



Lakeshore Connection

Wisconsin Chapter, Society for Technical Communication Volume 5, Issue 6 December 2004

Our Holiday party – “Yule” enjoy it!

You work hard the year 'round. You research, edit, revise, re-edit, revamp, re-visit, compile, parse, code, upload, download, draw, de-bug, index, script, program, encode, de-code, encrypt, tag, de-limit, burn CDs, read LEDs, and yes, sometimes you even get a chance to do some writing.

Isn't it time to have a little fun? To let your hair down? (If you have hair.) To see old friends, to re-new old friendships, to network, to console, to commiserate, to commemorate, to celebrate, to communicate, to pick someone's brain, to feel their pain, to sing a refrain, to reflect, to genuflect, to show respect, and relax, too?

Now is the chance to do all those things, and to have something good to eat and drink, besides. Join us for our Chapter's annual holiday party!

See the sidebar at the right for all the information you need for signing up. And we'll see you at the party!

Date:

Tuesday, December 14

Time:

6 p.m. to ?

Location:

Shaker's, 422 South 2nd Street, Milwaukee

Bring along:

Your spouse, friend or significant other; your appetite for food, fun and good times.

Cost:

\$17.00/person

Reservations:

By e-mail to STC-WI@email.com or via the STC telephone reservation line at 414-299-0048. ♦

seasons
greetings



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October recap: "The Business of Tech Comm."

Jim Romano, Director-Sponsor for STC Region 6 and President/CEO of Prisma International, was guest speaker at our October 12 meeting. Jim spoke about the Business of Technical Communication, and also about the STC Transformation.

Jim stated that "most of us are in tech comm. because we have a passion for words, for language." The business side of it — how we produce value for our customers or employers — is not always clear to us.

This results in what Jim termed "the Value Gap," which is the Reality (that we produce content essential to companies and their customers) versus the Perception (that technical communication is easy, anyone can write, that there is little perceived value in it, etc.).

Building a Business Case is a way to bridge the Value Gap. "The Business Case is a managerial tool that supports planning and decision-making," Jim said. The Business Case is both a "thing" (a formalized report) and an attitude (thinking in a business-like manner, and using management/business terminology).

To build and develop a Business Case, you must:

- **Use metrics** (measurements). "In a business case, you need to have data," Jim said. Then, use that data to develop your metrics. "The use of metrics makes your business case credible."
- **Use business logic.** The business case must speak to the bottom line of the company.
- **Use managerial language.** Use terms that management knows: ROI, cost/benefit analysis, etc. In other words — speak to management in the language that it understands.

Some strategies for bridging the Value Gap include:

1. "Embrace Thy Neighbor." Tech comm. is a "Community of Practice" (a group that shares a common practice). Reach out to other writers, trainers, translators, etc.
2. Think content, not words. Content is about meaning. And content is what has value.
3. Think both global and local.
4. Metrics (again). Develop metrics (measurements) about your job and performance.

5. Learn to sell, market and promote your service. The key to this is to have a good "elevator speech." This is a 20-second sound bite that tells people who you are and what you do. Use this to educate people about what you do.

Jim pointed out that the concept of producing value is driving the current STC Transformation. He said that the STC is evaluating "what the organization needs to be in order to bring value to its members."

The STC Transformation will help to close the Value Gap by giving us more visibility through "Communities of Practice" and additional opportunities for networking, Jim said. ♦

Member news



Diane Newbury, our Chapter membership manager, reports the following new members in our Chapter:

David Brock (10/20/2004)
 Jenny Keppert (9/24/2004)
 Melissa Koss (9/15/2004)
 Rosie Maple (10/12/04)
 Ralph Sylvester (10/6/2004)
 Margie Thoennes (10/20/04)

Congratulations! ♦

Our November meeting: Web technologies for building better web sites

Our first "west side Wednesday" meeting was held November 10 at the Midway Hotel on Moorland Road in Brookfield. The presenter was Brennan Stehling. He is a developer specializing in Java and .NET technologies. His presentation was on web technologies for building better web sites for your clients.

Brennan began by going over the history of the technologies and tools that are used for building web sites. These include Standard Generalized Markup Language or SGML (which introduced the concept of tagging) and Postscript page description language.



He then described the origins and use of Hypertext Markup Language or HTML. He also pointed out the features of Extensible Markup Language, or XML.

The use of Cascading Style Sheets or CSS "allows you to remove font tags and attributes," Brennan said. "The CSS is an external document that you reference from the web page." It describes how to display the page, which results in smaller (fewer bytes) pages that load faster.

The Javascript programming language "addresses various parts of the page dynamically," Brennan said. You can show or hide blocks of text on the page.

Extensible Stylesheet Language or XSL is a different kind of stylesheet. It is a way to transform an XML document into a different kind of form. It "passes the XML through the stylesheet, and based on the rules that it finds there, it produces a new document," Brennan said.

The classic graphics formats (.GIF, .JPEG, .PNG) are still with us. But the up-and-coming format is Scalable Vector graphics, or .SVG files.

For the future, we can expect more use of XML and XSL. These formats let you re-use your data. With the same data or file, for example, you use one style sheet to create a version of a page for PDAs, and another style sheet to create a printed document.

And we will be using the new technology for BLOGs (web logs). ♦

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Long-time STC member and Fellow publishes film/communication book

Long-time STC member S. Martin (Marty) Shelton, has published a book, *Communicating Ideas with Film, Video, and Multimedia: a Practical Guide to Information Motion-Media*.

The book, published by the Southern Illinois University Press, is available from them. It is also available through Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble (bn.com).

Marty is a Fellow of the STC. He developed and managed the STC video competition for 13 years (1978 to 1990).

And in March 1995, he hosted an all-day seminar on Motion-Media Script Design for our Chapter. ♦

Chapter member is published in *intercom*

Michelle Schoenecker, a member of our Wisconsin Chapter, has published an article that appears in the November issue of *intercom*, the STC magazine.

Michelle’s article is entitled “Best Practices for Developing Sales Proposals.” It is one of the feature articles in the issue.

Michelle is Proposal Manager for Fiserv, Inc. Fiserv provides information management systems and services to the financial industry, including transaction processing, outsourcing, business process outsourcing and software and systems solutions. ♦

Consider the Classic Membership renewal option

As part of its transformation process, the STC is offering several different levels of membership options.

We’re encouraging our members to choose the “Classic Membership” option. This is what you’ve had all along. The cost of this option is not going up.

Yes, there is another option (the limited membership) that is less expensive. One feature of that option is that you will *not* automatically be a member of a local chapter or SIG.

Local chapters (that means us!) receive a rebate from the national chapter. The rebate is based on the number of members in the chapter, multiplied by a dollar figure.

These rebates are an important source of revenue for local chapters. The rebates enable us to have speakers, workshops, etc.

So please — support your local chapter. Help us to continue to bring you good programs, monthly meetings and workshops that are of interest to you, and all the other value that is yours through membership in your local STC chapter. ♦

Editor’s column

by James Green

It was determined this week that *Lakeshore Connection*, newsletter of the Wisconsin Chapter STC, will join the “low-carb” trend.

James Green, editor of the newsletter, also pointed out that *Lakeshore Connection* “is practically almost totally free of fat and cholesterol,” adding that the only ‘fat’ is contained in the “Editor’s column,” and on the editor’s body.

Green noted, however, that he was not sure whether the newsletter was low-sodium, as well.

And he cautioned that the newsletter may possibly contain some animal by-products.

“As always, the newsletter is primarily concerned with the well-being of our chapter members,” Green declared. “In this, we are unchanging and unswerving. And resolute, too.” 😊 ♦