Memo to Members

STC Community of Distinction

8 time winner!

OCTOBER 2014

Guest Edited By Alex Garcia

IN THIS ISSUE:

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

[Note from RD Sharninghouse]: I'd like to thank Alex Garcia for stepping in to edit this month's newsletter. I have been up to my neck the past month working days and corralling Walkers, Aliens, Predators, and Michael Myers as part of the crew at Universal Orlando's Halloween Horror Nights at night. Once Halloween season is over, and after I hibernate, I will be back in action. Until then, don't forget to renew your STC Membership!

As a classic member, you'll receive the list below at no extra cost. Members-only discounts on education and our annual Summit

- Access to over 140 free, on-demand webinars

- 14-day advance access to the newest employment opportunities available in the STC Job Bank

- A copy of STC's *Salary Database*, containing the most up-to-date information from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics on what technical communicators are earning

- Online access to industry-leading publications *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*

- Access to the members-only sections of the STC website, including the community leadership resources, the STC Member Directory, and more

- An affinity program that provides discounts on software, products, and services

- Professional support through our global network of over 6,000 professionals

2015 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Current membership dues rates effective 15 September-28 February 2015

Membership Category	Included in Membership	Current Dues**	Adjusted Dues (See **List of Eligible Countries**)
Classic Membership	- Online Publications - Free On-Demand Webinars - Salary Database - Job Bank	**$225** - Add $25 per chapter - Add $10 per SIG	**$50** - Add $10 per chapter - Add $5 per SIG
Gold Value Package (available only until 31 May)	- Classic Membership Benefits 1 Chapter - All selected SIGs 5 Live Webinars 50% off 1 Virtual Course - Summit Really Early Bird Pricing Anytime - A print subscription to*Intercom* (introduced June 2014)	$425	$425
New TC Professional (graduated within past three years)	- Classic Membership Benefits 1 Chapter 1 SIG	$160	$160

Membership Category	Included in Membership	Current Dues**	Adjusted Dues (See **List of Eligible Countries**)
Student Membership	• Classic Membership Benefits • 1 Student Chapter • 1 Professional Chapter • Academic SIG • 1 Other SIG	$75	$25
Retired Membership (contact Membership Dept. for eligibility)	• Classic Membership Benefits • 1 Chapter • 1 SIG	$145	$145

There is a $30 enrollment fee for new membership.

Members may add the following a la carte menu items:

- $25 per chapter (emerging nations: $10)

- $10 per SIG (emerging nations: $5)

- $60 for printed copies of *Intercom**

- $75 for printed copies of *Technical Communication**

Please visit STC.org

R.D. Sharninghouse
Secretary and Editor, Memo 2 Members Newsletter
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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Debra Johnson, President
Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter
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(I want to give a special nod to the original authors of several articles I used on the Internet as reference, however, no names were listed… so forgive me… I have copied some, mashed up others, paraphrased and embellished)

The emphasis on strong communication skills for Technical Communication professionals has increased dramatically as the field from which employers have to choose from continues to showcase outstanding expertise. Technical Communication professionals, however, are no longer being relegated to the background. In many cases, their recommendations and concepts are having a direct and effective impact on overall corporate strategies. Consequently, if you don't have strong communication skills, you might get a job but you'll probably be stuck in it for a long, long time.
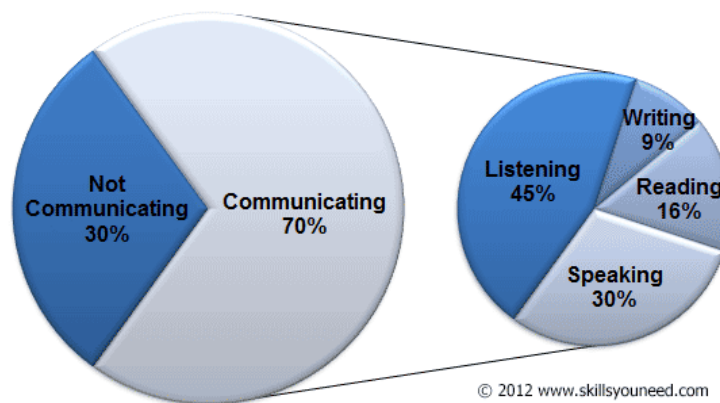
Of those communication skills, the most important to me is the art of listening…

> *"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.*
>
> Rachel Naomi Remen

…and I don't mean hearing someone… hearing refers to the sounds that you hear, whereas listening requires more than that: it requires focus. Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body. In other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages.

Time Spent Communicating

Not Communicating 30%
Communicating 70%

Listening 45%
Speaking 30%
Reading 16%
Writing 9%

© 2012 www.skillsyouneed.com

Based on the research of: *Adler, R., Rosenfeld, L. and Proctor, R. (2001) Interplay: the process of interpersonal communicating (8th edn), Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt.*

A good listener will listen not only to what is being said, but also to what is left unsaid or only partially said. Effective listening involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal and non-verbal messages.

TOP TEN PRINCIPLES OF LISTENING

1. Stop Talking

Don't talk, listen. When somebody else is talking listen to what they are saying, do not interrupt, talk over them or finish their sentences for them. Stop, just listen. When the other person has finished talking you may need to clarify to ensure you have received their message accurately.

2. Prepare Yourself to Listen

Relax. Focus on the speaker. Put other things out of mind. The human mind is easily distracted by other thoughts – what's for lunch, what time do I need to leave to catch my train, is it going to rain – try to put other thoughts out of mind and concentrate on the messages that are being communicated.

3. Put the Speaker at Ease

Help the speaker to feel free to speak. Remember their needs and concerns. Nod or use other gestures or words to encourage them to continue. Maintain eye contact but don't stare – show you are listening and understanding what is being said.

4. Remove Distractions

Focus on what is being said: don't doodle, shuffle papers, look out the window, pick your fingernails or similar. Avoid unnecessary interruptions. These behaviours disrupt the listening process and send messages to the speaker that you are bored or distracted.

5. Empathise

Try to understand the other person's point of view. Look at issues from their perspective. Let go of preconceived ideas. By having an open mind we can more fully empathise with the speaker. If the speaker says something that you disagree with then wait and construct an argument to counter what is said but keep an open mind to the views and opinions of others.

6. Be Patient

A pause, even a long pause, does not necessarily mean that the speaker has finished. Be patient and let the speaker continue in their own time, sometimes it takes time to formulate what to say and how to say it. Never interrupt or finish a sentence for someone.

7. Avoid Personal Prejudice

Try to be impartial. Don't become irritated and don't let the person's habits or mannerisms distract you from what they are really saying. Everybody has a different way of speaking - some people are for example more nervous or shy than others, some have regional accents or make excessive arm movements, some people like to pace whilst talking - others like to sit still. Focus on what is being said and try to ignore styles of delivery.

8. Listen to the Tone

Volume and tone both add to what someone is saying. A good speaker will use both volume and tone to their advantage to keep an audience attentive; everybody will use pitch, tone and volume of voice in certain situations – let these help you to understand the emphasis of what is being said.

9. Listen for Ideas – Not Just Words

You need to get the whole picture, not just isolated bits and pieces. Maybe one of the most difficult aspects of listening is the ability to link together pieces of information to reveal the ideas of others.   With proper concentration, letting go of distractions, and focus this becomes easier.

10. Wait and Watch for Non-Verbal Communication

Gestures, facial expressions, and eye-movements can all be important. We don't just listen with our ears but also with our eyes – watch and pick up the additional information being transmitted via non-verbal communication.

* **http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html#ixzz3G8E7V5n5**

THE VIEW FROM NUMBER 2

By Mary Burns
Vice President
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC
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When I first came to my job 15 years ago, I knew nothing about mainframe financial software. A creative writing major, I had been hired to edit user and technical manuals for grammar, style, and "readability." I'm a know-it-all by temperament, and I felt at a distinct disadvantage editing content that I didn't understand.

So in addition to taking all the in-house product classes I was allowed, I would drop in on the technical trainer a few cubes away. "Jake," I said once, having just peered into a COBOL program. "What is a record layout?" Suppressing alarm at my ignorance, he patiently cast about for common ground, and found it in cooking: A file is like a spice cabinet. A record is like a single spice. The record layout is the container, sort of. It's where the program puts the spice it has selected to actually see and work with it.

I pestered the business trainers too. "Amanda, what is "cycle due"? Why is "merchant discount" actually a fee?"

I hit the jackpot in Bill, a technician who had a passion for the workhorse application he maintained and enjoyed discussing it. I kept a folder of "Bill questions" for when he stopped by. It was like drinking from a fire hydrant, but my understanding of transaction routing grew by leaps and bounds.

This is all to say that to be effective technical communicators, we need mentors, and finding them is one of the challenges and pleasures of our job. If this sounds like you, you'll enjoy our October meeting, when four technical communicators from our area will share what they've learned in 150 combined years on the job. Bring on those questions!
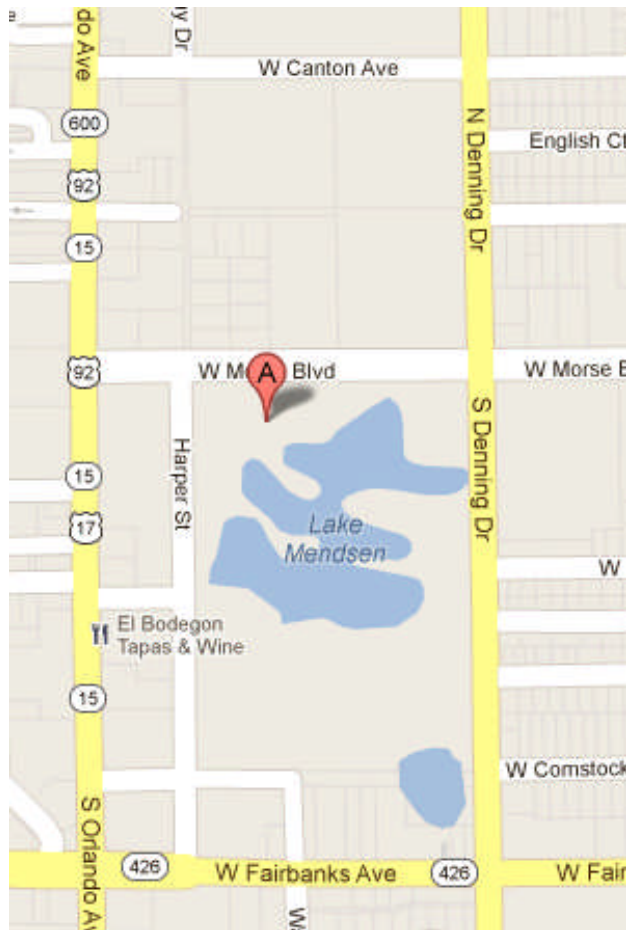
Meeting Specifics:

WHEN: Thursday, October 16, 6:15 PM New member orientation; 6:30 PM Networking/Refreshments; 7:00 PM Meeting
WHERE: Winter Park Civic Center, 1050 West Morse Blvd., Winter Park, FL 32789
HOW MUCH: $10 Student, $15 STC Member, $20 Non-Member. First-timers free.
RSVP/REGISTER: http://stcorlando.eventbrite.com.

The Winter Park Civic Center
West Morse Boulevard, Winter Park, FL
(407) 599-3341

IF YOU MISSED LAST MEETING…

By Alex Garcia
Treasurer
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC
Treasurer@stc-orlando.org

…You missed a lively discussion about how YOU, as a Technical Communicator, are already a Teacher. Namely, your background makes you uniquely positioned for a career as an Instructional System Designer (ISD). Myself and two of my colleagues at the Global Center for Courseware Development at Lockheed Martin Mission Systems and Training in East Orlando, Megan Brown and Jessica Baker, went over our individual paths from Technical Writers to Instructional Designers.

Some bits of wisdom you missed include:

- Location, Location Location: Orlando is the country's epicenter for Simulation and Training. Orlando is home to Team Orlando (www.TeamOrlando.org) – a cooperative between the four branches of the military, defense contractors, and the University of Central Florida so many career opportunities are available here.
- Why you are ready to be an ISD:
    - ISDs, like technical writers, have to put audience first
    - We are strong editors and Quality Assurance (QA) people
    - We like to break things and document why they broke
    - We're geeks
- Skills you need to be an ISD:
    - Educational theory
    - How to write effective test questions
    - Measuring the efficacy of your training
    - Project Management
    - How to talk like a graphic artist and programmer
- A day in the life of an ISD:
    - Status, status, status
    - Spreadsheets
    - Dealing with customers (and keeping within contract scope)
    - Dealing with graphic artists (explaining/QAing graphics requests and reining in creativity based on limits of delivery method)
    - Planning lessons
    - Writing, editing, and QA

GET ACTIVE, GET RECOGNIZED, SHARPEN YOUR WARDROBE!

By W.C. Wiese
Active Member Chair
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC
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Want to stand out in your profession? Want to show the boss you're serious about your job? This'll do it.

They come in yellow, black, and powder blue. They come in forest green and artillery red. And there are maybe 250 in the whole wide world. What are they? Highly sought after Active Member shirts earned by Orlando Central Florida Chapter members!

At our end-of-the-chapter-year awards dinner in June, Membership Chairman David Coverston recognized 12 Active Members at the year-end banquet. Each received a black-trimmed yellow polo shirt that helps us stand out in crowds.

Since 2001, the Orlando Central Florida Chapter has recognized members who are consistent in their attendance and help make the chapter a success. These distinctive leadership shirts cannot be bought, only earned. They set our membership apart at STC conferences and in the workplace. (After years of envy, several other chapters have copied us and begun their own active membership programs in the past 5 years.)

As the table shows, members earn points every month they attend a meeting, put on a program, attend an Administrative Council meeting, or serve as a judge or mentor.

Activity	Point Value
Attend Chapter Meeting	1
Chairman/Officer	0.5/month for office 0.5 for each AdCo
Present a Program	2
Visit a Class or Another Chapter	1
Serve as a Mentor/Month	1
Serve as a Judge/Month	1
Sponsor a New Member	2
Write Articles for the Newsletter	0.5

You'll need to earn 14 points to receive a 2015 Active Member shirt. But it will be worth it!

The shirts let our members celebrate chapter pride in the workplace whenever they choose to wear them. They send a positive message to employers, clients, and co-workers: *I am committed to my profession and committed to self-development. I am a member of STC!*

Will you be an Active Member? Watch upcoming issues of *Memo to Members!* And watch for opportunities for mentorship, to share in committee work, or to judge chapter contests.

"My experienced and most trusted advisors"

-Terra Jarvis

MENTOR TO MENTEE ARTICLE

By Terra Jarvis
Student Member
Orlando Central Florida Chapter STC

My experienced and most trusted advisors have been through the Orlando Central Florida Chapter Mentoring Program. The personal experiences cultivated in the mentoring program enabled me to develop into an effective Technical Communicator. This mentoring program not only guided and directed me in the right direction, but it gave me the competency needed to launch my career. First, I was told to select a technical writing track. I was also encouraged to look at a double major. Second, I was told to become tech-savvy.

For instance, becoming proficient in MS Office Suite, Adobe Madcap Flare, FrameMaker, Adobe Creative Suite, Lotus Notes, Microsoft Visio and HTML coding as well. I needed to be marketable in my field. Third, I was told to be involved with STC meetings and events because it will keep me informed in the field and I will be able to acquire the additional skills needed to keep me competitive in my field instead of falling behind. For instance, taking courses with STC and acquiring certificates. Fourth, I was told to volunteer to gain experience. The reason why the volunteer work was important was because it opens up opportunities for jobs and experiences. The experience you obtain is used on your resume as well. I created this opportunity by volunteering my time as a newsletter editor for the Lake Nona Toastmasters Club in Orlando Florida and as the assistant editor to the Memo to Members Newsletters. Fifth, I was told to look for opportunities to get publications on my resume. This was important because it shows the audience the professional writer is competent at producing content to convey information in an effective way. It also showcases to the audience the

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professional writer can effectively communicate with their audience. It helps the professional writer expand and grow as well. It also shows that the professional writer can go through the technical writing process to develop a product that is useful, whether it is to inform or persuade.

The mentors who advised me showed me the way by utilizing their prior experience in the technical writing field. This involved their time, energy, positive support, and their direction. They actually care about your future as a Technical Writer. I think that is really rare. I had the honor to be mentored by David Coverston, Dan Voss, and Sarah Baca. Their actions gave me the models I needed to follow. The mentoring program is consistent at providing the mentees with the most effective tool to become successful in their careers. I felt like the mentors directly influenced my development as an effective Technical Writer. This helped me create those opportunities that I needed to plan for a career as a Technical Writer. They were the guiding lights that enabled me to become competent and confident in my future career. My mentors helped me develop a resume that would catch the right audience to open up opportunities for me to have interviews to place me in those jobs that helped develop my career (Dan Voss). David Coverston mentored with me on styles and doing mock interviews. He was thorough and he cared about my career. We practiced mock interviews on the phone, Skyping, and in person. This made a very positive impact on my ability to launch my career.

Sarah Baca gave me her time whenever I had questions and even sent me an example of what an effective technical communicators portfolio looks like. They also helped me publish articles (Dan Voss and David Coverston). My portfolio took me

months to develop and design. The hours put in were well worth it. The long hours David and Dan put in were really humbling to me. I am so grateful for their time, energy, and expertise on the subjects we focused on.

When I moved to NY, I joined the NY Metro STC. Dan Voss and Sarah Baca directly introduced me to Aiessa Moyna who is a member here in NY. Sarah Baca sent me her LinkedIn information and connected me with her. She met with me and introduced me to two other professional writers and she was able to give me some great guidance and advice in looking for work when I arrived. She genuinely cared about me and mentioned how important the mentoring program was and how grateful the NY Metro STC was for having it in place. She also stated how important it was to be there for other mentees in the mentoring program as well.
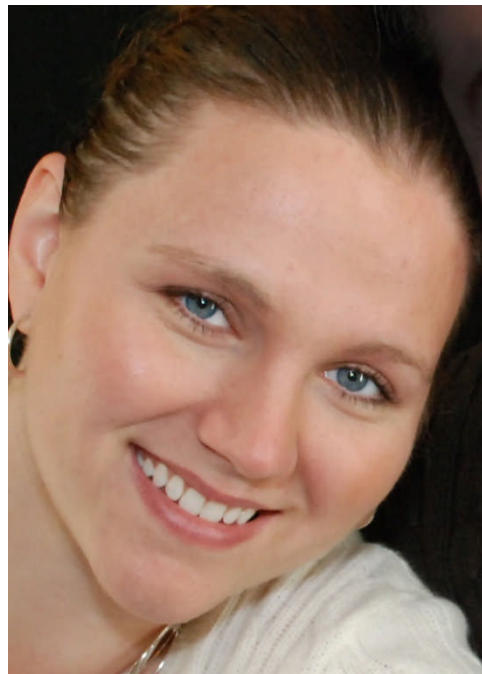
Since I have been here I have done what my mentors have taught me. I stayed connected to STC and created those opportunities to launch my career. I met with NY Metro Chapter over the phone and through e-mail

and they have given me so much support and welcomed me as well. A NY Metro NY member looked at my resume and gave me some helpful hints and insight on what they are looking for here in NY to draw attention to my resume, so I made those modifications. I was also given advice on changes to my portfolio as well. All this guidance and support made my resume and portfolio more effective.

I applied to several jobs and got my first interview with eBay as a Technical Writer. I was in a pool of candidates. I confidently and competently went through not just one, but four interviews to be chosen for the job.

So, because of my ability to listen and learn I was able to take what my mentors gave me and apply it to my life to create those opportunities for myself.

This experience has given me the ability to expand and grow by following others lead. I have learned to trust my own abilities by the support and guidance of all my mentors. The mentoring program is effective and is needed for all technical communicating mentees in order to be successful in launching their careers. It just starts with being willing to listen and then creating that action that puts you exactly where you want to be.