thinking about ways that you can help STC reach the many technical communicators who have not yet joined our community.

If you have questions or comments about the STC Board of Directors or any of the items mentioned in this article, please contact your director-sponsor, **Rob Houser**, at [rob@userfirst.net](mailto:rob@userfirst.net).



The Boston skyline at dusk provided by Deana Collins of the Boston STC Chapter.

### About the Boston STC Chapter:

- Boston has the second largest chapter in the world with over 1,000 members.
- The STC Annual Conference has been held in Boston three times (1963, 1972, and 1982).

### Based on a Web poll posted on the Boston STC Chapter Web site, this STC Chapter consists of:

- 66.8% Technical Writers
- 5.3% Technical Editors
- 4.9% Trainers/Curriculum Developers
- 8.8% Managers
- 1.3% Webmasters
- 2.2% Web Content Editor
- 10.6% Other

This Web poll was based on 226 votes.

## Tool Tips

### by David Coverston

*Tool Tips is a series of helpful hints that can save you time and strengthen your skills as a technical writer.*



As a technical writer, I often need to get the exact name of a file. Whether I have to email the name to another employee, use the name in writing a batch file, or make a list of files that are installed for an application going to a customer, a misspelled file name can mean

bad news. If a file is buried on a LAN ten subdirectories deep, typing the name can take a while. Fortunately, there's a much easier way.

### FileGrab

FileGrab is a free utility from the Ziff-Davis publishing company. You can find a description of the program and download it here at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,5752,00.asp>. There is no installation routine, so you have to extract all the files in filegr.zip to a folder on your hard drive and create a shortcut to filegrab.exe. I have a folder on my Desktop named Toolkit where I put shortcuts to all my utility programs, including FileGrab.

### Getting Started

To start FileGrab, double-click filegrab.exe in your Windows Explorer, or double-click the shortcut you made to it on your Desktop. The FileGrab window will open as shown in Figure 1.

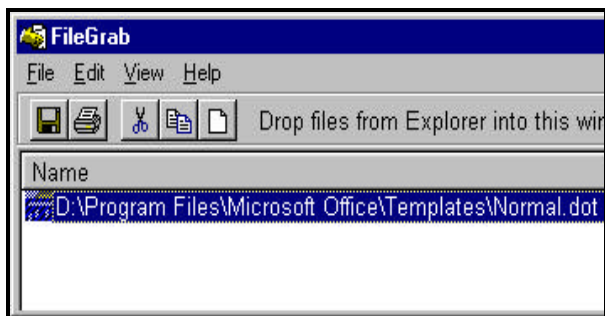


Figure 1: FileGrab Window

To get a list of filenames, drag the file from the Windows Explorer window and drop it in the pane of the FileGrab window. If FileGrab is not visible on the Desktop, hover your pointer over the Taskbar icon until the FileGrab window displays, then drop it in the pane. If you are comfortable using drag-and-drop with other applications, this should be easy for you. Once you have your list, select the files and click the Copy tool.

The displayed tool buttons and their functions, from left to right, are:

- **Save**—Saves the list of files to a text file. When you copy your list to the clipboard, FileGrab pads columns with spaces so that they line up. You can also choose to separate the file properties with commas or tabs.
- **Print**—Prints a list of the files.
- **Cut**—Removes a file from the list of files and copies the name to the clipboard. This does not delete the file from your PC.
- **Copy**—Copies the names of selected files to the clipboard.
- **Clear**—Clears the file name from the File list.

Once you have made a file name list in FileGrab, you can choose options on the View menu to select which file properties you want to copy into your list, as shown in Figure 2.

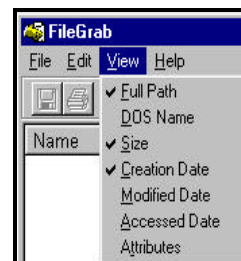


Figure 2: FileGrab View Menu

Checking an item adds it to the list; unchecking the item removes it. You can turn on or off any of the attributes, even after you have made your list. The last feature I'll mention that you might be interested in is the sorting function. You can sort your file list by any of the attributes you have chosen to display by clicking the column heading control bars in the file list pane. Sort them before you copy them to the clipboard and you can paste a sorted file list into your target document.

*David Coverston, Orlando chapter secretary, is a technical writer for PaySys International, Inc. If you have any questions about this Tool Tips article, feel free to contact David at [dcoverston@paysys.com](mailto:dcoverston@paysys.com).*



David Coverston provides helpful hints for fellow STC members.



# Employment Opportunities

by Richard Phipps



Listed are some recent employment opportunities. Feel free to contact me at [rphipps@ciber.com](mailto:rphipps@ciber.com) if you would like more information or would like to apply for the positions.

## Technical Writer- FrameMaker

The FrameMaker Group will be creating client user documentation. The projects are expected to kick off around the first week of December and run through the end of March, with the week of Christmas off. The required skill sets include strong Framemaker (version 7.0 preferred) and MS Word. The manager is expecting to hire only experienced professional writers with at least 5 years of writing experience.

## Custom Code Writer

Work with a team of writers and developers within a financial software development environment, creating end-user and technical documentation for credit card processing software products.

## Technical Writer- Stromberg, LLC

Prepare and maintain online help, instructional materials, and software user guides using technical writing and analytical skills. Develop procedural instructions for user documentation, gather and interpret technical data to support content development, create and maintain document templates and style guides, prepare systems and programming documentation, create and maintain procedures manuals and software user's guides to

support new and existing products.

## Job Search Checklist

Have you...

- √ Leveraged the Internet, posting to major job sites and using search engines?
- √ Polished your resume and portfolio, with hard-copy and online versions?
- √ Posted a personal Web site?
- √ Checked your market value?
- √ Researched your interviewer's company?

*Richard Phipps is the employment manager for the Orlando Chapter STC. Contact Richard at [rphipps@ciber.com](mailto:rphipps@ciber.com) to boost your career or share job leads.*

# How to Use Lists Effectively

by Steven Greffenius, Boston Chapter

Use lists to organize information quickly. A shopping list, for example, tells you what has to go into the cart. It might have some order built in, but usually you list the items as they come to mind. More formal lists for complex material generally fall into one of these categories:

- Bulleted lists
- Numbered lists
- Multi-column lists

## Three Types of Lists

Let's take a look at how to use each type:

### Bulleted Lists

Bulleted lists are the most versatile type. They're easy for readers to scan, their structure is flexible, and the items may or may not be in a particular order. The three bulleted items above illustrate how to use a bulleted list to organize information.

### Numbered Lists

Number the entries in a list when you want to present items in a well-defined sequence. The most common example of this type is a list of steps in a procedure. You want your reader to perform the steps in a precise order:

1. Lay out the tools you need.
2. Attach part A to part B.
3. Attach assembly AB to part C.
4. Check that all fasteners are secure.

### Multi-Column Lists

Use a tabular or multi-column format when each item in a list has two or more parts. Definitions in a glossary, descriptive material, and conditional responses often make good use of this format. The descriptions in a list of parts or the responses in a troubleshooting guide furnish two good examples. Consider the list of conditions from a driver's handbook found in the next column.

### Use Lists to Good Advantage

Everyone uses lists all the time for purchasing, planning, organizing, and select-

<b>Green</b>	<b>GO—Check both ways and enter the intersection.</b>
<b>Yellow</b>	<b>Caution—Slow down and enter the intersection with care.</b>
<b>Red</b>	<b>Stop—Do not enter the intersection</b>

ing. Integrate them into your prose in formal and informal presentations. They help you communicate efficiently with your audience, and they're easy to use.

*This article first appeared in the **Boston Broadside** and was reprinted with permission from the editor **Daphna Edgar** and author **Steven Greffenius** of the Boston STC Chapter.*

## October Meeting: Managing the Chaos of Technology



Joyce Pearce put us at ease with her informative presentation on managing change.

Technical communicators are in a unique position to aid companies in times of technological transition, according to Joyce Pearce, a Senior Consultant with Intuitive Information, Inc.

In her presentation, "Managing

the Disruption and Change Caused by Technology," at the October STC meeting, Pearce outlined a holistic approach to change management, involving people, processes, and technology.

According to the Gartner Group, 50 per cent of all "computerization" projects fail, and 60 per cent of CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software implementations fail. More than half of all companies can't even measure the ROI (Return on Investment) of their projects.

### Changes are everywhere.

Common changes that employees must deal with include growth, downsizing, reorganization, new products/services, and mergers/acquisitions. When change is introduced in a company, workers often go through a grieving process, like the stages of grief explained in the theories of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. These stages in-

### Seven Reasons Why Technology Implementations Fail



Joyce Pearce presented some interesting insights about the effect change has on a company.

According to a Gartner Group assessment, seven reasons why technology implementations fail are:

1. Data is ignored
2. Politics rule
3. IT organizations and business users

include shock, denial, bargaining, anger, depression, then acceptance

Pearce said that technical communicators are ideal candidates to be change agents—people who support a team through careful preparation and exhaustive attention to detail. Because technical communicators are geared toward detail, are in a neutral position on the team, can see the big picture, and are experts in communication skills, they are in a unique position to aid in ushering in technological change.

Technical communicators are in a unique position to aid in technological change.

—Joyce Pearce

Change agents understand the business reason for a change and understand the culture of the organizations involved with the change. Change agents accept the fact that there is a normal resistance to change and help to see that the right people are involved with planning and implementing a change. Change management teams should focus on processes to assess and define the current state, then clearly define the desired state.

can't work together

4. There is no plan
5. Technology is implemented for the enterprise, not the customer
6. A flawed process is automated
7. Insufficient attention is paid to skill sets

Technical communicators can play a key role in avoiding these failure modes, as explained in the above article and the box to the right.

### Ten ways in which we can manage change include:

1. Let customer initiatives drive the change—Can you justify the need for the change to your customers?
2. Get active support from executives—Obtain executive support from across your organization.
3. Develop a plan that includes people, processes, and technology in the early stages—Build cross functional teams of subject matter experts and get requirements from all process owners.
4. Develop a strong communications plan—Explain the "what" and "why" and provide status updates to stimulate interest.
5. Address the psychological impact of the change—Address how the change will affect each group or person and express what is being done to accommodate their needs. Provide a clear vision of benefits of the change.
6. Include all process owners on the project team—Include an empowered representative from each affected group on the change team.
7. Understand your current state—Baseline your current business processes and identify the gaps.
8. Define the desired state—Identify the gaps that the change will address.
9. Assess the skill requirement—Evaluate the skills required for the new process. Conduct a skills survey to identify gaps that develop a plan to train or acquire the necessary skills.
10. Conduct an integrated test including the processes, people, and the system or application before you instituted the change—Assess the results and make any necessary modifications.

## November Meeting: Timeless Tips for Great Presentations

Our speaker at the November meeting will be Bruce Dalland, Program Management— Technical Writer at Adaptec, Inc. Bruce is a member of Toastmasters International, and he along with several other members of Toastmasters will be presenting several helpful topics from the Toastmasters Better Speaking Series.

Toastmasters was established in 1924, bringing people from all backgrounds together to learn how to speak effectively, conduct a meeting, manage a department or business, lead, delegate, and moti-

vate. Toastmasters uses time-tested programs that are continually updated to meet participants' needs.

This review of the following presentation topics should be of value to all STC members:

- Selecting Your Topic
- Knowing Your Audience
- Organizing Your Speech
- Concluding Your Speech
- Preparation and Practice
- Taking the Terror out of Talk
- Impromptu Speaking

Bruce and his fellow Toastmasters will be presenting many of the areas you will need to address if you want to make a successful presentation.

This is a very timely topic, especially in these times where “selling yourself” and “selling your product” are often critical to getting a job or making a sale. Please plan on attending this informative session.



**Come to our November meeting to strengthen your presentation skills!**

All STC monthly meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. at the Winter Park Civic Center unless otherwise specified.

# December 2002

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
15	16	STC Monthly Meeting	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
29	30	31					



## The Story of the Starfish

by Dan Voss

If you have joined or decide to join the Special Needs SIG, it won't be long before you hear one of us rambling on about starfish—at which point you will no doubt scratch your head and wonder “What in blue blazes do starfish have to do with special needs?”

It's not that we are ichthyologically inclined. The reason we have adopted the humble starfish as a “mascot” for our SIG is that it provides a perfect metaphor for the unique challenge of our mission. Providing information, advocacy, and support for technical communicators and users of communication products who have disabilities can be truly inspiring, but it can also be discouraging. Try as we might, we cannot possibly provide solutions for all the challenges faced by millions of people with disabilities. We can't even do that within our own profession.

*But we sure can try.*



And it was to capture this “never-say-die” attitude that my predecessor as manager of the Special Needs Committee, **Judy Skinner**, created the starfish metaphor in the conclusion of her landmark article, “My Brain Works, My Legs Don't: Let's Take the 'Dis' out of 'Disabilities',” published in the *Proceedings* to the 47<sup>th</sup> STC conference:

“I'm reminded of the story about the beach strewn with starfish and the little girl picking them up and throwing them back in the ocean.  
'Little girl,' a passer-by said, 'what are you doing?'  
'I'm saving starfish,' she replied.  
'But there are so many! Your efforts can't possibly make a difference.'  
As she picked up another starfish, the little girl said, 'It makes a difference to that one.'”

**We ask you to help us make a difference.**



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### Chapter Meeting Schedule

- **October 22-** *Managing the Chaos of Technology* with Bob Shydo and Cathy Balboa from Intuitive Information, Inc.
- **November 26-** *Timeless Tips for Great Presentations*
- **December 17-** *Getting Absolutely Anything Ready for Print*
- **January 28-** Joint Meeting with UCF
- **February 25-** Writing Contest and Scholarship Awards Banquet
- **March 25-** *The Tina-Xena Transformation: A Recipe for Professional Empowerment*
- **April 22-** *Employment Progression*
- **May 27-** Panel Discussion on *Help*
- **June 24-** Year-end Banquet

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## Those Flowers Could Be Ours

by Dan Voss



Did you ever see a photograph that just *begged* to be taken and not have a camera?

That happened to me the other day as I was executing the grueling daily trek down I-4. A nicely dressed woman of about 40 was placing fresh flowers on one of those many roadside memorials we whiz by each day without a second thought.

If I had a camera, I believe it would have been the kind of shot that makes a magazine cover. Instead, I took a mental snapshot that has etched itself indelibly in my memory.

I will never know who that memorial was for, what loved one or loved ones this woman was grieving for, or what was in her heart as she gently removed the wilted flowers that had succumbed to the broiling Florida sun and put new ones in their place. Nor will I know the circumstances surrounding the accident that led to this memorial.

I do know this. There are entirely too many such memorials along our highways.

Moments after I passed the woman at the memorial, somebody in a van cut me off so abruptly I had to slam on the brakes to avoid a collision. Fortunately, the driver behind me was not tailgating, so there was no accident. It occurred to me that my wife could easily have been the next woman changing flowers by the roadside. The difference is measured in seconds.

“There but for the grace...”

I whispered a prayer of thanks.

I’d like to close with two thoughts. To my fellow motorists: let’s do what we can to prevent the need for further roadside memorials. And to the woman I saw the other day: God bless you, and may you find peace. Perhaps your love, my “snapshot,” and the readers of this letter will save someone else.

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