

# Lines & Letters

## Northeast Ohio STC Newsletter



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### President's Column

We are off to a fantastic start this season in NEO STC!

#### Charter

First and most significantly, our proposed charter was approved by STC international. This won't mean any immediate change in the way we go about things, because it does mean we are already doing well, in the estimation of STC international. We were one of the very first communities to successfully complete the re-charting process, and the chapter should take pride that it went so smoothly. The members of our re-chartering committee were: Lori Klepfer (lead), Bob Dianetti, Angie Dianetti, Beth Williams, Kris Henige, and myself. When you see them, please congratulate them on a job well done!

#### Budget

The executive board approved our budget for the year just before the end of September. As treasurer Ken Rogers mentioned at the September meeting, our goal is to provide the same level of services to you while reducing costs wherever possible. We will also be seeking to raise funds through corporate sponsorships - you will hear more about this soon.

#### Webinars

Have you taken advantage of the WebEx seminars offered by STC? (<http://www.stc.org/seminarsList.asp>) During the 2004-2005 season, the chapter is offering five of these seminars at no cost to attendees. Three have already been held, with the remaining two budgeted for after the new year. If you have interest in one or more of these upcoming seminars - either to attend or to host at your company - please contact me ([klindsey@parker.com](mailto:klindsey@parker.com)). The chapter will sponsor the seminars that members express the most interest in. Also, if your company is hosting one of the seminars on your own and would be willing to welcome one or more visitors to the session, please contact me. If I get inquiries from chapter members, I will direct them your way.

#### Contest

On the subject of our annual contest, I have two points.

- ◆ First, the board has decided to raise the bar for eligibility to win the contest by rewarding participation in chapter activities. You will receive an entry for serving on a committee, judging in our competition, hosting an event (for example, a webinar), successfully submitting an article to our

newsletter Lines & Letters, and other similar activities. To receive an entry for attendance at meetings and networking lunches, you must be present at three of these events (i.e., one entry for every three events attended).

- ◆ Second, because of this year's financial constraints, I am sorry to report that we will not be able to give away two complete registrations for the Seattle STC conference next May. We will still have a drawing for a significant educational resource of some kind, but its nature and value will be appropriate to our chapter's finances for the year. If we have an outstanding year and successfully recruit corporate sponsors, the prize could be a conference registration and more - let's hope and work toward the best!

Thanks for reading and for being part of NEO STC - the new STC!

~ Kim Lindsey, Chapter President

### News from National

#### STC's 2004 Technical Communicator Salary Survey

STC's 2004 Technical Communicator Salary Survey is now available on STC's Web site at [www.stc.org/salarySurvey.asp](http://www.stc.org/salarySurvey.asp) As in past years, the survey features information about salaries and benefits for STC members in the U.S. and Canada. The survey breaks down salary information by levels of experience, levels of education, gender, and ZIP code/postal code. This year, for the first time, the survey form was sent to STC members all over the world. Two countries outside of North America--Israel and India--produced enough responses to be statistically significant. Salary information about those countries has been included in the survey results.

To access the survey, you'll need to log onto the members-only section of the STC Web site using your member number and password. Your member number appears on your STC membership card and just above your address on the mailing label of Intercom. Password help is available on the logon screen.

#### Customize your STC Membership in 2005

New choices for 2005 STC Membership are a change the STC Transformation Initiative Team has made toward its goal of providing value that members want and need to develop professionally.

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Professional Memberships range from:

- ◆ E-membership (\$135) and Classic Membership (\$145) - Both E-membership and Classic Membership include 1 chapter with 1 SIG, or 3 SIGs. The difference: E-members receive copies of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* online, while Classic members continue to receive paper copies. Add more SIGs for \$5 each; dual membership in additional chapters is \$10 each.
- ◆ Student Memberships (\$50) - Student membership includes 1 student chapter and 1 professional chapter membership, and no additional cost for SIGs. Student members will receive their copies of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* online.
- ◆ Limited Memberships (\$125) - Limited Memberships include only paper copies and online access to of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*.

In addition, new members who paid 2004 dues during the months of Jan. - Oct. 2004, receive a "rebate" ranging from \$14 (Jan.) to \$126 (Oct). These credits will appear on new members' renewal invoices. New members who join the Society in Nov. and Dec. 2004 are considered paid in full for 2005. For more information, see:  
<http://www.stc.org/transformation/article9.asp>.

### Dues Renewal Deadline and Rates

The STC office is currently developing a new online dues renewal form. The office will notify members via e-mail when the online renewal form is ready.

Printed dues renewal invoices will be mailed in late November to all members who do not renew their memberships online at the STC Web site. For membership dues, STC accepts checks in U.S. dollars or Canadian equivalent, and American Express, MasterCard, and VISA payments. Dues payments must be received by January 1, 2005. (A grace period extends to February 28, 2005.) Note that only members who have paid their dues by February 28, 2005, will be eligible to vote in the STC election.

The renewal invoices for 2005 allow members to choose one of four new individual membership categories approved by the STC board of directors. (For more information on the new categories, see "Board Establishes New Membership Categories" in the September 2004 Tieline.) [*The detailed table of rates for 2005 membership dues is omitted - please contact the Society for this historical data.*]

Two groups of members do not receive a dues renewal invoice in November: Members who join STC on or after November 1, 2004, and sustaining organizations. Sustaining organizations are billed separately in July.

If you have any questions about dues renewal, please contact the membership department.

### New on the STC Web Site: *Intercom* Online

A new *Intercom* section of the STC Web site featuring full-text search of archived articles is available. Through the new site, STC members enjoy early access to PDFs of the current issue, including the Society Pages, letters to the editor, and *Intercom* departments such as *Witful Thinking* and *Off Hours*. Members also have access to PDFs of all articles from October 1999 to the present. Additionally, selected articles from the current issue are available to nonmembers, free of charge, to introduce them to the magazine and STC.

### September Meeting Recap

by Bob Young

#### Forget the flash, concentrate on content.

Theresa Leonard-Wilkinson says that concise instructions that assist web surfers is the ticket to closing the deal for internet marketers. Leonard-Wilkinson knows firsthand, having applied her web site conversion skills for major companies, including CompuServe, Intuitive Concepts, and Abercrombie & Fitch.

The latter two web sites were compared for visual and instructional concepts during Leonard-Wilkinson's spirited presentation at the Northeastern Ohio STC September meeting. She emphasized the tangible and intangible elements that help web site designers overcome obstacles that prevent surfers from buying, requesting information or downloading software.

A well-known designer from the Central Ohio chapter, Leonard-Wilkinson noted that only 30 percent of web surfers purchase products. Interestingly, less than half surveyed bought the cheapest product. Why?

"Price is the least important factor, quality the most," she said.

Building trust and confidence in the web site is as important as the label on the merchandise. Web surfers, said Leonard-Wilkinson, must be made comfortable and motivated to take a desired action upon accessing a web site. Clear instructions packaged with consistent navigational tools will allow the user to patiently view artwork, product information, or size and color

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information. In other words, good copy writing and design are more important than huge, flashy graphics.

Leonard-Wilkinson noted that studies have shown that since we are trained to read left to right our eyes first go to the center of a page, move up to the top left-hand side, and then over to the right side of the page.

Therefore, she added, it's important to have your logo prominently displayed at the top left side along with the navigational links. Graphics should enhance the middle copy and not overwhelm the user.

By not making the customer work for information you have accommodated the four traffic groups:

- ◆ Users who know what they want. Make checkout easy for them.
- ◆ Users who kind of know what they want. Help them narrow choices.
- ◆ Window shoppers who are curious. Package merchandise to maintain their interest.
- ◆ Users who accessed the site by mistake. Catch their interest and allow them to exit without effort. They might come back later to learn, or purchase, more.

Leonard-Wilkinson added that a web designer must know her audience, address users' fears of not being able to leave, provide contact information, and, above else, provide value. She cautioned that changes to a site, such as color, text, or navigation, should be made one at a time. If sales drop, you know what to immediately correct.

### Upcoming NEO STC Meetings

*By: Bob Young*

All regular meetings are at the Holiday Inn in Independence on the second Thursday of the month, through May 2005. Dinner is at 6:30 p.m. followed by the presentation at 7:30 p.m. Cost is \$30 for members, \$40 for non-members, and \$10 to attend meetings without dinner. Pre-payments are encouraged through PayPal at [www.neostc.org/calendar/](http://www.neostc.org/calendar/).

In November, renowned author Dr. Karen Schriver will present Ten Information Design Challenges

for Organizations -- her formulas for effective document design, while Scott Butler is scheduled to address the February meeting on usability.

- ◆ November 11, 2004 - Karen Schriver, Ten Information Design Challenges for Organizations

- ◆ December 9, 2004 - Holiday social hour and food drive
- ◆ January 13, 2005 - TBA
- ◆ February 10, 2005 - Scott Butler, Usability/human factors
- ◆ March 10, 2005 - TBA
- ◆ April 23, 2005 - Joint meeting with Pittsburgh STC chapter in Boardman, Ohio
- ◆ May 20, 2005 - Chapter achievement and competition awards

### CHAPTER COMMITTEE REPORT

#### Academic Relations Committee To Reach Out to Students

*by Jeanette Evans, Senior Member*

I am hoping that this year we can continue the student outreach work that we started last year. We targeted four schools last year. I hope we get enough volunteers this year to continue the work we started with Bowling Green, Youngstown State, Cedarville, and Miami. We could of course always add more schools.

Please feel free to let me know if you are willing to help in the fun and satisfying work of this committee. This work is often less time consuming than some of the other committees in NEOSTC. I look forward to hearing from you about joining us.

If you volunteer, we ask that you personally contact at least one student in the tech com field. This contact involves asking if the student is aware of NEOSTC and would like to get more information, learn about upcoming meetings, etc. I would also like to assess interest at that point in a college level competition.

This should be an enjoyable networking and mentoring activity where students hook up with members working in the field. STC has identified this type of outreach work as a valuable part of what we should be doing at the local level. I am looking forward to it!

### Upcoming STC Seminars

by Melinda Liggitt, Department Editor

- ◆ October 30, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM -- Introduction to Framemaker Hosted by STC Chicago Chapter, at Knowledge Systems Institute, Skokie, IL. Register by Oct. 25 on the STC Chicago website.

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- ◆ Nov. 8, 2004, 6:30pm – 8:00 pm – “Technological Preparation of Technical Writers” Presented by Matt Willen, Pittsburgh Technology Council Building, 2000 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA. Fee: \$5 members, \$7 nonmembers, \$3 students. Dinner Meeting. RSVP Pittsburgh Chapter STC.
- ◆ Nov. 10, 2004, 1 – 2:30 pm -- Introducing Windows “Longhorn” Help Presented by Char James-Tanny in an STC WebEx Seminar. See national STC website to enroll.
- ◆ Nov. 17, 2004, 6-8pm -- “Setting Rates” Hosted by the Pittsburgh STC Chapter Consulting and Independent Consulting (CIC) SIG, at the Oakland Panera, 3401 Blvd of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.
- ◆ Dec. 8, 2004, 1 – 2:30 pm – “Highlighting Hazards” Mastering Warnings and Error Messages” Presented by Leah Guren in an STC WebEx Seminar. See national STC website to enroll.
- ◆ Dec. 13, 2004 – “Electronic Documentation Review with Adobe Acrobat and WebWorks FinalDraft” Presented by Alan Houser, Pittsburgh Technology Council Building, 2000 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA. Fee: \$5 members, \$7 nonmembers, \$3 students. Dinner Meeting. RSVP Pittsburgh Chapter STC.
- ◆ Jan 10, 2004 – “Annual Employment Meeting” Hosted by Pittsburgh Chapter STC, 2000 Technology Drive, Pittsburgh, PA.

### Region 5 Conference - Salt Lake City

The Region 5 Director, Linda Oestreich, is pleased to announce that STC's Intermountain Chapter will host this year's Region 5 Conference, October 21-24, 2004.

The conference theme is "Ascending the Summit: A Technical Communication Expedition," which refers to the setting--Salt Lake City, at the foot of the Wasatch Mountain Range.

The Intermountain Chapter invites all technical communicators to join in "ascending the summit"--tackling technical communication challenges, renewing both friendships and work relationships, and enriching our skill sets.

In addition to great keynote speakers and a closing session focused on Transformation, the conference organizers promise opportunities for networking, enriching your careers, and giving your heart and mind an invigorating treat--the beauty of Salt Lake City.

The conference ends on Sunday morning (Oct. 24) with a leadership workshop, a chance to recap what you've learned, and informal chats with STC leaders. "I'm expecting to have fun, and I know you will too!" says Linda Oestreich, STC Region 5 director. At this time, four STC directors are scheduled to attend.

For details about the conference, including schedules and registration information, please see the Region 5 Conference Web site at [www.stcregion5conf2004.org](http://www.stcregion5conf2004.org).

### Rochester Chapter STC Conference

The Rochester Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication is holding its 46th annual conference on Friday April 8, 2005. (We have this down pat.) We are particularly looking for new people to attend who bring new ideas. We typically have 150 attendees from a variety of industries and employment areas: technical writers, graphic designers, multimedia instructional designers, editors, and academics.

This year we will be offering a discounted registration fee for our presenters. We do not have the fees established yet but I know they will be well under \$100. That's a steal for a full day conference these days.

We will be having an Idea Market at the 2005 conference because it was such a success last year. An Idea Market is a great way to participate. You facilitate a discussion on a specific topic by using only a flip chart with a list of questions or topics. There are no chairs or tables in the room so the participants can roam from one presenter to the other. We hope to have 8-10 Idea Market presenters in the room all "discussing" at the same time. Plus, you don't have to submit a paper for the conference proceedings!

Our Keynote presenter is Malcolm McLaren who is the president of the McLaren Engineering Group near NYC. They specialize in Entertainment Engineering and he will be discussing the project management and communication hurdles involved in creating massive stages for his clients: the Rolling Stones, MTV Awards, the Republican Convention, and various Broadway shows to name a few.

So, come and be apart of it. Please pass this on and let me know if you have any questions.

See you in Rochester on April 8, 2005

Sincerely,

Lisa Moretto, Spectrum 2005 Chair

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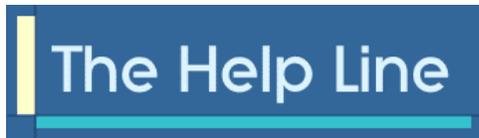
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### The Help Line



**Edit Content in a Web Page** -- Microsoft Insider Newsletter

- ◆ To increase the font size by 1 point, click CTRL+].
- ◆ To decrease the font size by 1 point, click CTRL+[ .

**Do a quick test of a \_JavaScript command in your browser's address bar** -- Elemenk K Tips Newsletter

When you're in a rush, sometimes every second makes a difference. Creating a new Web page and testing it in different browsers--just to make sure you have the right syntax--can get wearisome when you're under a lot of pressure. However, most modern Web browsers allow you to test a limited amount of \_JavaScript right in the address bar where you normally type a URL. Just type the word "\_JavaScript" followed by a colon, and experiment to your heart's content. You can even use semicolons to write multiple lines of code. For example, the following typed in the address bar gives you a dialog box that says 3: `_JavaScript:var x = 3;alert(x)`

You can also write to the screen, using `window.status`. (Even though that property normally writes to the status bar, it writes to the screen when you execute code from the address bar.) For instance, the following code in the address bar writes a bold number 4 on the screen: `_JavaScript:var x=4;window.status = "<b>" + x + "</b>"`

One last thing to keep in mind is that Gecko-based browsers (e.g., Netscape and Mozilla) and Opera leave your code in the address bar as is, whereas IE converts your spaces to "%20"--so it may be a little harder for you to see what you've typed.

**Determining whether the FrontPage Server Extensions are installed (FrontPage 2000/2002/2003)** --Elemenk K Tips Newsletter

You can easily determine whether a given site has the FrontPage Server Extensions installed. Just open the site for editing and choose Web Settings (or Site Settings) from the Tools menu. The resulting Web Settings/Site Settings dialog box indicates the version of the server extensions installed, if any, as well as the server type being used.

If you don't want to launch FrontPage, try this technique: Launch Internet Explorer and load the site's `_vti_inf.html` file. This file should be in the site's root directory, so the complete URL would be `http://domain/_vti_inf.html`, where domain is the domain or server name. If the FrontPage Configuration Information page appears, the server extensions have probably been installed. If the page doesn't appear (and you get a 404 error), they haven't been installed.

Do you have a favorite tip, trick or helpful suggestion you can share with your fellow members?

Share Your knowledge!

Send it to me at [newsletter@neostc.org](mailto:newsletter@neostc.org) and I will put it in the next issue of The Help Line.

### White Board

**Announcements, Notes and FYIs from NEO and around the region**

*From Bob Dianetti:*

Dear Clients and Friends of RADCom, Inc.

It is with great pleasure that I announce that RADCom has been selected as a Case Weatherhead 100 Upstart winner for 2004.

This would not have been possible if it weren't for our excellent clients and supporters in Northeast Ohio.

I thank you all.

*From the Members of NEO STC:*

CONGRATULATIONS RADCom!!!

*Chapter Changes -- from STC Tieline -- October 2004*

STC welcomes its newest chapter, the MetroState Student Chapter, based at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota. The chapter has been assigned to region 6. The Arizona State University student chapter has been dissolved. Its members have been reassigned to the Phoenix chapter.

### Wiki Website Review

*By Kristy Benson, Member*

Has your manager charged you with writing an HTML Help system for your company's newest software release? Are you shopping around for an online help tool that will generate Web-based Help? Do you need instructions for linking your Help pages to an

application? Are you looking for a good mailing list for help with WebWorks Publisher?

You can find answers to these questions and many others on the MSHelpWiki. Created by Microsoft Help MVPs, the MSHelpWiki at [www.mshelpwiki.com](http://www.mshelpwiki.com) is a knowledgebase of online Help-related information. The website is unique because it is set up as a Wiki, a site where anyone can freely edit the contents. This Wiki format allows the community of Microsoft Help MVPs and Help authors in general to contribute to the website. (You can learn more about Wikis at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>.)

The main content areas of the Wiki are listed on the left side of each page. In addition to the Help-related content, there are instructions for editing the Wiki, a glossary of Help terms and acronyms, and a page for suggestions. You can also view recent changes to the Wiki via a link at the top.

The different Microsoft Help technologies are each assigned their own page. Naturally, the familiar WinHelp and HTML Help formats are present, but you can also view information on MS Help 2.x (the help system used by Visual Studio .NET help and MSDN Library) and Longhorn Help (the Help format that will be introduced with the next version of Microsoft Windows). These pages include links to articles, bug lists, and frequently asked questions about each Help format. You can also find details on connecting each Help format to an application written using various programming languages like Visual Basic, C++, and Delphi.

The Wiki includes an extensive list of Help authoring tools with links to vendor websites. You can read other users' comments about the tools they have experience with, and you can leave a comment of your own. Some tools also have links to more extensive reviews on external websites.

You can browse a list of online support groups for Help authoring. This includes general Help-related mailing lists (like the HATT discussion group), along with vendor-sponsored mailing lists and forums.

The Wiki also contains a section with general HTML information, under the heading Cross-Browser. Listed here are links relating to Web standards, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), and other information useful for writing Help that will be viewed in various Web browsers and operating systems.

Unfortunately, a few Help-related subjects lack meaningful content. For example, the Help Design and

Translation & Localization pages have very little information. However, the beauty of the Wiki format is that any user can add content to these pages at any time. Hopefully, as Help authors write articles on these topics or come across useful tips on the web, these pages will fill up with links.

The MSHelpWiki is an excellent clearinghouse of links relating to the diverse aspects of authoring online Help. It is a great place to start if you have any questions about Help formats or tools. Even better, it is an exciting way to post your own links and share information with fellow Help authors in need.

## Networking Without Blinders

*By Phil Stella*

Many Communication Professionals recognize the power of effective networking as a key business strategy. But, if you fall into the trap of networking out of habit, driven by some outdated mindsets, you network with blinders on. And, if you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.

Here are some simple reminders to help you network without blinders.

- ◆ Networking isn't selling. It isn't even marketing. It's just networking - "the exchange of information, ideas and resources" as John Naisbit defined it in "Megatrends" over a decade ago.
- ◆ Don't mix networking, marketing or selling in the same interaction. Each strategy has a specific purpose and role to play.
- ◆ It's not who you know - it's who they know. If you're networking to grow your business, don't overlook people who could never be your clients. Realize that they can connect you with people who could be your clients.
- ◆ Networking isn't a car pool or taking turns buying lunch. Don't try to stay "even". A one-sided networking relationship can be extremely meaningful as long as both people find value in it.
- ◆ Networking isn't driven by guilt or obligation. You don't help people because they already helped you and you "owe them one" or because you want them to "owe you one". Help people because that's the right thing to do without thinking of what's in it for you.
- ◆ Realize that "givers gain". The more you give to others, the more will ultimately come back to you.

As you can see, networking is really much more than a set of simple strategies and techniques. There is a karma-like philosophy driving the process. Networking pros recognize and embrace that philosophy as they harness the power of networking.

### Work the Room Like a Pro

By Phil Stella

So you've decided to attend an upcoming STC event to do some networking. Good for you ... but you'll need to work the room like a pro - with focus, style and finesse. Here are 10 simple best practices to increase your skills and confidence ... and results.

1. Know why you're there. Precisely define your specific networking objective for the event. What types of people do you want to meet? What will you say when you do?
2. Get there early and stay late. Make it the most important thing you'll do that day.
3. Let your nametag help you network. Put it high on your right lapel or right side and don't put it where you don't want people to look.
4. Smile so you look friendly and sincere. A good smile says, "I'm someone you'd like to meet." And smile with your eyes, too.
5. Offer a firm and energetic, but comfortable hand shake. Don't squeeze too hard or shake too long.
6. Always talk to strangers ... only talk to strangers. Don't spend much time chatting with people you already know, because the more strangers you meet - the greater the chances you'll accomplish your objectives.
7. Sit smart. Don't sit too early because you can't choose who sits with you. Sit surrounded by strangers. It's called net-work, not net-sit.
8. Don't offer your business card up front. Wait until you have a reason at the end of a brief conversation. Let the other people ask for yours first or ask if you can give them your card.
9. Ask good questions. While casual chitchat is harmless and easy, it takes time away from finding out about the other person.
10. Talk less and listen more. You need to gather data to begin answering the question "Is this

person someone I want to get to know better, someone who I can help or who can help me?"

These 10 simple networking best practices can increase your skills and confidence. And watch how they differentiate you from the other people who are networking there like rank amateurs.

*Phil Stella runs Effective Training & Communication (440-449-0356, etcjps@aol.com). He's a training resource for business people who want to communicate with more power and success.*

### Additional Content

Michelle Price, NEOSTC Member, contributed [this PDF](#) on "Robohelp Online Demonstrations."

Scott Abel, Immediate Past President of the Hoosier Chapter STC, and Kay Ethier, Hoosier Chapter Member, allowed us to reprint [this PDF](#) on "Introduction to Structured Content Management with XML."

### Editor's Notes

#### Good News!

I am extremely pleased to announce two new members of the Lines & Letters Newsletter Committee. Please welcome aboard:

- ◆ Carol Zollinger: Co-editor
- ◆ Melinda Liggitt: Department Editor

Carol will be collecting all the written content for our newsletter, copy-editing the received content, and contacting contributors for articles and other content.

Melinda will be gathering, writing and organizing content for our department features: On the Front Lines, Regional News/Announcements, scheduled seminars, new membership announcements, etc.. She will also be contacting possible contributors for articles and Committee Reports.

WELCOME ABOARD LADIES!!

#### Bad News

Effective immediately, I am resigning as newsletter editor for NEOSTC Lines & Letters. I am also leaving the NEOSTC chapter.

Nora Ebie