



Techniques



Volume 15 Issue 2

Kentuckiana Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

Spring 2000

A Word from the Editor

Call for New Officers

The April meeting is when we elect new officers, so if you have any inclination at all, please consider volunteering for one of the positions on the board. I will be stepping down after this newsletter, so we will definitely need a new newsletter editor. Jan Scarbrough is ready to move on as well, so we will need a new Membership director. We're still short one Program director and other members of the board may also welcome a change, so don't be shy about throwing your hat in the ring. This is your chance to make this chapter what you want it to be, to make it useful and relevant. Come on down!

And please, if you can't be an officer, at least come to this meeting and help elect the officers for the new year. We will have an interesting program. See the Chapter News section for details.

Since this is my last issue, I want to publicly thank Carol Smith at AdWare for her excellent work in laying out all the newsletters produced during my tenure as editor. I would never have made it without her. Thank you, Carol. In token of our appreciation, we are giving Carol a check for \$50, far less than it would have cost us if we had to pay for these services.

Director's Notebook

by Thea Teich, Region 4 Director-Sponsor

Director - Sponsor's Column: Report from the January, 2000, STC Board Meeting

By Thea Teich, Director-Sponsor, Region 4

Marcomm vs. Techcomm: Not So Strange Bedfellows

What is the difference between marcomm and techcomm? Is one more "creative" than the other? What are the purposes of each, and how different are those purposes? What results do you look for to evaluate the effectiveness of marcomm? Of techcomm?

Because many technical communicators are being asked to produce materials to support marketing efforts, I would like to focus this column on marcomm. In various guises over the years, I've handled marketing communications for technical products, services, and subjects as part of whatever income-generating position I've held. A little more than a year ago, I was asked to develop and teach a marketing communications course as part of the techcomm program at Cincinnati State Community and Technical College.

Bottom line, it really doesn't matter what comprises the marcomm "materials" mentioned above; everything from

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Career Notes:

We're looking for contributors for this column. Send me an article about your experiences related to technical writing as a career: where you've been, getting and keeping jobs, free lance versus full-time employee, what kinds of different work that can come under the heading of technical writer (like Jan's ISO 9000 experience).

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Director's Notebook Continued

brochures to direct mail to e-commerce websites can and should be approached the same way.

Your first step is to forget what you're going to produce.

Your second step is to try to get your boss to forget it, too. That's harder.

My point here is that the end product, the tactic, is relatively unimportant. It's the "what." Of far greater significance in a marcomm effort is the "who," "why," and "when."

Of course, this contention is difficult to impose when your manager is pronouncing in no uncertain terms, "We need a brochure," or "Competitor X has a website; we've got to get ours up NOW."

Responding with, "What is our objective for this project?" or "Have we ascertained the distribution system and response fulfillment yet?" might be grounds for the elimination of one or more technical communicator positions. However, as in most things, the tech communicator is nothing if not contrarian.

I may be sacrilegious here, but defining the audience is even more important for marcomm purposes than for techcomm. That's because the overall purpose of marcomm is to sell something. What you're selling is not important, except as it relates to whomever you're selling it to. It could be the latest and greatest computer, a high tech injection molding machine, or set of roller blades; it could be website design services or tax preparation assistance; it could be the passage of a levy for advanced police communication systems or a candidate for political office. Whatever the product, service, or issue, in all cases you are trying to get someone to do something: buy a product, engage a service, vote in a certain way – whatever. The actual result does not matter; the fact that there is a result and how often that result occurs are the criteria measuring success or failure—the evaluative tools for marcomm efforts.

Underscoring this is one of the basic differences between marcomm and techcomm. Marcomm's purpose is to sell

something; the job of techcomm is to help customers use what they've already bought. Good techcomm may be a major factor in getting customers to buy in the future, but that's not techcomm's primary objective.

Once you've defined the audience(s), then the marcomm message must be determined. While the message is in essence consistent across all audiences, how and when it is conveyed, through which media, and with what emphases can and probably does vary. The message must differentiate your product, service, or issue from those of your competitors. Why should potential customers do what you want them to do, and not what your competitor says? Why is what you are selling better?

Because you have analyzed your audience(s) and your product, service, or message can solve their problems, take away their pains, make their lives easier, save them time, make the mundane exciting—or whatever else appeals and attracts. If you cannot differentiate the subject of your marcomm effort from that of your competitor, if your product, service, or issue does not offer customers benefits they have not received before, then your company, client, or colleagues may need to re-examine their objectives. "Me, too" is certainly a common objective, but I hope no employee's salary raise is wholly dependent upon a "me, too" product's performance in the marketplace.

Let's assume your product, service, or issue has benefits to consumers they've not experienced before. Let's assume you've ascertained the various audiences who may be intrigued by whatever you're selling. Let's even further assume that you know how to couch your messages so they appeal to the "pain points" expressed by those audiences. Now you can choose your tactic, "how" you will reach your various audiences with your targeted message. However, what usually happens at this point is that the tactic is apparent, determined by the audience and the message. "We need a brochure," has transmuted into "This audience can be reached best by a (fill in the blank)."

By the way, I think both techcomm and marcomm can be equally creative. The operative word is "can." But we'll leave that for another article. I'm sure I've overstepped my space in your newsletters as it is. Till next time.

Let's Get Technical

Notices of interest (in lieu of an article):

Don't miss the RoboHelp demo in May.
No date set yet. Check our website later at <http://www.stc.org/region4/ky/kyhome.html>
or call Richard Kopp at (812) 941-2632 for details.

Talk Back!

This space reserved for reader questions and feedback. Send in questions related to technical writing questions or comments you'd like to share. Later, you can also send in answers to a question you see in this section. (Send questions and comments to linda_stein@adware.com).

Chapter News

Notes from the Last Meeting

We canceled the February meeting for lack of a program.

Coming Up

Our presenter for the April 13th meeting is Judy Glick-Smith, STC Second Vice President and senior member of the Lone Star Chapter. Judy has been involved in the high-technology industry since 1980 as a programmer, systems analyst, documentation specialist, consultant, instructor, public speaker, and entrepreneur. She is President/CEO of Integrated Documentation, Inc., a Dallas-based consulting firm that specializes in implementing knowledge and content management systems and transferring knowledge through effective technical communication. Judy has a BBA in Accounting with a minor in Information Systems from Georgia State University.

Her presentation is entitled: The Technical Communicator's Role in the Implementation of Knowledge Management Systems

Information has become the most important currency of our age. The rules by which we apply that information are what we call knowledge. Much of the current literature actually claims it is impossible to acquire and disseminate tacit knowledge—the knowledge located in employees'

minds. However, acquiring and codifying tacit knowledge is precisely what technical communicators do. During this presentation, Judy Glick-Smith describes the elements of a knowledge management system and the implementation process. Finally, she discusses the technical communicator's role in implementing knowledge management systems and how technical communicators can prepare for this role.

Also, don't forget that chapter elections will be held at this meeting, so think about any position you would like to fill. The Newsletter Editor position will be available, for sure.

We will once again be meeting via video-conference between Louisville and Lexington. See the back page for more information.

Meeting Schedule

The new officers elected at this meeting will schedule the next year's meetings.

Be on the lookout for more information about:

RoboHelp Demo - May ?? . Date to be announced later. Check the website at <http://www.stc.org/region4/ky/kyhome.html> or call Richard Kopp at (812) 941-2632 for details.

Web Watch

Listed below are links to sites that provide information about several certificate and degree programs in technical communications.

<http://www.stc-va.org/facademic.htm>

<http://www.onlinelearning.net/CommunitiesofStudy/neighborhoods.cfm?NB=BSSTEC>

<http://www.nuol.edu/>

<http://www.udel.edu/ContEd/bustechwrtng.html>

http://www.sfsu.edu/~tpw/program/f_overview.html

<http://216.25.105.11/technical/index.htm>

<http://hypatia.wright.edu/Dept/ENG/WSUTECH/certific.htm>

<http://www.sfu.ca/continuing-studies/wp/text/certtc.htm>

<http://english.ttu.edu/tc/> (For more info, you can also call Thomas T. Barker at 806-742-2522.)

Member News

If you have corrections, complaints or news to share, call or email Linda Stein at (502) 568-5326 or linda_stein@adware.com.

Featured Member

This edition's featured member is actually member(S), the award winning Lexmark writing team. Congratulations!!



Team members:

First Row: Terri Boggs, Donna Cummins, Theresa Perkins, Joni Stowe, Karen Luton and Debra Revell

Second Row: Bill Underwood, Howard Blatch, Brett Litton, Amanda Baldwin and Patty Cobb.

Not pictured: Ruth Getler, Terry Gera, Jonathan Arp and Michael Baird.

"And the winner is ... Lexmark International ... again." At the 1999 Southwestern Ohio Society for Technical Communication's (STC) awards banquet this February, Lexmark won eleven awards in the Technical Publications Competition -- an STC record for one corporation. Out of

a field of 54 hardcopy entries, Lexmark submitted ten entries and received ten awards. The Optra W810 Setup Guide received awards for Distinguished and Best of Show, automatically qualifying for international competition. In the Online Publications Competition, Information Development's first publications CD, the Optra T CD, received an award for Merit. Listed below are the eleven awards by category:

Distinguished and Best of Show:

- Optra W810 Setup Guide

Excellence:

- Optra W810 User's Reference
- Optra M410 User's Guide
- Z31 Getting Started
- External Print Server Quick Start

Merit:

- Optra T Publications CD
- Optra T Setup Guide and Roadmap
- Optra E310 User's Guide
- Z11 User's Guide
- Z31 User's Guide
- Forms Printer 4227 Service Manual

Back to Basics

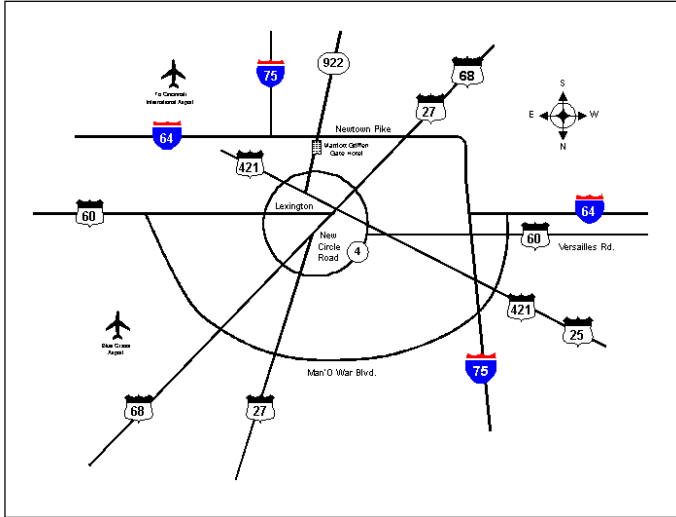
We're looking for contributors for this column. Send me an article about basic writing.

Trade Secrets

We're looking for contributors for this column. Send me an article about a tool you find especially useful, or tell us how you solved a problem that other members may face.

Directions to the Upcoming Meeting

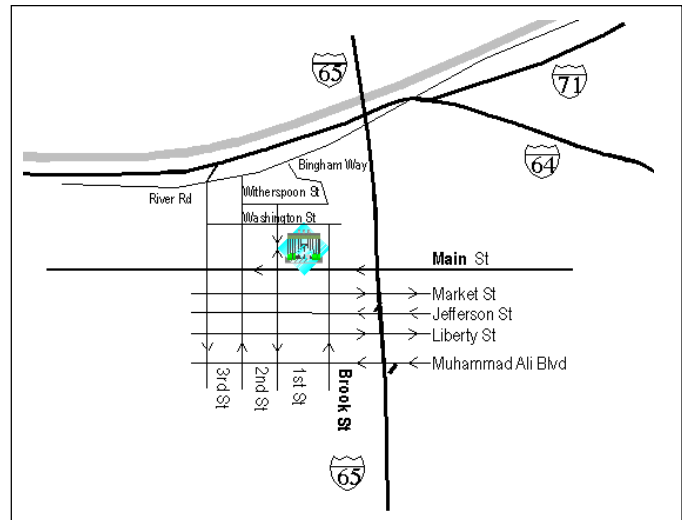
Lexington



Lexmark's Executive Briefing Center is located at 740 New Circle Road, at the intersection of New Circle Road and Newton Pike. The main entrance faces New Circle Road, directly in front of the plant. After exiting New Circle Road, follow the signs to the "Lobby." If you are entering from Newtown Pike, use the entrance next to the large "LEXMARK" sign. Follow the signs to the "Lobby" which is located adjacent to the flagpoles in front. There is a visitor's parking area in front of the building. When you enter the lobby, the briefing center is on the right, with "Lexington Briefing Center" above the door.

AdWare is on the 10th floor of the Humana Waterside Building. The building occupies most of the block bordered by Brook, Main, First and Washington Streets, with entrances on both Washington and Main. There is on-street metered parking, if you can find a spot. Space may also be available in either of two parking garages, one on Washington Street between Brook and Floyd Streets, the other at First and Witherspoon (one block north of Washington).

Louisville



At Your Service

President
Don King
Working Words
(502) 894-8464
dak@working-words.com

VP - Programs (Louisville)
VACANT.
We need someone else to plan programs. Let us hear from you!!
Please contact any chapter officer.

Membership
Jan Scarbrough
Key Communications
(812) 944-3865 ext. 256
jan@romance.win.net

Newsletter
Linda Stein
AdWare Systems, Inc.
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linda_stein@adware.com

VP - Programs (Lexington)
Joni Stowe
Lexmark, Inc.
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jstowe@lexmark.com

Secretary - Treasurer
Richard Kopp
Purdue School of Technology
(812) 941-2632
rdkopp@purdue.edu

Employment
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(606) 744-2255
j.mace@morehead-st.edu

Region 4 Director Sponsor
Thea Teich
(513)521-8102
TeichTMC@aol.com

April Meeting: Thursday, April 13th from 5 to 7:00 p.m.

We are meeting via video conference.

Where: Lexington: Lexmark, Inc. (map and detailed directions on page X)
Host: Joni Stowe. 740 New Circle Road at Newtown Pike.

Louisville: AdWare Systems, Inc.
Host: Linda Stein. 10th Floor, Waterside Bldg.
101 East Main St. (between Brook and First Streets)

When: *Arrive by 4:45 p.m. Video conference begins at 5:00 p.m.* Light supper provided at 6:00.

What: Judy Glick-Smith, Second Vice President of STC, will be at the Louisville site to talk to us about: The Technical Communicator's Role in the Implementation of Knowledge Management Systems.

PLEASE RSVP by Monday, April 10 to:

Lexington: Joni Stowe
(606) 232-1180
jstowe@lexmark.com.

Louisville: Richard Kopp
(812) 941-2632
rdkopp@purdue.edu

Techniques

Linda Stein
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