

Lines & Letters

Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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President's column: Adding value as a technical communicator — both in your career and in STC

By Stephanie Webster (swebster@tmwsystems.com)

The mission statement of the Society for Technical Communication is "Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication."

The bottom line of STC is that this organization is focused on those who practice technical communication. This means in our day-to-day lives. Our careers. Our professions. Even our titles reflect this path.

So, how can we as a community in Northeast Ohio strive to enhance the value of what we do day-in and day-out? First, focus on who we are behind the scenes. Who is our membership? What types of jobs do we do? Once we look at who we are, we can then focus on the next step — enhancing the value of our positions by educating and adding more experience to their foundations through STC-related events. These include:

- ♦ entering technical communications competitions to gain feedback of what we've accomplished in our jobs through peer-judging
- ♦ attending educational events such as monthly meetings, webinars, software sessions
- ♦ networking with other technical communicators to find out what is going on in their world through networking luncheons, mingling at NEO STC events, and participating in supporting and preparing for NEO STC-related events

The first event for the NEO STC 2006-2007 year focuses on taking a peek inside some of our fellow technical communicator's worlds. On the evening of September 14, we will be having a panel discussion to see what others in our profession encounter on a day-to-day basis. You'll probably hear some of the exact same situations you encounter, and see what it is like to walk in another writer's shoes. You will also get a glimpse at some of the types of corporations who hire technical communicators in our geographic area.

NEO STC will be focusing this year at delving more into your world and striving at adding value to what YOU do every day. This means gaining participation from corporate-levels, and hearing your suggestions on what opportunities you'd like to participate in to enhance your career.

Please stay in touch through the NEO STC web site (<http://www.neostc.org>), and look for e-mails from our committee chairs on the exciting events, activities, and opportunities being offered this year:

- ♦ software session on Advanced FrameMaker (September 23, 2006)
- ♦ two additional software sessions: MadCap Flare, and eLearning through Lectora training
- ♦ instructional webinars
- ♦ networking luncheons
- ♦ monthly networking and educational evening meetings
- ♦ three levels of Technical Communication Competition entries
- ♦ representing NEO STC at academic relations job fairs in Ohio colleges
- ♦ NOCA (Northeast Ohio Communication Affiliates :— www.nocanet.org events
- ♦ contributions to the Lines and Letters monthly newsletter (<http://www.neostc.org/lines/>)
- ♦ participating in a NEO STC committee or helping set up an event (please e-mail me for available committee positions or individual tasks)

As you can see, there is a lot going on in the community this year! We hope you will plan to take advantage of all the offerings that are available and get involved where you can to add value to your every day!

Monthly meeting September 14: Corporate Culture and Technical Communication

Join us as we kick off the NEO STC new year and take a peek inside local companies. Find out what's going in other Northeast Ohio businesses through a panel discussion of technical communication department representatives. The members of our panel will discuss what technical communicators do for various employers; what tools they use; how they fit into their departments, companies, and corporate culture; and more!

We will also be having dinner (pasta bar with grilled chicken and meatballs, salad, and dessert) at the meeting, located at Parker Hannifin, 6035 Parkland Blvd., Cleveland, OH 44124. The cost is \$20 for members, \$30 for nonmembers, and \$10 for meeting only.

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Before the meeting (from 5:30 to 6:00), come join the NEO STC executive board and committee chairs for an informal meet-and-greet before the meeting. The meet-and-greet will be in the Parker Hannifin Learning Center.

RSVP for the NEO STC evening meeting (dinner and/or presentation) to programs@neostc.org

For more information, see <http://www.neostc.org/calendar/20060914.html>.

We look forward to seeing you!

Upcoming events

- ◆ 9/14/2006: Corporate Culture and Technical Communication. A panel discussion of NEO company representatives. More information.
- ◆ 9/19/2006: Networking lunch. Applebee's, 3528 Hudson Dr., Stow. RSVP to Jill McCauslin (jmccauslin@radcomservices.com) by September 18.
- ◆ 9/19/2006: NOCA Golf Outing at StoneWater Golf Club, Highland Heights. More information.
- ◆ Non-STC 9/20/2006: ibm.com — Experiences of the User Experience Design team" presented by Keith Instone and Will Smith of the ibm.com User Experience Design Team. More information.
- ◆ 9/23/2006: Software Saturday. Structured Authoring, XML, and DITA (using Adobe FrameMaker), presented by Alan Houser. At the Tri-C West Campus. See More information.
- ◆ 9/27/2006: Webinar: Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate — in Half the Time.*
- ◆ 10/6/2006: Deadline for NEO STC Competition entries. More information.
- ◆ 10/11/2006: Webinar: Designing Business Forms: A No-nonsense Approach.*

* Note that the chapter is not sponsoring these Webinars. If you would like to host a seminar, please e-mail us.

Reminder: If you RSVP but do not show up for a meeting, it costs the chapter money — we have to pay upfront for meals. Please remember to let the Programs Committee (programs@neostc.org) know in advance if you have registered but cannot make it to a meeting.

Software Saturdays (and now Fridays!)

We have an exciting start to this year with Alan Houser scheduled to return for an encore Software Saturday with NEOSTC on September 23! His January 2006 Adobe® FrameMaker® class was a huge success. We are honored to welcome him back!

Don't miss his Advanced FrameMaker class, Structured Authoring, XML, and DITA. This is a great value for STC members (at an estimated 75% off the market value for this class). Only 13 spots are left for this hands-on training in September.

RSVP to Amy Vogt (vogt@ppipubs.com).

In an attempt to accommodate the schedules of all members, this year we are planning to mix some Software Fridays in with the Saturday sessions. We are collaborating with the Pittsburgh group to host a MadCap Flare® Software Friday in the Northeast Ohio area in the Spring. We will try to make training as accessible as possible to everyone interested in attending.

Also, on our agenda for this year, RADCom is hosting an e-learning training session this winter. We are currently looking into additional topics of interest, including Adobe PhotoShop®, content management, and Advanced Microsoft Word® training. Please contact Amy Vogt with any suggestions for a Software Friday or Saturday topic or trainer.

Hosts Needed for September Webinars

The Education Committee is looking for volunteers to host up-coming STC Webinars:

Visible: The New Visible

- ◆ Presenters: Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger
- ◆ September 13, 2006
- ◆ Level: Intermediate

Austin Skaggs is an STC member and former magazine writer. He currently develops end-user documentation for PDI/Enterprise. Christine Granger manages and develops end-user documentation for PDI/Enterprise. Formerly she worked as a store-level support analyst for Ultramar Canada.

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Creating Interactive CBTs with Captivate-in Half the Time

- ◆ Presenter: Kevin Siegel
- ◆ September 27, 2006
- ◆ Level: All levels

Kevin A. Siegel is the founder and president of IconLogic, Inc. He has written more than 100 step-by-step computer training books, including Essentials of Macromedia Captivate, Essentials of Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004, Accelerated QuarkXPress 6, Essentials of Adobe InDesign CS 2, Essentials of Adobe PageMaker 7, and Essentials of Macromedia RoboHelp HTML X5.

If you are interested in hosting a Webinar, please contact Denise Kadilak for more information. For a list of all STC Webinars, visit the STC Web site.

NEO STC Board Meeting Highlights

The NEO STC board met in August to discuss the upcoming year. Here are some of the highlights of the meeting. For full meeting minutes, see [NEOSTC_Board_Minutes_081706_newsletter.pdf](#).

Overall chapter goals:

- ◆ Continue with member value in career and in STC
- ◆ Strive for Chapter of Distinction award
- ◆ Continue volunteer recognition program under new point system
- ◆ Look for additional volunteers across different committees; see Stephanie Webster if interested

The Academic Relations committee will increase our involvement in college fairs and job fairs and continue to establish student-practitioner mentoring relationships. They are also considering a chapter/student joint meeting, and are preparing our chapter to offer a \$500 academic scholarship.

The Consulting and Independent Contracting Special Interest Group (CIC SIG) is planning on surveying CIC SIG members to establish an action plan. They are planning on more promotion of the CIC SIG listserv and consultant-specific Webinars. They are also participating in the local CIC SIG management group, a new group being founded by the CIC SIG and sanctioned by STC to help mentor local CIC SIGs and encourage local CIC SIGs to work together.

We are trying to reach out to other organizations in our community. Part of this effort includes chapter membership in Northeast Ohio Communications Affiliates (NOCA) and Cleveland Technical Societies Council (CTSC). Bob Young will serve as our representative to NOCA. Kim Lindsey is our representative to CTSC. Our membership is cooperative — NOCA will list our events at www.nocanet.com. In turn, NEO STC is advertising NOCA and CTSC (www.ctsc.org/index.htm) events on our Web site.

The Employment committee is planning on continuing to update the employment resources on the chapter Web site. They are currently looking for volunteers to help with the weekly job searches.

We will continue offering Networking Lunches. Jill and Angie are looking for 5 to 6 restaurants in which to meet. They prefer restaurants that meet the following criteria:

- ◆ Offer separate checks
- ◆ Seat people before entire party arrives
- ◆ Accept reservations

The Programs committee is considering host sites at employer locations (the sites must be free and preferably have on-site catering). For this year's holiday social hour, there will be a silent auction. We are looking for donations for the auction from local area vendors, members, and other friends of STC. Half of the proceeds will go to the Cleveland Foodbank and half the proceeds will go to the chapter.

The Public Relations committee is looking for more employer sponsors for each meeting. Contact Mario Morelos if you know of interested sponsors. Sponsors are employers and community organizations that contribute to the local chapter efforts (even one-time contributions). These do not have to be sustaining organizations.

The Treasurer reported that the chapter is in healthy financial status; financial reports will be submitted by September 30. The Web Site committee is building a wiki for the chapter. Christina Chase will assume leadership for organizing the content of the chapter wiki.

Welcome our new members and new senior members!

We are pleased to welcome new members:

- ◆ Terri Daniluk
- ◆ Annmarie Gunn
- ◆ Renee Murray
- ◆ Danny Vranesevic

We look forward to seeing you at upcoming events!

Our new senior members, who will be announced at the September 14 meeting, are Thomas Hudson and Diana Reep. They will receive also pins and certificates to reward their continued membership.

Congratulations and thank you for staying with us!

Member profile: Trish Spayer

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Trish Oleksy Spayer is the 2006-2007 vice-president for our NEOSTC chapter. She was secretary for the last three years and on the membership committee for two years prior.

As a Technical Writer/ Illustrator at Pressco Technology Inc., Trish writes all of Pressco's user manuals and designed and maintains the Pressco Web site.

She recently hit her 10th anniversary at Pressco. As Trish puts it, "I am also the graphics expert at my company and get to enjoy some creative projects. (I studied art in high school)." Trish graduated Magna Cum Laude from ETI Technical College with a Bachelor's degree in Electronic Engineering Technology. "In previous lives," Trish notes, "I worked as a technician, tech support rep, and sales engineer. I easily transitioned into technical writing by using my proven technical, writing, and graphics skills."

A two-time STC award winner, Trish won one of her awards for the Web site for Pressco at www.pressco.com. Some judges comments were: "The entry clearly identifies the audience on the home page. Great system explanations... The web site not only marketed the product, but educated potential customers on how the processes worked, and answered potential FAQs using layman's terms." Trish wrote those FAQs. Other judges comments include that "Navigation is excellent; using a different color on the buttons is especially helpful for orientation purposes... The rotating

graphic on the home page creatively illustrated Pressco's products."

Living in Garfield Heights with her husband and two cats, Trish says, "I enjoy photography, swimming, sewing, reading, and just hanging out on my deck that overlooks the woods. I love traveling, and try to visit Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula about once a year. You can see some of my photos of the area at <http://pasty.com/pcam/toleksy>." Trish plans a cruise to the Mediterranean in August, 2006, with her husband. Concerning this upcoming Mediterranean cruise, Trish says, "I learned Italian and Greek to prepare for this trip. It's a region I've always wanted to visit. My husband and I also got married on a Caribbean cruise in November, 2003."

Note to readers: Please provide me with your bio information at jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net. I will be happy to provide a member profile about you for an upcoming NEO STC newsletter.

Get your entries ready for competition!

The NEO STC 2006-2007 Competitions are under way! Please review the Call for Entries document and fill out the Entry Form to enter. The deadline for entries is October 6, 2006. The cost is \$75 per entry; entrants do not have to be STC members. This is your chance to receive peer and professional feedback on the work you do day in and out and also to shine in the areas you excel!

There will be three categories in this year's competition: Technical art, technical publications, and online publications. Entry forms are available on the Web site (<http://www.neostc.org/comp>; links to these documents are also on the NEO STC home page).

If you are interested in helping to judge the competition entries, please contact (Rebecca Postupack-Slifer (rebeccaslifer@hotmail.com)). The judges' training session will be held October 13th (location TBD).

Book review: *Creating More Effective Graphs*

By Denise Kadilak (denise.kadilak@blackbaud.com)

Book information: Author: Naomi B. Robbins. 2005. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Interscience. [ISBN 0-471-27402-X. 402 pages, including index. \$64.95 USD (soft cover).]

Previously published in Technical Communication *52(4):485-486.*

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Do you need to create a graph? Are you unsure what type of graph will work best with your data? Are you afraid of alienating your readers with an ineffective graph? If so, you may find Naomi B. Robbins' *Creating more effective graphs* helpful.

Creating more effective graphs is a quick reference guide on selecting easy-to-read charts and graphs for any context. The book examines a multitude of graphing options in relationship to various data scenarios and briefly explains why some graphs work and others do not.

Robbins, president of NBR, a graphical data presentation consulting and training company, moves her readers from the simple — pie charts, dot plots, and bar charts — to the complex — trellis displays, mosaic plots, and linked micromap plots. The journey is slow and gentle. Robbins avoids large leaps, using a variety of examples at every level and explaining and displaying advantages and disadvantages of one graph type over another. While moving readers through this host of sample graphs, Robbins' focus — the data — never wanes: Is the data clearly presented? How long will it take the reader to discern the results? Is there a better graphing alternative?

The arrangement of the book mirrors Robbins' concern for clarity. The book is composed of a series of sample graphs, each accompanied by brief overviews of the data represented and explanations of why one version works better than another. Robbins invites you to take your time, to study each graph and come to some conclusion as to what it represents before turning the page. Once you turn the page, a better graphic representation of the same data usually appears, clearly demonstrating the limitations of many common graphs and the profound effect the choice has on the user's interpretation of the data.

Influenced by the work of William S. Cleveland and Edward Tufte, the psychology of information design weighs heavily in Robbins' book. In *The visual display of quantitative information* (Graphics Press, 1983), a classic on statistical graphics, Tufte argues that a good graphic design allows viewers to quickly comprehend a large array of ideas. Cleveland, in *The elements of graphing data* (Wadsworth, 1985), argues that the effectiveness of a graph depends on how well you make use of graphical perception principles. Understanding visual and graphical perception is key, Cleveland contends, to creating a user-friendly graph.

Robbins' examples demonstrate both principles. She repeatedly asks you to time yourself when interpreting a graph, to compare the time it takes to read one graph versus another graph, and to notice if you glean more information from one graph versus another.

For example, when graphing the area of U.S. states, Robbins first uses a strip plot, which displays the distribution of data points on a numerical axis. With the plot, it is easy to discern area range and the location of most of the values. On the next page, however, she displays the same data using a dot plot. The increased clarity of the dot plot is astounding. The dot plot is about three times larger than the strip plot, allowing a good deal more space in which to display all fifty states. Because of the increased space, the dots representing the data do not overlap, making it much easier to see the area.

Of the dot plot, Robbins explains, "Dot plots were introduced by Cleveland (1984) after extensive experimentation on human perception and our ability to decode graphical information. Since the judgments the reader makes when decoding the information are based on position along the common horizontal scale, these plots display data effectively. Since it would be very difficult to fit the names of the states on the horizontal axis, dot plots place them on the vertical axis, and the quantitative variable, area in thousands of square miles, on the horizontal axis" (p. 69).

She takes this same example a step further, demonstrating how to improve on the dot plot by arranging information in order of size rather than alphabetically. She explains, "As in any form of communication, we must know our audience and tailor what we say to be appropriate for that audience, the readers of the chart" (p. 71).

Robbins also offers helpful advice on the various graphing software products available and a checklist of possible graph defects.

The book's only fault is Robbins' weak prose style, which affects primarily the preface and introduction. She does well writing short, to-the-point explanations of the various graphs, but the comparatively text-heavy preface and introduction prove awkward for her. Her sentences lack variety, and the excessive use of pronouns with no antecedents makes her writing difficult to understand at times. Fortunately, Robbins' solid knowledge of her topic and sound visual aids overcome these flaws.

Creating more effective graphs answers all the basic questions of graphing: What constitutes an effective graph? How do I choose a graph? How do I recognize an ineffective graph? Novice and experienced graph designers alike will benefit from reading this book.

Book review: *Managing Enterprise Content (Part One)*

By Jeanette Evans (jeanette.evans@sbcglobal.net)

Ann Rockley authored *Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy*. Ann is President of The Rockley Group, Inc. of Toronto, Canada. She and her company specialize in enterprise content management (ECM) and related processes and methodologies. She is also an Associate Fellow of STC.

The book addresses several audiences including content managers, information architects, and authors who are responsible for creating enterprise content. The co-authors of the book are Pamela Kostur and Steve Manning who are also of The Rockley Group, which works with customers in the life sciences, financial services, and high technology industries.

The book is organized in the following sections.

- ◆ The basis of a unified content strategy
- ◆ Performing a substantive audit: Determining business requirements
- ◆ Design
- ◆ Tools and technologies
- ◆ Moving to a unified content strategy

A resources section covers these items.

- ◆ Checklist for implementing a unified content strategy
- ◆ Writing for multiple media
- ◆ Vendors
- ◆ Tools checklist
- ◆ Content relationships

The book provides a comprehensive overview of the subject with a focus on developing a content strategy. I noticed that on amazon.com reviewers gave the book 4+ out of 5 stars with 19 reviewers. Published in 2003, the book is still a valuable reference, as it addresses basic concepts that are not dated and still apply.

I was curious to see how the overall definition of ECM fits in with the concept and scope of Ann Rockley's book.

The entry at wikipedia.com addresses the big picture by calling ECM "any of the strategies and technologies employed in the information technology industry for managing the capture, storage, security, revision control, retrieval, distribution, preservation and destruction of documents and content."

From a 2006 reference to an Association for Information and Image Management International (AIIM) document (*AIIM Industry Watch: State of the ECM Industry @2006 AIIM The ECM Association Moving from Why? To How?: The Maturing of ECM Users*), the Wikipedia entry summarizes the purpose of ECM by stating that "ECM systems are designed... so that an organization... can more effectively meet business goals (increase profit or improve the efficient use of budgets), serve its customers (as a competitive advantage, or to improve responsiveness), and protect itself (against non-compliance, lawsuits, uncoordinated departments or turnover within the organization)."

The AIIM citation in Wikipedia makes this statement on the importance of ECM "... for a large enterprise, ECM is not regarded as an optional expense, where it is essential to content preservation and re-usability, and to the control of access to content, whereas, very small organizations may find their needs temporarily met by carefully managed shared folders and a wiki, for example. Recent trends in business and government indicate that ECM is becoming a core investment for organizations of all sizes, more immediately tied to organizational goals than in the past: increasingly more central to what an enterprise does, and how it accomplishes its mission."

By writing this book, technical communication specialist Ann Rockley involves herself in the discourse on this important subject, especially on how to approach content development. Both the tools used for ECM and the content itself are critical to the definition and success of an ECM endeavor. Ann Rockley is concentrating in her book on content.

Is content the most important element to the success of an organization's ECM effort? You could make a case for that or at least state that content is undeniably a major element and worthy of discussion as tackled in this book.

Handy hint: Using SnagIt to Capture Web Pages with Links

By Lisa Mileusnich (lmileusnich@parker.com)

You can use the SnagIt screen capture tool to capture Web pages and have links remain active in the image. (This option is only available for SnagIt version 8.0 and later.)

To keep clickable links in a Web page capture, follow these steps:

1. Open the Web page that you want to capture in your browser.
2. Open SnagIt (and make sure that the browser is not minimized).
3. Select the **Web page (keep links)** capture profile from Basic Capture Profiles.
4. Click **Capture**. The SnagIt window disappears, and you see the Web page and a finger pointer cursor with a page icon attached to it.
5. Left-click once in the middle of the window to start the capture.
6. Wait while the window scrolls automatically. (To cancel, right-click or press <Esc>.) When complete, the capture appears in the Capture Preview window.
7. Click **Save As** on the Output toolbar.
8. In the Save As dialog box, type a file name and select one of the following file types in the Save as type dropdown list: Web page with image (*.mht), Adobe PDF (*.pdf), or Macromedia Flash (*.swf).
9. Click **OK** to close the Save As dialog box.
10. Click **Done** to close the Capture Preview window.

Note: You cannot edit a finished Web page, Flash file, or PDF file with SnagIt.

For more information on features in SnagIt 8, visit <http://www.techsmith.com/snagit/whatsnew.asp>.

Revitalize Your Membership: A Guide to Hosting a Membership Drive

By Bob Young (ryoung1956@sbcglobal.net), NEO STC
Immediate Past President

This is an article Bob wrote for the September 2006 Tieline, a newsletter for STC leaders.

Undertaking a membership drive can appear, at least on the surface, to be an intimidating project for the seasoned or novice chapter leader. There's the amount of time for planning, making arrangements, and seeking volunteers to complete the project. And, there's the chilling unknown of what happens if the result falls below expectations.

Well, if you glean anything from this article it's the simple message that a membership drive is not only doable but an enjoyable process that breeds many positives. Today, thanks to last year's concerted membership drive, the Northeast Ohio community has bolstered its roster numbers. More importantly, morale has increased thanks to teamwork and a refreshed spirit that anything is possible. It's amazing what a little innovation, a few slices of pizza, and a side order of optimism can do while reaching out to fellow professionals.

Brief background: Northeast Ohio (NEO STC) had not had a coordinated membership drive in the last several years. We had routinely invited friends of members to meetings but there was no sustained recruiting drive. With few guidelines to follow, I decided, as incoming president for the 2005-2006 year, to implement a three-pronged initiative: an organized recruiting drive using phones and emails, a beefed up Public Relations effort, and last, but by no means least, a recognition program to increase community involvement and retain existing members.

Each of these three objectives is discussed separately to show how they intertwined to help us exceed expectations with an 18 percent membership gain.

Making the Connection

"Over the past couple of years our chapter had done a good job of retaining members, but we were not bringing in new people. You would see the same people at the regular meetings and board meetings," said Beth Williams, who spearheaded the recruiting drive as Membership chairperson. "STC has great people but priorities change as careers develop. We thought about

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what we could do as a chapter to meet our members' needs."

That something, Beth explained, centered on reconnecting with the membership base with a personal touch. And, it would involve more than phone calls. This would be a year-round commitment to showcase the educational and networking benefits of STC membership. As examples, NEO STC conducted a one-day FrameMaker seminar, paid the cost of webinars so members could attend free, and held a Family Day meeting at the Great Lakes Science Center on a Saturday in February so members could bring their spouses, children, and friends.

"Our message was if your needs have changed as a professional that STC can still help you grow," said Beth.

Beth teamed with Jill McCauslin to orchestrate a two-day telephone drive to start the process. Both ladies are veteran STC members, past NEO STC presidents and recipients of the Distinguished Chapter Service Award.

Thus, the dynamic duo focused on having members call former and non-renewed members to update them on chapter happenings and show we were interested in their involvement.

The first task was to compile different membership lists that were used throughout the past few years into one master file. Beth requested a new membership list from the Society office as well as a non-renewal list that included members from the past three years. She also had a chapter list that had been expanded by Programs over the years with the names of guests at meetings. Beth compared the names on all the lists to remove duplicates and those who were on the non-renewal list but rejoined at a later date. Then, she went to the STC website and reviewed addresses and to check if any of the "non-renewals" had actually just transferred to another chapter. Beth estimates it took five hours to sift through 200 names before the final compilation of two lists: one for current members and the other of former members no longer affiliated with STC.

While the master list was being compiled, Jill arranged for us to use a room at RADCom, Inc., in Hudson, OH, to make calls. This offer was a blessing because RADCom's telephone service is toll free from Akron/Canton to Cleveland. Our anticipated cost was reduced by not having to pay long-distance fees to contact former members. NEO STC's geographical base stretches some 133 miles from southern Canton to the northern edges of Erie, PA.

Jill and I choose two days in August for the phone campaign so calls could be made in the afternoon one day and the evening the next. This helped us reach a greater number of former members because we had work phone numbers mixed in with home phone numbers. Emails were then sent to the membership with the dates of the phone campaign and a request for volunteers. We were pleased with the turnout on both dates despite work commitments and summer vacations. Maybe it was just good pizza and camaraderie. But there was no secret about the organized effort.

Beth had divided the calling lists into groups of 10 people to make it easier for volunteers to make calls. The calling sheets included a section for notes to jot down changes in email addresses and/or comments why members chose not to return. The comments were helpful to Programs to learn what was working and what needed improvement. Still, most of the comments were favorable, such as "Thanks for taking the time to call me," and "Glad to hear NEO STC is doing well." A few minutes on the phone can build a lasting connection (excuse the pun).

To assist with any follow-up questions, our webmaster, Brian Baddour, placed a link to a page about the membership campaign on the chapter website. This link was placed near the Calendar link so former members could review upcoming events and speakers.

Two weeks after the phone drive, members of our executive board were each asked to personally call or email 10 of our current members to thank them for choosing NEO STC as their geographical community and to direct them to the website for upcoming events and information.

Revitalizing the PR Spirit

At the same time the membership campaign was being conducted, the Public Relations Committee was formulating goals for the year. Besides revitalizing marketing initiatives, the PR team assisted the membership campaign. PR Committee chairman Mario Morelos wrote scripts to assist callers with spreading the message. The scripts contained key points that we wanted to emphasize and helped "break the ice," if you will, at the start of the phone calls.

Programs, meanwhile, realized that we needed an "impact" speaker at our first meeting of the year in September. This would give us an opportunity to stir interest for the coming year with past and current members. We were fortunate to arrange for Neil Perlin, a veteran STC presenter and technical expert, to kick off

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the first meeting with a presentation on emerging technologies, including blogs and wikis.

By reaching out to both current and former members, we had 52 people attend our September 8 meeting that featured Neil Perlin. This was the largest turnout for a regular meeting in many years for NEO STC.

Retention of members is equally important. To this end, the PR team pledged to improve communication with the membership and increase NEO STC's visibility in the northeast Ohio community. These objectives were met with a redesigned chapter logo, press releases sent to area media, emails to members, and a new meeting program that introduced the evening's presenter and spotlighted sustaining organizations and sponsors. A colorful, professionally printed brochure also was written by our members to highlight NEO STC's penchant for developing career skills.

You still may be asking yourself what PR has to do with recruiting members. Everything! We have to get into the mindset of "selling" to the public the many benefits STC offers and the work we do. By reacquainting ourselves with other professional groups, we will be able to offer more diverse meeting topics to interest more potential members.

We also have increased our sponsorship coffers, which will allow us to provide more services to our existing members, such as webinars, Software Saturdays and volunteer recognition. Which brings us to the next initiative on our list...

Recognizing Senior Members

NEO STC initiated a Recognition program that was modeled after the successful program by the Orlando, Fla., STC chapter. There are several aspects to this special program, and space does not permit a full accounting at this time. That's an article for another day. However, in terms of membership, the key is to take time to give thanks to your volunteers and pay tribute to senior members of your chapter. Volunteers who feel appreciated are more willing to get involved with activities, and, in turn, the teamwork creates stronger bonds within the geographical community.

True, the Society office sends a letter and certificate to STC members who have obtained five years of membership. We decided that our Recognition program would include giving our five-year members a Senior pin along with an NEO STC certificate during a meeting. We purchased a total of 15 pins at \$10 apiece. Although it would be helpful for the Society office to provide

chapters with a better price for the pins, it's still a small price for a boost in morale. Plus, the pins are excellent recognition for the chapter as well.

NEO STC member Bob Clark wore his Senior pin to work the day after being recognized at the meeting, and the little red pin did its magic.

"I asked, what is that? What affiliation?" said Neil Stenger in reference to the STC Senior pin. "I had heard he (Clark) was a member. I was curious.

"It's great brand recognition. It looks professional," added Stenger, an intranet manager at Ohio Savings Bank in Cleveland.

Sharon Resar joined NEO STC thanks in part to Clark's pin. "I had looked at (STC membership) before and thought about it. Bob convinced me to join."

Resar, who is a Senior Analyst in Method & Procedures and Employee Communication Coordinator at Ohio Savings, says her membership "is a good way to stay informed and educated" with the technical communication industry.

New member packets that focus on the benefits of membership also are an important part of a successful membership drive. The "welcome" letter does not have to be fancy. The message must communicate that STC membership provides excellent networking and career growth opportunities.

"Our recent hires have been technical writers. We've become more technical-oriented. We needed people with certain skills," said Evelyn Kozik on reasons for her joining STC and seeking NEO STC writers and editors. Kozik is the manager of the Knowledge Management Group at Ohio Savings.

Rewarding effort

As you can see, NEO STC's membership campaign was more than telephone calls and emails. We started the STC year with 144 members, and by January, we led Region 4 in percentage of increased membership at a 17.5 percent clip. Overall, 26 new members joined in a nine-month period, for an 18 percent increase. It was a team effort.

We saw a dip with non-renewals but efforts are already under way to contact those members to tell them we want their participation. It's a continuous opportunity to try new recruiting tactics.

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"This isn't rocket science," said Beth. "We simply reconnected with our members. That's always a good thing to do."

Hot jobs

[NOTE: As of 2014, employment resources have shifted to the chapter's LinkedIn presence. Please refer to the [current chapter website](#) for details.]

Check out just a few of the hot jobs from our Web site at <http://www.neostc.org/jobs/openings.php>!

Technical and scientific communication

- ◆ First Consulting Group is seeking a Technical Writer/Documentation Specialist to document current and new applications (analysis through design requirements) including complex system architectures.
- ◆ American Red Cross is seeking a Communications Specialist to support the American Red Cross through public relations planning and counseling, media relations, community relations, publicity, publications, employee communications, issues management and special events.
- ◆ Cleveland Motion Controls is looking for a Technical Writer who will be responsible for all aspects of development and publication of technical documentation for their industrial control products.
- ◆ SageQuest is seeking a QA/Technical Writer to prepare requirement specifications, user manuals and training materials.

Web design and development

- ◆ Noveon, a subsidiary of The Lubrizol Corporation, is seeking a Web Site Specialist to maintain their internal and external Web site.

Training and instructional design

- ◆ Huntington Bank is seeking an Instructional Designer who can determine appropriate solutions to meet business needs, partner and consult with stakeholders to identify training needs and select appropriate media strategies, lead design projects, maintain project plan, scope resource requirements, and ensure timelines are met.

Graphic design and technical illustration

- ◆ Technical Search Consultants is seeking a Web/Graphic Designer who will be responsible for conceptualization, development and production of

uniquely designed web sites, multimedia interfaces, and collateral materials.

Marketing communications

- ◆ Perfection Corporation, a 60-year-old leading manufacturer in the Gas Distribution Industry, is looking for a Marketing Communications Coordinator to develop product communications and marketing literature, including trade publications and news media.
- ◆ Cleveland Foodbank, a progressive nonprofit org, seeks Fundraising Grant Writer to help secure funds from current and prospective foundation and corporate supporters.

Internship

- ◆ The Eliza Jennings Senior Care Network, a not for profit organization, is looking for a Marketing Intern to assist with coordinating special events, do market research/competitive analysis, and input and manage their marketing database.

If your company has a job opening, please contact Namrata (Nams) Malik at Nams Malik (nmalik@ra.rockwell.com)

Job listings on the NEO STC Web site are free and reach a targeted audience!

Lines & Letters information

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