

Memo to Members

The newsletter of the Orlando Central Florida Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication



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October 2010

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Memo to Members



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Regular Meeting		ADCO Meeting		Special Event		
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
April 2012						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					
May 2012						
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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President's Corner

by Dalton Hooper
Orlando Chapter President

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Connections

We humans have a basic desire – you might even say a *need* – to belong to a group. We need companionship with like-minded people. We need to be supported and guided. We need to support and guide others. Since we are complex beings, most of us belong to many different groups on many different levels. We might simultaneously belong to

- A biological or nuclear family.
- A project team at our place of work.
- A church in the community.
- A student body at an educational facility.
- A group of supporters of a particular sports team.
- A professional organization (e.g., STC).

Although many of us may not consider ourselves to be “social” people, we all need and seek approval, affirmation, and assistance from others. Sometimes we don't even have to become personally acquainted with the individuals in our group. Sometimes it is enough to simply know that we are not alone. Take, for example, the online social networking phenomenon. If we have a Twitter account, we take pride in accumulating a high number of Followers – even though we may have no idea who most of them are (Do you think Al Gore actually knows all of his 2,180,088 followers?). Although we complain when we come back from vacation to find we have 462 emails waiting for us, how would we feel if we received none. Although we complain when we go to our mailbox and find that it contains only bills and ads, we also feel a sense of disappointment on those rare occasions when we find the mailbox empty. Humans need to connect.

You're in luck!

If you are a human (and most of you are!), here is an opportunity to continue to be a part of something positive: a member of the Orlando Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication.

Beginning now, you can renew your STC and Orlando Chapter membership for 2011. You can do it online by visiting <https://access.stc.org/JoinSTC/renewal.aspx>. Be sure to designate Orlando as your chapter. Currently, STC offers four levels of membership:

- Student membership

Student members have access to the online versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. They also get membership in one professional chapter, one student chapter and one special interest group.

Student Membership costs \$75.00.

Want to post a job opening? You can contact our Employment Manager, Dalton Hooper, by clicking [here](#).

NOT A MEMBER?

Want more information on being an STC Orlando Chapter member? You can contact our Membership Manager, David Coverston, by clicking [here](#). Your first meeting is free!

ACTIVE MEMBER SHIRTS

Want to be in the running for an Active Member polo shirt? You can contact our Active Members Manager, W.C. Wiese, by clicking [here](#).

RISING STARS



Want to help our Chapter in support of our educational outreach initiative? You can make a tax-free donation. Just click on the above image for more information.

STC ORLANDO LOGO ITEMS



Show your STC Orlando pride by purchasing an item imprinted with the STC Orlando logo! Click on the above image to see the catalogue and/or to place an order.

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Basic membership

Those who choose Basic Membership have access to the online versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. Basic membership also includes 2 free archived seminars (available after 2/1/2011). Membership fees below include one chapter and one special interest group selection. You will be allowed to opt-out of these included communities in the next page of the application to decrease your dues (chapter - \$25, SIG - \$10) accordingly.

Basic Membership costs \$250.00.

SIG Value membership

Those who choose SIG Value Membership receive electronic versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. The SIG value membership includes membership in *all* STC Special Interest groups.

SIG Value Membership costs \$375.00.

Gold membership

If you choose Gold Membership you will have access to the online versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*, free registration for five webinars, two free archived seminars (available after 2/1/2011), a 50% discount for one online certificate course, free access to the Salary Database, and a free Premium listing (50-word description) in the STC Online Buyers' Guide to Products and Services. Also with Gold Membership, you receive membership in one chapter and one special interest group (SIG).

Gold Membership costs \$395.00.

Your renewed membership will be valid through December 31, 2011; and don't forget, STC is offering the option to pay for dues in four equal installments. The monthly installment payments will be automatically deducted from your credit card (or credit card backed debit card) and will begin the first business day after your application has been processed and will continue approximately every 30 days for the next three consecutive months.

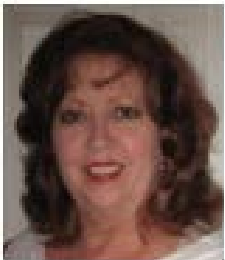
Come be a part of our family.

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The View from Number Two

by Debra Johnson
Orlando Chapter Vice President



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I want to thank Elizabeth Holubek for a wonderful presentation on Business Analysis and Business Process Modeling last month...it is still causing quite a buzz...to the point that Sun Coast Chapter has asked her to speak to their group after the first of the year. Well done, Elizabeth!

I am on schedule to speak to the Future Technical Communicators group - University of Central Florida chapter right before our Oct STC meeting. They want me to put into words my journey as a Technical Communicator. They want to know what skills



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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (STC)



Mission: STC advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and media so that both businesses and customers benefit from safe, appropriate, and effective use of products, information, and services.

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10,633 views

technical writers possess, and how these skills can prove them invaluable within the workplace; what I do on my job and why I love what I do so much.

So, let's talk about our next meetings.

Here is the lineup so far:

October 19, 2010: Traci Wilbanks, Senior Technical Writer – MEDai, an Elsevier company.

After five years as a middle school English teacher, Traci got married, moved to Orlando, and found herself working as a technical writer with an Orlando-based military training solutions company. Her English degree was a foot in the door, but the seven years spent at a small, privately-held software company really solidified her understanding of the profession.

When offered the chance to expand her skill set and move into the role of a Business Systems Analyst for a durable medical equipment company, Traci eagerly accepted.

The two years as an analyst really expanded her experience in the other areas of the development lifecycle, but technical writing and end user training has always been where her strength and interest resides.

Traci will talk about things such as:

- Writing in the Medical Arena – Being a patient gives you some experience, but what else do you need to know?
- As Medicare/Medicaid Goes, So Goes the Nation
- Client Systems and Technology Set the Pace of Progress
- How Healthcare Reform Impacts the Industry
- Knowledge Necessary to Break Into the Field

Next month we meet to give thanks... more on that soon.

P.S. See you Oct .19, 2010 at 6:30 pm at the Winter Park Convention Center. Bring someone with you!!!

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If You Missed Our Last Meeting

by Michelle Damrom
Chapter Secretary



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... you missed a thought-provoking, discussion-generating presentation that showed us how our core skills as technical writers can open doors for us in the related field of business analysis.

A Business Analyst (BA) for 12 years, Elizabeth Holubek of Wyndham Vacation Ownership is currently building a Business Process Modeling discipline at Wyndham. In

her presentation Elizabeth provided a history of business analysis, described what a “typical” BA does, and showed that BAs and Technical Communicators share many core skills and competencies. She also provided several resources for those wishing to learn more about the field of business analysis.

BA History

In the past, communication between business managers and IT solution developers proved problematic because the managers talked about “the customer” and what they as managers wanted to achieve for their customers, while developers talked about systems and data. Business analysts bridge the communication gap between managers and developers by learning the business inside-out—seeing things from the manager’s perspective as well as understanding the various solutions being offered by the software developers and how those solutions could be used to solve problems and advance the business.



BA Job Description

BAs learn the business thoroughly and then help the various parts communicate with each other to enable successful problem resolution and growth. It’s easy to see that at the heart of all these activities is communication. Listed here are the major areas of communication for a BA:

- ➔ leadership and collaboration
- ➔ analysis, design, and documentation
- ➔ business knowledge
- ➔ testing and training

BA and TC Shared Skills and Competencies

Elizabeth shared with us a list of common BA skills and abilities:

- ➔ technical
- ➔ creative, strategic
- ➔ flexible, adaptable, collaborative
- ➔ process focused, analytical, conceptual, results focused, quick learner
- ➔ problem solver, mediator, presenter, educator, writer, motivator, leader

That sounds a little like what our Technical Communicator list of skills and abilities would be, doesn’t it? If you want to go further and take a test that evaluates your own personal skills and abilities, check out one or more of these links from Elizabeth:

- ➔ Discovering Your Strengths
<http://www.strengthsfinder.com/113647/Homepage.aspx>
- ➔ Leadership Test
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_01.htm
- ➔ Communication Skills Test
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCS_99.htm
- ➔ DiSC Model (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Conscientiousness)
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_92.htm
- ➔ Career Explorer Test
<http://www.careerexplorer.net/aptitude.asp>

BA Resources

- ➔ IIBA: International Institute of Business Analysis

<http://orlando.theiiba.org>

➤ **ABPMP: Association of Business Process Management Professionals**
<http://www.abpmp.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=118>

The IIBA now offers certification in Business Process Management; also, the IIBA now has an associate test that Technical Communicators can take.

See how much you missed? Come on out and join us for October's meeting, on the topic of Medical Technical Writing.

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Microsoft Office 2010 – The Best New Features in Excel

By Mary Hester

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Excel is arguably the most under-utilized Microsoft Office product when it comes to advanced features. Ask people what features they most like in Excel and they usually describe the spreadsheet and graphing tools. But that is just a very small part of the capabilities built into Excel. From tools for statistical, engineering and financial functions, to pivot tables, to Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) programming, you can use Excel for simple to complex data analysis and display with easy to read graphs and charts.

If you haven't used the advanced tools in Excel, start by trying the new features to get the most from your software investment. Analyze your data to discover patterns or trends, then display with graphs and charts that illuminate the best course of action. With a little practice, you will improve your ability to study large data sets and make the most informed decisions.

Make fast, effective comparisons

Sparklines – Use sparklines to graphically display data in a single cell. You can display data in line, column or win/loss format to highlight trends. On the Insert tab, choose the type of Sparkline and your data range. Customize your sparklines for optimum effect by selecting the sparkline and choosing the Design tab.

Slicer – Slicers are filtering components that allow you to slice-and-dice your data without having to open drop down lists. Slicers make it easier to segment and filter data in PivotTables for high powered business intelligence.

Step up your analysis

Search Filter – Use the new Search Filter to quickly and easily narrow your search in tables, PivotTable, and PivotChart views. You can instantly sort through a million or more items.

PowerPivot (formerly called Project “Gemini”) Add-In – Groundbreaking technology that allows you streamlined integration of data from multiple sources and lightning-fast manipulation of large data sets with up to millions of rows. Effortlessly publish and share analysis through Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 and have other users enjoy the same Slicer and fast-query capabilities when working on their Excel Services report.

Backstage – The Microsoft Office Backstage view replaces the traditional file menu with an ergonomic approach that uses In and Out features for efficiency. The improved

Ribbon lets you access your favorite commands quickly and create custom tabs to personalize the way you work.

Jazz up your data presentations

Conditional Formatting – Excel 2010 adds sophistication to conditional formatting. Give your document a professional look by adding eye-catching formats. You have more choices and control over styles and icons, improved data bars, and the ability to highlight specific items in a few clicks. You can also display data bars for negative values and use color for effect.

Work from anywhere

Online – Post your spreadsheets online and work on them from virtually anywhere from the Web or your Windows Mobile-based Smartphone. With Excel 2010, you can take advantage of a best-in-class spreadsheet experience across multiple locations and devices.

Excel Web App – Extend your Office experience to the Web, and view and edit your spreadsheets through the Excel Web App when you're away.

Excel Mobile 2010 – Stay up-to-the-minute and communicate on-demand by using a mobile version of Excel specifically suited to your Smartphone.

For other interesting features and functions, try Goal Seek to give you a what-if analysis to test your scenarios, experiment with linear regression to understand relationships in your data or just play with the new formatting tools. But once you uncover the “hidden” features in Excel, you will be enthusiastically hooked.

For more technical notes and information go to: www.lansystems.com

Ms. Hester is the CEO of LAN Systems which provides IT solutions in the Greater Metro Atlanta Area. LAN Systems is dedicated to providing business technology that works for people. In 2004, Mary founded Intelligent System Solutions, Inc. (ISS) which provides high-tech consulting, sales and service to utility customers. Mary brings extensive experience managing a support and service group renowned for its “Best in the Industry” rating and standards. She is an expert in customer loyalty and retention. She has designed and delivered numerous training courses and workshops on a variety of topics.

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Use The Persona To Create The Most Useful Section Of Your User Document

by Barry Millman

A good User Document includes sections on how to set up, use, and care for the product. However, to create a great User Document, the technical writer should use the Persona, generated in the analysis of the User/Reader, to create the topics for the most useful section of the User Document. This article describes this procedure.

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THE MOST USEFUL SECTION OF A USER DOCUMENT

The most useful section of a User Document is the one that helps the User get what he/she wants/needs done right now!

Writing such a section might seem to be an impossibility. How do you know what the User needs to do now?

The only thing that you, as a writer, can do is to play the odds. That is, determine the topics that have the highest probability of being of interest to your User. And “of interest” means “getting what the User wants done, right now.”

We created Persona (an almost-real representation of your product's User) in another article in the "New Technical Writer" series (see the links in the "Resources" or "Author Information" section of this article). We can use the Persona to create a topic list for this section.

USING YOUR PERSONA

This step in using your Persona is missed by almost all User Documents that I have seen. Yet this step will result in a User Document that is most satisfying to your Reader. Here it is:

Imagine your Persona using your product. Now, what are the main things that your Persona will want to do with your product.

As an example we will use a photo editing program (Acme FotoPhixer, a hypothetical product from a hypothetical company) that comes bundled with a point and shoot digital camera. Our Persona is a typical user of such a camera.

Ask: What does that Persona want to do with Acme FotoPhixer?

The short answer is that they want to improve their photos. HOW can they improve their photos with Acme FotoPhixer? In OUR words (not the words of the User) we could tell them how to:

- * Rotate
- * Crop
- * Red-eye removal
- * Adjust brightness & contrast
- * Removing unwanted items from the photo
- * Focus/Blur
- * Save
- * Print
- * Share

These names are what we, the photography experts might use. However, "crop" may be meaningless to our Persona. In fact, we could move crop into "Removing unwanted items from the photo."

The "Focus/Blur" topic is interesting. If a photo is out of focus or blurred, there is really nothing that our software can do to improve it. However our Reader does not know this, but still wants to do it. We should include topic with this text: "It is impossible to fix the focus or remove blurring in a photograph. You might be able to improve this using the [Sharpen Effect] tool in FotoPhixer." (The [] specifies a reference to the topic in the User Document.)

DON'T HIDE THIS SECTION

If your Reader cannot quickly find what he/she wants to do in your User Document, then the document has failed. Since we created this section to answer the User's pressing needs for the product, then we must make this section very accessible to the User — they have to be able to find it easily.

"Fixing (Improving) Your Picture" is a PERFECT, User-oriented title. That is the correct title for this section. Don't bury this gold under titles such as: "Tutorial" or "Use FotoPhixer's Tools." These titles do not suggest answers to the User's questions.

You should make this section very easy to find in the User Document. It's the key section of the User Document. It has the information that most Readers want, most of the time (by your analysis). Place it prominently in the User Document.

SATISFYING THE READER IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK

Producing this section is easier than you think.

First, imagine that you were NOT going to include this section. Your User Document would still have to cover all of the features, tools, and user interactions for the

product. You need to do that to satisfy your boss. It's also logical. If a feature is not described, then why is it in the product?

Thus you have created a topic list for a "classical" User Document.

Now we create our User-oriented section, "Fixing Your Picture." Here are the steps:

1. List each of the topics for fixing a picture, using titles that the Reader will understand.
2. Provide a brief overview, perhaps with a picture showing before and after the use of this fixing method.
3. Then list the steps for that topic, and provide links to the documentation for the relevant tools for each step.

I would recommend using what I call a "Visual Index," which is described in the links in the "Resources" or "Author Information" section of this article, Within Document Re-usability.

We could call this organization method "within document re-usability." Here the writing for a topic exists as an item in the "reference" section of the User Document. By referring to that item when it is needed for performing a User-oriented task, we make the text do double duty. This results in reusability within the document.

HOW TO GET THE TIME TO WRITE THIS SECTION

Put less detailed effort into the documentation for the product's features that will be rarely used. For example, FotoPhixer includes tools to make the image look like it's made of stone, or produce 3D effects, etc. These are rarely used, and have a similar set of controls. Instead of detailing the use of each of these rarely used features, write a global usage, describe the controls, encourage the User to experiment, and remind them of the un-do and cancel capabilities.

You can create the "most useful" section with the time you save by not thoroughly documenting these rarely-used items.

THE BOTTOM LINE

You can make your User Document much more effective if you think about your User/Reader and what he/she wants to do with the product. Use this information to create an easy to find section in your User Document that meets your Reader's needs.

Barry Millman, Ph.D., has a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering (1966, Carnegie Institute of Technology) and an M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Psychology (Human Information Processing, University of Calgary). He has been a consultant for over 25 years, an instructor, course developer, and award-winning speaker. For the past seven years he has been researching and creating resources to help organizations create great User Documents. Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Barry_Millman

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