



Mission: Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

March 2006

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Help Wanted, Apply Within

Editorial Team Looking for a Few Good Members

This issue of Rough Draft brings about some changes: a new look and editorial team. The newsletter is now in the hands of Karen Zorn, Managing Editor; Clare Turner, Editor in Chief; and Jane Rossignol, Chanda Child, and Deb Paulsen, Reviewers. Linda Shacklock, Gloria McConnell, and Kathy Graden will continue to write monthly columns. A good start, but there are still a few *Rough Draft* jobs that need filling:

Reviewer Responsibilities: review upcoming issue for spelling errors, broken links, readability problems, etc. Commitment: 2-5 hours per month.

Contributing Editor Responsibilities: write a monthly topical column or provide information gleaned from related newsletters, list serves, or usegroups. Articles can be assembled from postings. Commitment: Depends on subscriptions, 3-10 hours per month.

Reporter Responsibilities: contribute articles regarding STC, SIG, or other activities relating to technical communications. Commitment: varies.

Salary for above positions: unending thanks and gratitude.

More help wanted listings at [Help Wanted](#).

Also in This Issue

[Turning Chinese English into English English](#) William Pacino of the Northern New England Chapter writes about a challenging and educating writing assignment.

[Tech Comm 2005](#) You really had to be there! The partnership between the Phoenix chapter and the IDL SIG presented a wonderful conference full of interesting presentations, networking, and entertainment.

[Tax Tip](#) Geoff Hart of the Montreal Chapter details a personal savings plan that really works for independent consultants and freelancers.

[STC Election News](#) Upcoming Society and Community election information.

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CARSEF, Science Fair Central

The 2006 Central Arizona Regional Science and Engineering Fair (CARSEF) will be here before you know it ... the date is **Wednesday, April 12, 2006**. Please consider volunteering for this very worthwhile event. Plan to sign up at the next STC meeting, or contact [Gloria McConnell](#).

If the acronym "CARSEF" is new to you, here is what it's all about:

CARSEF is for students in grades 4 through 12 who attend school in central Arizona. CARSEF provides an opportunity for young people to create serious science or engineering projects, to experience research and learn about the scientific process, within a fun, competitive atmosphere. CARSEF competition is basically divided into Junior (grades 4-8) and Senior (grades 9-12) divisions.

What will we do?

Volunteers from the STC Phoenix Chapter judge student reports, and the chapter provides monetary awards for the best reports. STC's role is to bring awareness of the value of good technical communication and expose students to the technical communication career.

It cannot be said too often: taking part in CARSEF is a very satisfying experience. STC judges will find many well-written reports, as well as inventive (sometimes surprising) projects, and will see great promise in our future generation.

Venue

This year, CARSEF will be held at the [Mesa Convention Center](#), 263 N. Center Street ([MapQuest](#)). This location is convenient to the Superstition Freeway, Loop 101, and Loop 202.

If you have questions about our role in CARSEF, please contact Gloria. For more information about the event itself, see the [ASU CARSEF site](#).

Editor's Note

Everytime I participate in CARSEF I learn something new. One year it was about laundry detergent, another why statin drugs and grapefruit don't play well together. Not only is it fun, but the variety and depth of experiments is encouraging. If you haven't participated, try it!



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Phoenix Community News

Congratulations!

Congratulations to chapter members **Jane Smith**, awarded STC Associate Fellow and **Tom Barnett**, awarded STC Fellow. Not only have these individuals served our chapter with dedication, they are make presentations at Society conferences, participate on chapter and SIG management, manage competitions, and other tasks.

Membership News

Membership Manager, Sally Nielsen is on vacation. Look for statistics in April.



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Editorial Blithers

The Only Certain Thing Is Change

by Karen L. Zorn, Managing Editor

Notice anything different? After editing and publishing *Rough Draft* for nine years, Kathy Graden has stepped down so she can concentrate on family, self, and work. During those nine years, Kathy gathered information, wrote columns and articles, mined other STC (and non-STC) publications for items of interest, and entered the STC Newsletter Competition resulting in one Achievement Award, two Merit Awards, four Awards of Excellence (one Most Improved), and one Award of Distinction and Best of Show. Thank you, Kathy, for a job well done and your commitment to the Phoenix Community. Kathy will continue writing a monthly column for *Rough Draft*. Look for her article "[Handling Prima Donnas and Office Ogres](#)" in this issue.

One of the first lessons a Technical Communicator learns is "Know your audience." *Rough Draft* is *your* newsletter, your input and feedback help us provide you with information you need and can use. Also, we are soliciting contributions from Phoenix community members. Do you belong to an E-mail list, STC SIG or other technical writing listserv? You're bound to read a wealth of information that could be of interest to community members. Newsletters from other chapters or organizations may have interesting articles that could be published, with permission and proper credit, of course! Pictures taken at STC events (with appropriate captions) are always welcome!

As the new editorial team comes up to speed and learns new software and skills, we ask for your patience. We're experienced at paper publishing; learning to create a virtual newsletter and all that goes behind what you see-- cascading style sheets (CSS), links, URLs, is a big challenge. It will take a little time to get it right. Your suggestions and comments can help us along the way.

Feel free to e-mail us at: rough_draft@zorntech.com.



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Turning Chinese English into English English

William Pacino

reprinted from "The Nor'easter" Northern New England Chapter newsletter

The rewriting assignment came from a friend, a Chinese software developer who was involved in a side business selling Chinese audio amplifiers and speakers. This high-end audio equipment, imported from China, had an owner's manual prepared in China and written in English.

The problem in the manual was that the Chinese English was scrambled - the most important part of the sentence was at the end, much of the document was written in the past tense, and there was an oversupply of politeness and formality. This document needed a rewrite in order to move the nouns, verbs, and adjectives around so that this document written in Chinese English sounded like English English.

This was not an easy assignment. First I had to understand what was being said via the Chinese English descriptions and I then had to rearrange the sentences in a way that did not corrupt the meaning of the delivered information.

Ten Samples

I have chosen to display ten samples from the original Chinese English document and what I did to rewrite these samples in English English.

The audience for this information is an American purchaser of high-end audio stereo equipment. The reason that this American user purchases this equipment to enhance the audio listening of recorded music via audio CDs or DVDs. Thus the document talks of a concept such as "sound image". I could have rewritten such a phrase to "... the listener hears". But I choose to leave some wording that dealt with the sensory experience of listening to music, rather than reducing it to nothing but a cold hard description.

In the following twelve examples, the first selection, marked CE1 to CE10, is from the original Chinese English owner's manual. The second selection, marked EE1 to EE10, is the rewritten English English.

CE1

Thank you for choosing the Multi-Channel Amplifier.

It was designed deliberately and inspected strictly in order to ensure your maximum enjoyment on perfect stereo

music playback and high quality home theater sound.

EE1

Thank you for choosing the Multi-Channel Amplifier.

This product has undergone careful design and thorough inspection to ensure your maximum enjoyment of perfect stereo music playback and high quality home theater sound.

CE2

As a breakthrough, the frequency band climbed up to 100kHz easily, fitting the playback of beautiful and infinite harmonic of SACD or DVD-Audio software. The more important thing to audiophile is that it is easy for them to feel the sound timbre harmony, balance and naturalness from the unit's new design amplifier circuit.

EE2

In a breakthrough, the frequency band climbs up to 100kHz easily, fitting the playback of the beautiful and infinite harmonics of SACD or DVD-Audio software. The more important thing to audiophiles is that it is easy for to hear the sound timbre harmony, balance and naturalness from the unit's new design amplifier circuit.

CE3

Important Safety Issue

In order to reduce risk of fire and electric shock, never expose this unit to raining/shower or high humidity environment.

Warning

In order to reduce electric shock risk, please do not remove the unit cover. There is no part for user maintenance inside the unit. Always assign the repair job to the professional.

To keep high performance for a long time, please comply with the items as below

- Before operation, please read this manual book in detail, and pay attention to these notice issues relative.
- Do not expose the unit to the straight sunshine, nor to the extreme high or low temperature.
- Do not put this unit in raining/shower or high humidity environment, nor near vase, water pail or kitchen sink, etc. If there were fluid got into the unit, this may cause severe damage.
- Avoid to put the unit on the unstable platform or height with risk of falling, nor put the unit at the place where was easy to be shaken by speakers' sound wave. Particularly do not put the unit on the speaker cabinet.
- There will be heat created while the unit is working. For working in normal, please ensure there are good ventilation and heat release condition for the unit. The ventilation holes on the top side and bottom side of the unit are used to prevent from temperature increasing abnormally.

Never block these holes, especially never use fabric or paper to cover these holes, nor put the unit on the rugged carpet, bed or couch while the unit is working, for it will lower the effective space of the bottom side of the unit, weaken the air convection and interfere the heat release in normal. If the unit was put inside the Hi-fi component cabinet which would block the ventilation and air flow, please ensure there is space larger than 100 mm width on the top side and both sides of the unit.

EE3

Important Safety Issue

In order to reduce risk of fire and electric shock, never expose this unit to water (rain/rain shower) or a high-humidity environment.

Warning

In order to avoid the risk of electric shock, do not remove the unit cover. There are no parts for user maintenance inside the unit.

To keep this product operating at a high-performance level for a long time, follow the steps below:

- Before operation, read this manual in detail, paying attention to warnings and other notices.
- Do not expose the unit to full sunlight, nor to extreme high or extreme low temperature.
- Do not expose this unit to water or a high-humidity environment.
- Avoid putting the unit on an unstable platform or at a height with a risk of falling. Do not place the unit where it can be shaken by the speakers' sound wave. Do not place the unit on the speaker cabinet.
- There will be heat created while the unit is working. For normal operation, ensure there is good ventilation and heat release for the unit. The ventilation holes on the top and bottom of the unit are used to prevent an abnormal increase in temperature.

Never block these holes, especially never use fabric or paper to cover these holes, nor put the unit on a thick rug or carpet, bed or couch while the unit is working. If the unit is placed inside a cabinet with other Hi-fi components which blocks the ventilation and air flow, ensure that there is an air space larger than 100 mm on the top side and both sides of the unit and the component cabinet.

CE4

The unit's function configuration was based on the enhanced principle of "User Friendly". In addition to the basic design fundamental of "Absolute Sound Quality", its function, display, and signal terminal are set up in the position of end user wholly. So there is most basic operation function on the front panel, i.e. Power On/Off, Volume Control, Input Signal Selection and relative display, maximizing the comfort of operation by friendly man-machine interface.

EE4

The unit's configuration of features is based on the enhanced principle of "User Friendliness". In addition to the basic design fundamental of "Absolute Sound Quality", its features, display, and signal terminals are completely controlled by the end user. The most basic operation features are on the front panel of the unit, for example, Power On/Off, Volume Control, Input Signal Selection and relative display.

CE5

Mute Button

By pressing this button to reduce the master volume of the unit by preset attenuation rate and prohibit all other operation temporarily.

EE5

Mute Button

Press this button to reduce the master volume of the unit by the preset attenuation rate and prohibit all other operation.

CE6

If you used dipolar speakers, they should be set up at two sides of the listener at a higher position. Their sound was delivered to forward and afterward direction of the room. This kind of configuration made the listener not find out the sound source position but feel to be surrounded in a diffused soundstage. The height of these speakers should be more than 60 cm higher than the listener's ears and was better if a bit higher than a standing listener for your easy wandering in the room.

EE6

If you use dipolar speakers, they should be set up, at a higher position, on both sides of the listener. Their sound is delivered to both forward and backwards into the listening space. In this type of configuration, the listener is not aware of the sound source position, and instead feels surrounded by a diffused soundstage. The height of these speakers should be more than 60 cm higher than the listener's ears and is better if adjusted for a standing listener.

CE7

If traditional speakers were employed for playback surround sound, when setting up, please do your best to let their sound diffuse at the rear of the room for simulation of dipolar speakers' diffused soundstage. Usually it is easy to

obtain the best performance if putting these surround speakers at the position a bit after the listener but with similar height, so that a lot of reflection sound was produced by these speakers facing to rear wall crosswise, and reached listener position with part of direct sound at same time.

EE7

If traditional speakers are used for playback surround sound, when setting up, try to let their sound diffuse to the rear of the room for a simulation of the dipolar speakers' diffused soundstage. Usually it is easy to obtain the best performance by putting these speakers at the position behind the listener but at a similar height, so that a great amount of reflected sound is produced by these speakers facing the rear wall, as well as direct sound reaching the listener at the same time.

CE8

Every powering on, its volume would adjust to your preset level automatically. The extreme high volume had adverse effect upon your speaker system and the unit. A proper preset low volume level would protect your speakers from the impact of high volume level when powering on the unit.

EE8

Upon every powering on of the unit, its volume will adjust to your preset level automatically. Extreme high volume will have an adverse effect upon your speaker system and the unit. A proper preset low volume level will protect your speakers from the impact of a high volume level when powering on the unit.

CE9

The unit was equipped with microcomputer inside aiming at complicated function operation. But under some rare condition, signal source or static from outside may bring strong interference and cause operation wrong. If it happened like so, please turn off the unit and wait for over 5 minutes, then power on the unit again, it was expected to be recovered to working normally.

EE9

The functions of the unit are controlled via a microcomputer inside the unit. In rare instances, signal sources or static from outside the unit can interfere with the normal operation of the unit.

If this happens, turn the unit off and wait for five (5) minutes and then power on again the unit. Normal operation is expected.

CE10

We are striving for better product quality and performance continuously. The unit design or specification was subject to change without notice probably.

EE10

Unit design and specification are subject to change without notice.

William Pacino currently works as a solo technical writer in a start-up optical telecommunications company. His ideal writing situation would be an opportunity in the automated measurement and test industry where his previous work experiences with Tektronix and Analog Devices could add much value. He is a Senior member of the Northern New England STC chapter and lives in Chelmsford, MA. He can be reached at william.pacino@verizon.net.



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Grammar Central

Basics for Communicating Clearly

by Linda Shacklock

whom

Like the pronouns *me*, *him*, *her*, *us*, and *them*, the pronoun *whom* is used as an object, not a subject.

To **whom** [object of "To"] should I give the meeting agenda?

He brought the books for **whom** [object of "for"]?

Please tell me when you decide **whom** [object of "will hire"] you will hire.

Because the use of **whom** can be difficult and can sound stilted even when used correctly, try to avoid **whom** by replacing it with a noun phrase.

To **which person** should I give the meeting agenda?

He brought the books for **which student**?

Please tell me when you decide **which candidate** you will hire.

whomever

Like the pronoun *whom*, the pronoun *whomever* is used as an object, not a subject, but *whomever* leads to cumbersome constructions and is best avoided.

Give the meeting agenda to **whomever** you see first.

[Better: Give the meeting agenda to **the first person** (whom) you see.]

We'll hire **whomever** you find most qualified.

[Better: We'll hire **the applicant** (whom) you find most qualified.]

We'll heap praise on **whomever** the boss identifies.

[Better: We'll heap praise on **the person** (whom) the boss identifies.]

Collected "Grammar Central" topics: Click [here](#).

Questions or idea for a column? E-mail [Linda Shacklock](#).



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Help Wanted

Looking to enhance your skills or try something new? STC communities live or die by the efforts of the community volunteers who contribute time, expertise, and energy. Phoenix has been very fortunate to have a core group of dedicated people willing to work for the betterment of the chapter. As time moves on, volunteers move on to other positions or step back from their volunteer duties to attend to family, self, and work. Getting involved is an excellent opportunity to enhance your network, make new friends, and challenge yourself.

We're looking forward to the 2006-2007 program year and need new faces to become part of the community management team. As of this publication date, several members of the Phoenix community who have held key positions are moving on and giving up current jobs. Here's a list of open positions the Chapter Managers and Administrative Council (CMAC) needs to fill. Maybe one is interesting to you.

- Public Relations manager
- Web site staff
- Volunteer manager
- Achievements manager
- 2006 PAO (Publications, Art, and Online competition) liaison
- Program committee members
- Education committee members
- Hospitality helpers

April's *Rough Draft* will provide job details and other information which will give you some time to think about how you can contribute to the chapter.



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March 14, 2006 Meeting

Introduction to Flare. Or, The RoboHelp Saga, What Actually Happened?

Get the scoop on the new MadCap Software's Flare help authoring tool first-hand. In a three-part presentation, Mike Hamilton, VP Product Management, MadCap Software, will cover the journey from Blue Sky Software to Macromedia to MadCap, what happened to the creators, and a discussion of help authoring now and in the future.

Get the scoop on what happened with RoboHelp in its journey from Blue Sky Software to eHelp to Macromedia. After 14 years of success, what is the fate of RoboHelp? This presentation shares dates and occurrences to help put the rumors to rest.

Explore what happened to the core talent who created and nurtured RoboHelp. Where have they gone? What are they doing?

Discuss future directions in help authoring including technologies such as Microsoft's new Vista Help and the new tool from MadCap Software -- Flare, a new XML-based authoring tool which empowers technical writers, Help authors, and other documentation professionals to compose content in XML format without requiring any XML language or XML programming knowledge. MadCap Flare features a unique visual editor allowing users to compose content similar to how they would in Microsoft® Word™. We will discuss the capabilities of Flare and then do a live demonstration to include the import and conversion of existing RoboHelp content.

About our speaker

Mike Hamilton is the Vice-President of Product Management at MadCap Software where he is working on the next generation authoring tool, Flare. Before joining MadCap Software, Mike was the RoboHelp Product Manager for product line starting with Blue Sky Software, through eHelp, and Macromedia. Mike joined the RoboHelp team in 1999 as a founding member of the Training Solutions Program team, where he co-authored the certified training materials supporting the RoboHelp family. Mr. Hamilton has over ten years of experience in training, technical communication, multimedia development, and software development at several organizations including Macromedia, Blue Sky Software/eHelp, Cymer (a leading supplier of laser illumination sources to the semiconductor industry), National Steel Shipbuilding, and the US Navy.

Dinner and Reservation Information

Networking - 5:30 PM Dinner - 6:00 PM Program - 6:30 PM

Location: Radisson Hotel Phoenix Airport North, 427 N. 44th St., Phoenix.
Exit Loop 202 at 44th Street and head south. The hotel is on the east side of 44th Street.

Entrees: Herb-Crusted Roast Salmon or Stuffed Baked Chicken Breast. Vegetarian option is **Stuffed Jumbo Pasta Shells**. Meal includes garden salad, rolls, coffee, iced tea, & dessert.

Cost: Dinner and Program:

\$20 - Members; \$25 - Nonmembers; \$15 - Student members

Pay by check or cash at the door. Pay by credit card with the online registration form only. Includes dinner, tax, tip, and program.

Note: \$5 charge for late dinner reservations.

Program Only (includes dessert): \$10 for all members, student members and nonmembers

RSVP: Please RSVP with your dinner selection no later than **noon Thursday, March 9th**. Online registration at www.stc-phoenix.com/onlinereg.htm. Instead you may email stcphoenix@yahoo.com or call Norm at 480-963-8102 and pay at the door. **No-shows will be billed.**

Location map: [MapQuest](#)



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Handling Prima Donnas and Office Ogres

By Kathy Graden, Contributing Editor

At a photo shoot for Vanity Fair magazine, Desperate Housewives' Eva Longoria throws a hissy fit when Teri Hatcher snatches up the prettiest swimsuit before her co-stars have a chance to select theirs. The Philadelphia Eagles' Terrell Owens grabs headlines by demanding a new multimillion-dollar contract, arguing with the team's coach, Andy Reid, and lambasting quarterback Donovan McNabb. Stories like these may fascinate us and spark plenty of talk at the water cooler, but: we don't love bad behavior when people we work with are the tantrum throwers.

We've all encountered prima donnas or office ogres on the job. They're the star producers who possess degrees from the best schools, brilliance, and great looks – and aren't afraid to let management and the rest of the world know how wonderful they are. Companies love to hire superstars because they make productive, imaginative, and highly effective employees. The downside is, stars who are also prima donnas or office ogres can drive their coworkers crazy with temper tantrums, arrogance, condescension, rudeness, unsolicited criticism, and other displays of overweening narcissism. Instead of being inspired and motivated by the stars' brilliance, their colleagues either tune them out or head for the exits in self defense.

Prima donnas or office ogres can range from raging egomaniacs to subtle, passive-aggressive types to people who are, to put it nicely, "eccentric" or "quirky." They often consider themselves above the normal rules for office behavior, disrupting meetings, "forgetting" to report to superiors, bullying subordinates, and generally making life miserable for those around them.

How can you deal effectively with an office ogre or prima donna colleague? And if the ogre or prima donna is your client, does a workable strategy fall somewhere between smiling through gritted teeth and quitting your job? This article offers advice for defusing disruptive behavior (or at least, making it less stressful to be around).

Setting Boundaries for Misbehavers

Proactive managers often deal with prima donnas and office ogres by not hiring them. One way to identify prima donnas and ogres during interviews is to ask for examples of times when they succeeded as members of a team. If a candidate has trouble responding or shoots back with a strong individual achievement, that's a danger sign. If your organization has an open, team-spirited culture, you can also weed out prima donnas and office ogres who seem uncomfortable when you describe policies such as "no locked doors."

If you're a manager who already has badly-behaving people on board, try to understand what's driving their diva-dom before you choose a strategy for handling it. Remember these key points when dealing with office ogres and prima donnas:

They are used to receiving a lot of attention and being stars. They expect waves to part when they enter the room because they've had that experience many times since they were born.

According to corporate psychiatrist Pierre Mornell, "Underneath every big ego is a weak ego. (Prima donnas and ogres) are very, very fragile."

Working alongside brilliance challenges most people. Former Intel executive Dave House, who has worked with Bill Gates and Steve Jobs during his career, states that with such people, "You've got to get their respect and stand up to dealing with them."

Ask yourself if the prima donna or office ogre is worth the grief she or he is causing. The sheer bulk of administrative recordkeeping a badly behaving employee can generate may make your decision easy. Weigh the paper, and weigh the e-mails. Also ask yourself (and be honest!) if you are dismissing the person as an ogre or prima donna just because he or she is more vocal than most people about participating in decisions. Some managers mistake differences in style or opinion between them and their team members for attitude problems.

Decide whether the prima donna's or ogre's productivity outweighs behavioral issues. It may be OK to tolerate someone who is really, really different ... if he or she really, really delivers year in and year out. I once heard a manager say, "There is a fine line between a prima donna and an unemployed flake, and that line is productivity."

Determine how deep the person's bad attitude runs. If it's confined to the ogre's or prima donna's work role (and he or she behaves "normally" in more social settings), you stand a better chance of managing his or her obnoxious behavior. Also try to understand motives. If he or she bulldozes teammates, customers, and everyone else in a quest for attention and adulation, attempts to manage him or her probably won't work. But if he or she shows respect for people, procedures, and policies, find out what makes the prima donna or ogre happy (praise, time off, a raise) and provide more of it.

Even people with annoying personality traits can be difficult without being unethical or abusive. If your local prima donna or ogre considers herself or himself indispensable or above the law, you're better off without him or her.

Confront the bad actor (or actress) early, candidly, and in as non-threatening a way as possible. You may find that something unexpected is motivating his or her behavior. For example, when one of my direct reports repeatedly refused to go along with a new problem solution I had given her, I confronted her about it, thinking that she thought herself too smart to take orders. As things turned out, she was balking because she believed I had ignored her ideas for resolving the issue. Once the misunderstanding was out in the open and we discussed her ideas, she became more willing to try things my way.

It's wise to frame prima donna or office ogre behavior as a problem to be solved jointly instead of as a personal flaw the person must correct on his or her own. Tip: ask the employee to pretend to be you and ask him or her, "If you were in my place, how would you handle this?"

Treat prima donnas and ogres exactly like everybody else. No matter how valuable they are to the company, if you grant them dispensations from the rules, you create all kinds of morale problems and potential legal problems. However, you can make them think they're getting special treatment by assigning them to a lone project and telling them it's their opportunity to shine. They may well hit a home run for you.

Calming Troublesome Clients

If the ogre or prima donna making your life miserable happens to be a paying client, tread carefully. But don't think you have to smile and accept their tantrums. Here are some tactics for managing them:

- If a client insists that you do something illegal or unethical, such as cutting costs for art by scanning photos or illustrations from another source without obtaining the owner's permission, ask him or her how they'd feel if someone asked you to copy their work. Offer to obtain comparable art from a photo library such as www.clipart.com, and remind him or her that the small usage fee would certainly be cheaper than settling a lawsuit.
- If the client bombards you with huge e-mail attachments or becomes huffy when you don't respond instantly to an e-mail, tell him or her that in order to produce more work for them, you limit the number of times per day when you check e-mail. You can also ask politely if they'll send you files larger than 2 MB on recordable media, or if they'll include a note such as "large file included" in the Subject field of their messages.
- If the client maintains that a job you know will take days "is only a 5-minute job," argue back that to do the job well, you need the time to meet the client's requirements. If you explain all that the job entails, the client should realize that you've estimated the timeframe fairly.
- If a client claims to know someone who will do the job for a quarter of the cost, don't get into a bidding war to win the job. You probably were contacted because the client has seen your previous work and liked it; remind him or her that your price is based on the time and effort it will take to achieve the quality he or she admired. Tell the client you can lower your asking price only if you can cut back on some services.
- If the client wants a design or content change that will decrease the usability or attractiveness of the project, don't say, "You're

wrong"; the client will only become defensive and press harder. You're better off saying, "I understand what you're trying to achieve, but how about this solution?," and then offering them an alternative.

We spend about 25 percent of each year at work, so don't spend that time being frustrated and irritated by people with porcupine personalities. Try some of these techniques, and you'll have more time for the things at work you enjoy.



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Newest PhotoShop Elements Review

by Guy Ball

There's no question. Adobe PhotoShop is the industry standard for graphics professionals. But at \$600 a pop, it's a bit pricey for technical writers who only on occasion need to use the software to edit or fine-tune a photo, or who use only a limited subset of the features. I've always enjoyed PhotoShop's clear menu and tool bar functions, so when I've tried other photo programs, I've always found myself coming back (often to an earlier version that I purchased long ago). I don't pretend to know all the advanced PhotoShop features—don't need to.

So spending that kind of money for my limited usage was never cost-effective. Fortunately, Adobe has taken the most useful features for low-to medium-level users and packaged them together as PhotoShop Elements. In the past, this program was delivered free with other Adobe products, like Premiere, and offered only a few PhotoShop features. The latest version of this software offers virtually every feature technical writers would need and more. And priced at under \$100, you can't beat the value. PhotoShop Elements 3 and the most recently released version 4 offer all the standard editing tools you would expect in any photo program. You can crop and save to other formats. You have the ability to easily change the XML and Epic Editor: Promise and Reality, continued quality level if file size is an issue. You have a full range of options with tonal changes—simple adjustments like Lighting/Levels and the more complex requiring a practiced eye like Shadows/Highlights or Adjust Hue/ Saturation. Need to get rid of a person? That's easy. Just use your Clone/Rubber Stamp tool to cover them with copies of the wall next to them. Presto. What person? (I also like to use this tool to slim people down or remove unwanted blemishes.)

With the Resize function, you can easily change an image to a specific pixel size to post on the Web. Want to burn in a specific light area of a photo or dodge a dark area? The tools are right up front on the toolbar. Have a slightly out-of-focus shot that you need to use? Try the sharpening tools. Want to set up several layers of text, multiple photos, and different backgrounds? Elements offers this as well. Got red-eye in that photo of your boss that you must include for a newsletter? Click a button and she no longer looks like an alien.

With recent versions of Elements, Adobe folded in the Photo Album software they had been selling separately. This is a great product that allows you to easily organize your photos. You can automatically catalog every image on your hard drive, which helps you find missing photos that you know reside on your hard drive somewhere. By adding tags (keywords) to your photos, you can search and find certain images at the click of a button—regardless of where they are on your computer. I'm currently using it to track the hundreds of photos of a complex machine I've taken at different times so I can pull out a smaller, more focused selection when I need them. Another feature I like a lot is the automatic downloading of my digital photos into the Elements photo organizer. I just hook up the camera through the USB cable and my computer downloads all of the images into a new directory named with today's date. All the images are automatically included in their organizer, ready for me to tag. Then I'm asked if I want to delete them from my memory

card. Saves me time and effort—and I love it. (I know my camera can do this, but I love having it built into my photo editor.) Other features of the program you may find useful include burning a dynamic slide show to CD or DVD and automatically creating a photo album that you can print. You can apply text effects and add frames around your pictures, too. You can also build panoramic photos with the Photomerge function. I was very happy with PhotoShop Elements 3 and I am basing my review on that version. Adobe has just released a new version—4. My employer purchased it and I'm trying to determine if it's worth upgrading at home. It has a few new features but nothing I can't live without. Meanwhile, several reviews on amazon.com are critical of version 4 and recommend staying with 3. While I don't think the new version would be a negative to buy, it may just be that if you have 3, you might want to stay with it for now. I'll know more in a few weeks....

So if you're looking for power and great photo-editing features in a very inexpensive package—and something that stays in the Adobe and PhotoShop families, give PhotoShop Elements a try. You won't be sorry.

This article was originally published in the December 2005 issue of STC Orange County's newsletter: TechniScribe, and is reprinted with permission.

Guy Ball has written on a variety of technology and multimedia topics for the TechniScribe and Intercom. He works for EADS-North America Defense as a senior technical writer. His latest book, Images of America: Santa Ana, will be published in summer 2006. He can be reached at guyball@pacbell.net.



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Help Wanted, Apply Within

Editorial Team Looking for a Few Good Members

This issue of Rough Draft brings about some changes: a new look and editorial team. The newsletter is now in the hands of Karen Zorn, Managing Editor; Clare Turner, Editor in Chief; and Jane Rossignol, Chanda Child, and Deb Paulsen, Reviewers. Linda Shacklock, Gloria McConnell, and Kathy Graden will continue to write monthly columns. A good start, but there are still a few *Rough Draft* jobs that need filling:

Reviewer Responsibilities: review up coming issue for spelling errors, broken links, readability problems, etc. Commitment: 2-5 hours per month.

Contributing Editor Responsibilities: write a monthly topical column or provide information gleaned from related newsletters, list servs, or usegroups. Articles can be assembled from postings. Commitment: Depends on subscriptions, 3-10 hours per month.

Reporter Responsibilities: contribute articles regarding STC, SIG, or other activities relating to technical communications. Commitment: varies.

Salary for above positions: unending thanks and gratitude.

More help wanted listings at [Help Wanted](#).

Also in this Issue

[Turning Chinese English into English English](#) William Pacino of the Northern New England Chapter writes about a challenging and educating writing assignment.

[Tech Comm 2005](#) You really had to be there! The partnership between the Phoenix chapter and the IDL SIG presented a wonderful conference full of interesting presentations, networking, and entertainment.

[Tax Tip](#) Geoff Hart of the Montreal Chapter details a personal savings plan that really works for independent consultants and freelancers.

[STC Election News](#) Upcoming Society and Community election information.

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Upcoming Seminars, Workshops, Webinars

IDL SIG: announces its first one-hour webinar available to members and non-members.

March 15, 2006, 1:00 p.m. ET Michael Tillmans will present on the topic of “**Successful ID: Where Theory and Practice Meet**”

Cognitive psychology has a lot to tell us about how people learn. It's up to us to use those findings to create interesting and challenging learning materials for our clients. This webinar will identify the key research findings that apply to most common types of learning situations - information, concepts, principles/problem solving, procedures and attitudes - and match them with teaching templates that can be used for instructors, print, or online learning.

To register, go to: <http://www.stcsig.org/idl/webinar/>. You may register you and your co-workers at a single site with one computer and one phone line. Each additional phone line requires an additional registration.

Registration fees:

\$50 for IDL SIG Members

\$65 for non-members

CIC SIG: announces a webinar offered by a knowledgeable leader in the content management industry. As we try to learn more and more about content management and why it's not going to go away, events like these help us realize the business benefits and the real world return on investment calculations being used by many organizations to determine how best to create, manage, and deliver the content the need to do business. If you're interested in learning about content management, this one hour webinar is a good starting point.

Webinar: **Global Information Management Success at Siemens Medical Solutions**

Join **Frank Gilbane**, publisher of The Gilbane Report, for an online web conference where you'll hear:

- The latest trends in information management strategy
- Why DITA and XML Content Management are being adopted as industry standards
- How to leverage global information management to optimize product information publishing processes
- How an effective information architecture can help you reach global markets

Attendees will also hear from Tanner AG and learn how Siemens Medical went from strategy to solution implementation, in the 2,200 product operation and maintenance documents in over 22 languages. Siemens successful results include:

- Improved customer service & satisfaction - with consistent, accurate, useable content across product lines
- Accelerated time-to-market and reduced costs with streamlined multi-language translation efforts
- Author time, expense and effort savings with content re-use for customer/product and service documentation
- Reduction in print publishing of 80%, with a move to digital output/
- Adoption of a consistent information standard across the business

Register: <http://web.meetme.net/r.aspx?p=1&a=70541370449681>

Neil Perin will expand on his Tech Comm 5 Captivate presentation June 15 and 16, 2006, location TBD. Neil's workshop was well attended and mentioned frequently in conference evaluations. In this two-day workshop, Neil will greatly expand on using Captivate. To see a detailed course syllabus, go to: <http://www.hyperword.com/Captivate.htm>.

STC Phoenix: Neil Perin will expand on his Tech Comm 5 Captivate presentation **June 15 and 16, 2006**, location TBD. Neil's workshop was well attended and mentioned frequently in conference evaluations. In this two-day workshop, Neil will greatly expand on using Captivate. To see a detailed course syllabus, go to: <http://www.hyperword.com/Captivate.htm>.

Neil Perin: Creating Simulations and CBT Using Captivate

For years, software training was primarily text-based... paste a screen shot into a Word document, add some text with descriptions and instructions, and voila!

The results worked, but think how much more effective it could be to have someone actually "walk you through the steps" on the screen. That's where Captivate comes in, letting you create that "someone".

Captivate lets you create simulations and CBT (Computer-Based Training) inexpensively and quickly. It lets you capture what's on the screen as you perform some software-based task, save those screen shots as a "filmstrip", add explanatory and instructional captions, special effects, and interactivity features to make users think they're using the software, and play the result back as a "movie". It's a deceptively simple but powerful tool that lets you create movies for use as demos, marketing presentations, tutorials, even fairly sophisticated eLearning. And, compared to most other CBT authoring tools, it's quick and easy to learn and only costs about \$500.

This two-day, hands-on seminar is aimed at trainers, training developers, marketing staff, disaster recovery personnel, and usability testers who need to quickly get up to speed on the mechanics, design, and planning required to create training movies using Captivate. The only prerequisites are a basic knowledge of Windows, Internet Explorer, and PC skills in general.

STC's remote seminars are scheduled for March 8 - Instructions for Writing Instructions: Guidelines for Organization and Content, April 12 - Software Simulations: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices, May 24 - Life After roboHelp-How We Got Here and Where To Next, and June 14, 2006 - Introduction to DITA.

With all seminars, the cost is per site, not per person. One site can have only **one phone connection** and **one computer connection**. You will be issued an enrollment ID, passcode and phone number when you register and pay for the seminar. If you forward your ID, passcode and/or phone number to others or use it on more than one computer or phone connection, you will be billed \$150 for each additional connection used.

Please note that registration closes 24 hours prior to the event.

For more information, please visit STC's [Seminar Information](#) page.

Discount for STC Members: DITA 2006

Bright Path Solutions is pleased to offer STC members a discount rate to attend their upcoming conference -- DITA 2006. The event, scheduled for March 23-25, 2006 in Raleigh, NC, is the first annual gathering of DITA users, bringing together experts from around the globe for a three-day conference designed to help attendees leverage the power of the Darwin Information Typing Architecture OASIS Standard.

STC members who register online for DITA 2006 will enjoy \$245 off the full retail event price. That means you'll gain access to the event for just \$700!

When registering online, enter discount code: STC <http://conf.travelthepath.com/>

About DITA 2006

The roster of presenters for this first-time event reads like a who's who of technical communication. The headliners include IBM DITA experts Dave Schell, Don Day, Michael Priestley, and Susan Carpenter. The all-star line-up also includes DocBook Technical Committee Chair and XML evangelist, Norman Walsh, XML technical publications guru Bernard Aschwanden, early DITA adopter and documentation architect France Baril, and content management consultant and DITA educator, Steve Manning.

DITA 2006 presenters will demystify DITA, explore its usefulness, expose its limitations, describe its components, reveal its flexibility, and showcase its success. Hands-on workshops and real-world case studies will demonstrate the strength and usefulness of DITA, reveal valuable tips and tricks, and help attendees avoid costly mistakes made by others.

Event Contact

Kay Ethier, Bright Path Solutions

www.travelthepath.com

kethier@travelthepath.com

919-244-8559



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SIG Signals

When you join or renew your STC membership, you have several options. Classic and E-memberships offer combinations of chapter and SIG (Special Interest Group) affiliations. Many Phoenix community members also belong to SIGS, as demonstrated by Tech Comm 2005. There are also SIGs within local communities, for example our FUN SIG. As with local communities, SIGS are only as active as their membership. Most offer newsletters and e-mail discussion groups.

This monthly column will present SIG happenings and offerings. Contributions from SIG members are strongly encouraged and very welcome.

The STC SIGS you can join are:

Academic	AccessAbility	Canadian Issues
Consulting and Independent Contracting (CIC)	Emerging Technologies	Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication
Illustrators and Visual Designers	Information Design and Architecture	Instructional Design and Learning (IDL)
International Technical Communication	Lone Writer	Management
Marketing Communication	Online	Policies and Procedures
Quality and Process Improvement	Scientific Communication	Single Sourcing
Technical Editing	Usability & User Experience	

IDL (Instructional Design and Learning) SIG

Announces its first one-hour webinar available to members and non-members.

March 15, 2006, 1:00 p.m. ET. Michael Tillmans will present on the topic of "Successful ID: Where Theory and Practice Meet"

Cognitive psychology has a lot to tell us about how people learn. It's up to us to use those findings to create interesting and challenging learning materials for our clients. This webinar will identify the key research findings that apply to most common types of learning situations - information, concepts, principles/problem solving, procedures and attitudes - and match them with teaching templates that can be used for instructors, print, or online learning.

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Usability SIG

International Technical Communication : How to Export Information about High Technology by Nancy L. Hoft (Wiley, 1995), is a guide for creating effective international technical communication.

A SIG member said that this book is a compendium of tips like this:

...If the introduction to a bullet list is not a complete thought and each item in the list completes the thought, translators must rewrite the entire list so that it makes sense in the target language.

According to the publisher (from Amazon), it provides "Strategies, techniques and practical tips demonstrate how to communicate internationally quickly, cheaply and well. Includes anecdotes, examples, graphics, worksheets, a reference of universal international information and a list of dozens of international resources that can provide data on target countries and users."

CIC (Consulting and Independent Contracting) SIG

Three members of the CIC SIG have received the Distinguished SIG Service Award (DSSA) for their long-term service to the SIG. Below are their names and citations.

- Dr. Thomas (Tommy) Barker

For sustained leadership and support of the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG and for mentoring future SIG leaders.

- Jodie Gilmore

For her ongoing efforts to update and improve the Consulting and Independent Contracting SIG Web site and for her responsiveness to all Web site matters.

- Rich Maggiani

For his outstanding service as Membership Manager of the Consultant's and Independent Contractors SIG, and for his promotion of and participation in CIC SIG events at annual STC International Conferences.



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STC Election News

Chapter Nomination Deadline: March 10, 2005

Society elections are just around the corner. Our own **Tom Barnett** is campaigning for Society Secretary. Read all about Tom at: <http://stc-annex.com/tombarnett.htm>. There are virtual stump speeches from two candidates for Society 2nd Vice President, [Jon Baker](#) and [Mark Clifford](#). More information regarding Society elections can be found at: <http://stc-phoenix.com/Events/elections/elections06.htm#Society%20Elections>

On the local front, the chapter Nominations committee is preparing the slate and looking for members who are interested and willing to move our community forward and help it grow and prosper.

The following Phoenix Chapter positions are available for STC members who wish to become leaders of the chapter. All require meeting attendance. For any questions, contact the Nominations Committee ([Tim Eull](#), [Tom Barnett](#), or [Lisa Ford](#)).

President

Responsible for all operations of the chapter (an ex officio member of all committees); exercise general supervision over the affairs of the chapter, appoint managers of committees, and report to the director-sponsor. You write newsletter articles, respond to nonmember inquiries, keep in touch with other officers and committee members, prepare the chapter's activity report for the Society Board, and so on. This position gives you the opportunity for your ideas and philosophies to have an impact on the chapter.

Vice President

Responsible for external chapter programs and communication; advise the president on policies and programs, and assume the president's duties when necessary. You organize and manage special projects assigned by the president, and motivate others. Although not required, it is desirable for the vice president to run for president the following year.

Secretary

Record minutes of board meetings; distribute minutes to board members, committee managers, and other interested parties; write newsletter articles summarizing meeting programs afterwards; and maintain the chapter stationery supplies.

Treasurer

Responsible for the chapter finances; prepare the chapter budget, maintain the checking account, deposit chapter funds, pay invoices, monitor and keep records of chapter expenses, collect dinner payments at the monthly meetings, provide financial reports to the board, maintain paper and electronic files of all financial information, and prepare for a year-end audit.

Program Manager

Responsible for internal communication through the chapter meetings; coordinate with the Education Committee Manager; coordinate and communicate activities associated with monthly meetings including with the Arrangements Manager (meeting requirements, menu, notification via postcard distribution, and meeting feedback collection and reporting), Newsletter Editor, and the Web team; and contribute

newsletter articles about meetings.

Membership Manager

Organizes and directs an active membership recruiting campaign to increase the membership of the chapter. The Membership Manager maintains a list of prospective members, manages the membership address files from Society, welcomes new members, creates and distributes packets of information and an application to prospective members, and publish monthly membership information through the chapter newsletter.



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Jon Baker

Candidate 2nd Vice President

Introduction

My name is Jonathan W. Baker and I have been an STC member since 1995. I came to STC during a time of personal and professional change. STC has helped shape me and I believe I have helped shape STC. I would like the opportunity to continue to do so as 2nd Vice President. The following outlines some of my values and a brief bit of biographical information.

Values

When I came onto the Board of Directors in 2002, I came with a set of values with regard to who we are as technical communicators and as an organization. I also had a clear sense of who we are and what we can be as an organization.

One of the interesting parts of the experience on the Board was the focus not on finance, but on values - member values. Some members feel that STC is not providing value for their dues and because of this STC has been shedding members at a prodigious rate - from 21,789 in June of 2001 to 15,773 in June 2005.

When I talk about values, mine, yours, and ours, I am talking about the things that we need to operate at a high level. Sometimes this means simple things like openness and honesty and other times it means if you or I pay our dues we expect certain things from the organization.

Honesty, integrity, straight-shooting, go without saying in my book. I expect a high degree of professionalism. And I believe that every member in STC expects the same from each other and from STC. That is why my first email to the membership addressed the issue of openness. STC has to be transparent and that means that the leadership has to be transparent. No secrets. (Actually, that isn't completely true. Personnel issues are an area that STC has to remain squeaky clean in terms of respecting privacy.) But in terms of policy and how policy is made and in terms of how the office operates and why, the membership has a right and perhaps even a responsibility to know what is happening.

Other values - the process of working through the development of the transformation plan led the Board to understand that STC was not meeting the promise of member value. This means that STC was not providing the right mix of products for the membership. One clear message that the Board got was that members want more choices and more educational opportunities.

More choice has led to a revised membership structure that first addressed more types of membership with a variety of price points. The second phase of membership changes provided for international dues based largely upon the World Bank Model, which numerous other associations also use.

More choice is leading to more educational opportunities. The phone seminars program has expanded and the price has been reduced.

Last fall, a 2-day training program was held in the Washington, D.C. area. And more is going on in this educational arena for STC.

These are all efforts that I supported and some that I actually worked on while on the Board. I believe that these changes are just the initial step to an STC that offers more value for more members.

Membership numbers have bounced up from a low of 15,773 this past June to a more reasonable 18,000 as of January 2006 and I would hope that as STC tunes its value proposition and the economy continues to improve that the membership numbers will continue to go up.

In response to the two emails that I sent to the membership, I received lots of interesting comments asking about my values. As I indicated in my last email, I am a proponent of what we the Board set forth in the transformation. I should also tell you that when I came onto the Board in 2002, it was clear to me that we had a lot of work to do. Based on my own experience, I might have handled things in a different manner, but in hindsight I believe that this transformation has engaged and galvanized many members and will make for a more open, successful organization.

I understand that this year STC has begun a certificate program in the training program and will continue to develop this area. Professionalizing how we work and how we appear to others as professionals is critically important for us. As such, the issues of certification and standards need to be revisited.

I support the concept that STC is an international organization and that much of our future is in the international space. This doesn't mean that I favor abandoning our North American members; rather it means that STC needs to understand what our North American members' value and to deliver on that promise. For a number of years I've been hearing that STC is not providing value to our experienced and expert members. The last two conferences have done a better job at meeting those needs and I believe that as we delve into the educational space we can do a better job of meeting advanced practitioners needs.

As I've said in the past, please join me on this journey. STC is a very special group of people, who are capable of adapting to all kinds of change. Isn't it time we had some fun with all these opportunities ahead of us?

As always, you can contact me at: jbaker2525@earthlink.net or 978-443-3049.

Biographical Information

My professional experience includes being both a manager and an individual contributor and both an employee and a contractor. I started out in the textbook business (John Wiley, Harper and Row, and Little, Brown and Co), migrated to Digital Press at Digital Equipment Corporation, and then moved into Digital's Corporate User Publications group to become a technical writer. After leaving Digital, I spent most of the next 10 years contracting as a technical communicator. At present, I am an almost 5 year employee of EMC, Inc. handling programs related to writing and editing standards.

My STC work includes the following:

- 2006 - Candidate for 2nd Vice President.
- 2005 - Member of the STC Governance and the STC Global Membership support committees.
- 2002-2005 - Director/Sponsor, Region 1, Bylaws Committee Manager, member of the Transformation Membership and Finance Committees.
- 2001-2002 - Publications Portal Project Manager.
- 2001-2002 - New Media Publications Committee Manager
- 1996-2001 - Held many Boston Chapter positions, including chapter president.
- Awards - Boston Chapter's Carol A. Landers 'Spirit of Volunteering' Award and Distinguished Chapter Service Award



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Mark Clifford

Candidate for Second Vice President 2006-7

Future perfect ...

There's an old Chinese curse that you may have heard: May you live in interesting times. Well, for STC, the last year has been one of its most interesting times! Over the last year, we have achieved much towards the strategic advancement of technical communication. The focus now is to push the society to become the leading professional body globally.

But how will this be achieved? In a society as diverse professionally and culturally as ours, it can be difficult meeting the needs of members all the time. We can start with a few fundamental areas that can achieve real value and show real gains for all members.

STC has always played a role in educational program development. But with our diverse membership, just what education and skills are needed? Our own perception is coloured by our own needs and desires. To focus our educational developments we must understand the market need. This means involving businesses on two fronts.

Firstly, I want to raise awareness within the business community of the value of both good technical communication and its practitioners. Secondly, we need them to provide us with input on what they perceive as the skills and attributes they'll be hiring in the future. Armed with this information, we can really give added value to members, and their employers, by designing programs to suit all professional levels, meet industry's needs, and move a long way towards providing a skilled, employable, workforce.

The debate continues on whether it's better to be a certified communicator or not. Certification itself is not a guarantee of quality work, though it can help. It seems to be time to reopen the discussion on professional certification. Regardless, STC needs to maintain links with academe and continue to work to develop programs that address the needs of TC professionals from trainee to senior member and beyond.

Over the last few months, two issues have become more prominent than others- communication and availability and transparency of information. STC leadership has made great strides this year, and the leadership is continuing to improve both.

I want as much openness and transparency as possible. One of my objectives will be to reduce information restrictions to near zero. If there is no legal reason not to publish information then I will do so. However, when it comes to rolling out new initiatives, there's no point in promoting half-baked plans and ideas.

To ensure we can maintain our strategic direction and move forward with initiatives and programs that are sanctioned positively by our members, I believe we need to:

1. Deliver clear and consistent messages on initiatives and programs.
2. Solicit member feedback on proposed initiatives and programs.
3. Integrate member feedback into initiative and program development.

4. Develop and deliver comprehensive rollout plans for all initiatives and programs to members prior to implementation.

To meet these goals, I will introduce a system where new initiatives will be tested through focus groups. The focus group comments and feedback will then be used to help shape the further development of the initiative, ensuring member input and involvement throughout development and implementation.

Change, like death and taxes, is one of life's certainties. The major benefit of starting as 2VP is continuity. Things begun can be seen through to fruition. This opportunity to accomplish truly beneficial change is one of the main attractions for me.

I want to lead STC in the right strategic direction while ensuring that members are aware of strategies and feel that their participation and feedback on the tactical implementations is valued.

I have a strong passion for our profession and a deep desire to see STC meet its global objectives as the profession's leading body. Let's make that vision a reality together.

If you have any questions for any of this year's candidates please go to <http://www.stc.org/candidatesFAQ/index.asp>.

You can contact Mark Clifford directly:

Office: +44 1234 355522

Mobile: +44 7866 694083

E-mail: mark@cliffordsells.com



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Tax Tip: A Personal Savings Plan that Works

by Geoff Hart, Associate Fellow, Montreal Chapter

As a parent of two teenage kids, the concept of going freelance originally scared me silly. In particular, I'd never really run a business before and accounting was just one of those things my brain never seemed capable of handling. (It turned out to be easier than I'd feared, fortunately.) One of my biggest worries was how to ensure that come year-end, I'd have enough money left over to cover my tax liabilities.

A little thought provided a solution that works particularly well for me and that keeps me from spending money I don't have. Better still, it creates an enforced savings plan I can live with and that requires minimum overhead on my part. In this article, I'll describe how it works.

But first, a word of caution: It's important to remember that as freelancers, we must always keep a well-stocked reserve of money, often referred to as an "operating reserve" or "emergency fund", that will cover our expenses for at least 3 months and preferably for longer. This sum is what we'll survive on during dry spells when there's no work, or during life crises such as a sudden injury or illness that prevent us from working. The only goal of the reserve is to keep us financially alive until our business revives or our disability insurance kicks in. If you haven't built up such a reserve, creating one should be a priority. I built mine slowly by forcing myself to put aside money while I was a wage slave so that it would be ready when I made the leap.

My solution was to create a very simple spreadsheet that I use to track my income and expenses. The "income" page contains the following columns:

- Column 1: Details on the work—often just an invoice number that contains the client's name.
- Column 2: The fee charged for the service, excluding relevant taxes.
- Columns 3 and 4: Federal and provincial sales taxes. (In the U.S., replace "provincial" with "state".)
- Column 5: The total of the previous three columns.

At the bottom of the spreadsheet, I total each of the numerical columns, thereby providing a constantly updated running total. Below these totals, I have three additional rows, each of which represents one of the three overall Canadian tax brackets. For each row, I calculate my income tax based on the tax rate for the corresponding tax bracket, but here's the trick: I don't include any personal deductions or exemptions in that calculation. The result is that the column totals for sales tax tell me my total sales tax burden, and the row totals for each tax bracket tell me my maximum income tax liability. (With a little more sophistication, I could create a single formula that calculates the tax liability, but I was still learning the basics of Excel when I developed this approach.)

Each time I add a new paid invoice to the spreadsheet, my maximum tax liability (income plus sales) is updated at the bottom of the sheet. When I deposit each new cheque at my bank, I pause for a moment to ensure that the current balance in my financial reserve—a special short-term savings account that I'll describe in more detail in a moment—is larger than my total tax liability based on the spreadsheet. If not, I transfer enough of the new cheque to top up the account and cover my liability. Anything that remains becomes disposable income. By the end of the year, I not only have enough money to pay my taxes, but I also have an additional sum (usually a large one) that arises from how I chose to calculate my taxes: with no deductions or personal exemptions included, the calculated tax

bill will always be higher than my real tax bill. Barring any emergency expenditures that force me to dip into my reserve, I'll always have money left over at year-end. Some years, I even get a tax rebate on top of the enforced savings. In any event, any extra money that isn't required in my short-term reserve goes straight into retirement or other long-term savings.

The "short-term savings" account that I referred to earlier is more than just a regular bank account, because such accounts pay essentially zero interest. In my case, it means a money-market mutual fund that earns a steady, unspectacular rate of return with maximum security because the money is all invested in government bonds and similarly safe investments. The low interest rate is an acceptable trade-off for obtaining high security and near-immediate liquidity: I can extract the money with 1 day's notice, and there's no "load" (purchase or redemption charge) to either buy more units of the fund or redeem existing units when tax time rolls around. If you have more money available and are willing to lock in your savings for longer periods, "guaranteed investment certificates" (Canada) or a "certificate of deposit" (U.S.) may make more sense because these investments often offer higher rates of return. If you're a gambler, you can invest in riskier but higher-return investments such as stock funds, but I don't recommend this approach; the sole purpose of this savings account is security and liquidity, not a high rate of return.

Your financial circumstances may dictate a slightly different strategy. For example, if you're living hand to mouth, you may have little money left over to top up your reserve. Conversely, if you're earning far more money than you need to cover your expenses, you can make additional deposits or top up your long-term savings. The key is to have the discipline to sacrifice a little bit of comfort while you're building up your reserve so that you can relax a bit and spend more freely in the future. It's worked like a charm for me, and with a little modification, it'll work for you too.

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Report from the Trenches

by Clare Turner, Editor In Chief

The 2005 Region 5 conference co-sponsored by the Phoenix STC Chapter and the Instructional Design and Learning (IDL) SIG co-sponsored the conference was held November 11th and 12th. Over 100 people attended the conference from as far away as Washington state, the East coast, and Belgium.

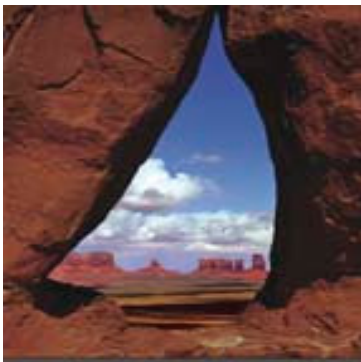
Held in sunny Mesa, the third-largest city in Arizona and a major suburb of Phoenix, the Region 5 conference offered warmth, hospitality, a plethora of speakers and sessions, and a taste of the Southwest. Starting with the conference theme - Lessons from the Desert: resilience, survival, success - to the western flavor radiating from the co-managers, this conference had something for everyone.

The theme of the conference was evident from the first day. Jane Smith of the IDL SIG and Karen Zorn from the Phoenix STC Chapter set the tone as co-managers. Dressed in southwestern garb, complete with the requisite cowboy hats, Jane and Karen rounded up the attendees and gently herded them to sessions to learn about resilience, survival and success as technical communicators.

Lucky early arrivals were welcomed Thursday evening to a casual social on the spacious southwestern-style patio at the Dobson Ranch Inn in Mesa. The evening was cool and clear, Chamber-of-Commerce weather, for the first gathering of the conference.

Following check-in Friday morning, attendees packed off with their conference goodies, and headed to the Welcome and Keynote Address. The Keynote Speaker, Conrad J. Storad, spoke on the topic of "More than Just the Facts: Making Nonfiction Fun." Conrad is an award-winning author of children's books on science and nature. His children's stories present complex ideas to young readers.

Conrad quickly transported us all back to first grade as he talked about his children's books and how maintaining a sense of wonder can help us as we craft our technical communications. One of Conrad's books is about a havelina. Now, there is absolutely nothing cute or adorable about havelinas, but Conrad used hand puppets and a big, stuffed havelina to get all of us involved as he read his story. By the end, we were all happily reduced to six-year-olds wanting story time to go on forever. Conrad reminded us all that non-fiction writing does not have to be dry, formal and boring. Though technically sound and packed with information, Conrad's stories are wonderfully entertaining (and beautifully illustrated). He reminded us all that no matter what type of writing we do, we're lucky to be writers.



TECH COMM 2005

Lessons from the Desert
silence ■ survival ■ success

MESA, ARIZONA • NOVEMBER 11 - 12

For the rest of Friday and continuing through Saturday morning, attendees had their selection of 21 sessions and workshops. As a session monitor, I was able to see how well received the sessions were. The sessions I assisted with were packed, many with standing room only. I had to scurry out after my first session to find more session evaluation forms to ensure everyone got their chance to rate the presentations (and get a ticket for the drawings at lunch on Saturday). Overwhelmingly, the comments were positive. In fact, if there was one complaint it was that there was too much information! All the presenters were well-armed with encyclopedic volumes of information, and usually had to cut off questions in order to move to the next session.

Of all the sessions I monitored, the most heavily attended was given by Mark Hanigan. Besides being a dynamic speaker, Mark spoke on a subject that touched us all - just who are we? His topic, "Riding the Harmonic Convergence of Instructional Design, Training, and Technical Communication", though sounding like something that belonged in the philosophy department, hit a cord with a large number of conferees. Mark, interactive as always with the audience, stopped frequently to answer questions and take his presentation in related directions. It was like a graduate college course, with the professor and students all discussing the topic, learning from each other and teaching each other. It was the fastest hour and 15 minutes I've ever spent!

After a breathless session with Mark Hanigan, lunch was a welcome respite from the high-energy of the conference sessions. Lunch on Friday was a topic-specific networking opportunity. Conferees were able to select tables hosted by an expert on a specific topic. Over a lunch of chicken, pasta and totally decadent chocolate cake, each of us had the opportunity to discuss our chosen topic with other technical communicators. There was just enough time to re-charge before heading back into the sea of sessions scheduled for the afternoon.

The afternoon sessions covered topics from dealing with SMEs (subject matter experts) to a fascinating discussion on the future of "the book." I was fortunate to sit in on the session conducted by Lance Gelein "Thinking Outside the Book: Making Learning Fun and Engaging". Lance postulated that the concept of a book (paper with printing hard or soft covers) was out-dated and would shortly be superseded by electronic forms of information. His examples included not only learning, but books used as reference materials for software. It was an interesting presentation and gave us all a lot to think about.

Following all the Friday sessions, the evening started with an informal pre-dinner gathering on the spacious patio, complete with musical entertainment that only technical writers and communicators could appreciate. Almost NoRmL, a collaboration of two technical writers, Rose Wilcox and Larry Sampson, entertained all with their witty tunes based on the trials and tribulations of being a technical writer. Dinner at several local restaurants had been arranged, with volunteer drivers serving as chauffeurs, so following the music and conversation, we were off to dinner.

Saturday was another Chamber-of-Commerce day in the Phoenix metro area. The conference day started with more networking on the resort's patio. Saturday was a half day, so there were only two sets of sessions in the morning. I attended the presentation given by Sarah Ryan-Roberts (WebEx) on "Developing Courses for Synchronous Online Instruction." She talked about WebEx and how it can be used as a tool to deliver online instruction. As with all the presentations I attended, this one was frequently interrupted with questions from the audience as Sarah kept us all interested in the capabilities of WebEx.

Finally, I attended a workshop session, "Lessons from the Usability Lab: Products and Documents that Succeed," presented by Whitney Bates and Amanda Crocker. Whitney and Amanda successfully teamed up to let us all experience first-hand how usability can - and should - be applied to everyday objects. We got to explain how to use can openers, a combination flipper/mixer and other everyday kitchen items.

The conference formally ended with the Saturday luncheon of breads, spreads, meats and some of the best apple pie I've ever tasted. The keynote speaker was Dr. Jean-luc Doumont, an STC *Intercom* contributor and educator from Belgium. His presentation on "Magical Numbers: The Seven-Plus-or-Minus-Two Myth" quickly disposed of our accepted notions of how to present information and gave us a new paradigm to consider. Dr. Doumont discussed a common myth that has prevailed in information presentation for over 50 years, that there is an "ideal" number of items that humans can quickly comprehend. Often funny and at times poignant, Dr. Doumont helped us see that while there is no absolute "magic" number, there is research to validate there is a maximum number of items we humans can easily comprehend. We all came away better equipped

to answer the question, “How many is too many?” and what to do when you realize you really do have too much information.

The luncheon continued with presentations of awards to sponsoring companies and acknowledgements of the many, many volunteers who had spent the months leading up to the conference working to ensure it was a success.

Following the formal conference were three post-conference workshops. The STC leadership offered a free workshop (to paid conference attendees) discussing the aspects of leadership, both in general and within the STC. STC leaders from all levels offered leadership insights based on general and specific experience. Specific presentations were given by: Suzanna Laurent, STC President; Linda Oestreich, STC Second Vice President; Sherry Michaels, Region 5 Director; and Jackie Damrau, Lone Star Community immediate past president and IDL SIG leadership team member.

Two additional technical post-conference workshops were offered: Creating Effective Visual Structures by Jean-luc Doumont, and Delivering Online Learning with Flash 8 by Thomas Toth. Both sessions were well attended and well-received.

This was my first STC conference, having joined STC in the month prior to the conference. As a true newbie, I decided to jump in and volunteer as a way of being more fully immersed in the conference experience. I'm glad I did. I found that being a volunteer let me feel more a part of the entire event, and I got to see first hand both the enormous amount of work that goes into a successful conference as well as the feedback (mostly good) we received from the attendees. I hope all of you will consider volunteering for anything that our chapter may need. It will help you become an active part of the chapter and broaden your experience as a person and as a technical communicator.



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Tooling Around by Gloria McConnell

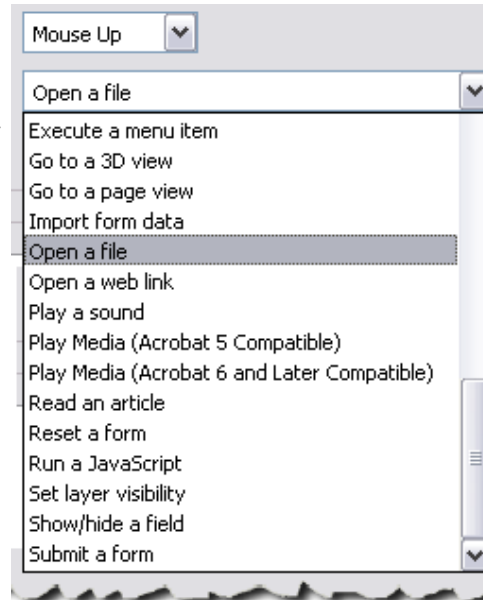
Adding Interactivity to PDF Files



For better PDF files for the Web, as forms, or just online reading, Adobe Acrobat® 7 has added several mouse actions for buttons. Acrobat can create a simple button for you (a rectangle or square), or you can use button artwork, such as those above. Either way, you can add actions for your buttons based on various mouse-action “triggers,” including:


- **Mouse Up:** Click and release the mouse button (the default action)
- **Mouse Down:** Click and hold the mouse button down
- **Mouse Enter:** Move the pointer over a button
- **Mouse Exit:** Remove the pointer from a button
- **On Blur and On Focus:** For form fields
- **Page Visible/Invisible:** For media clips

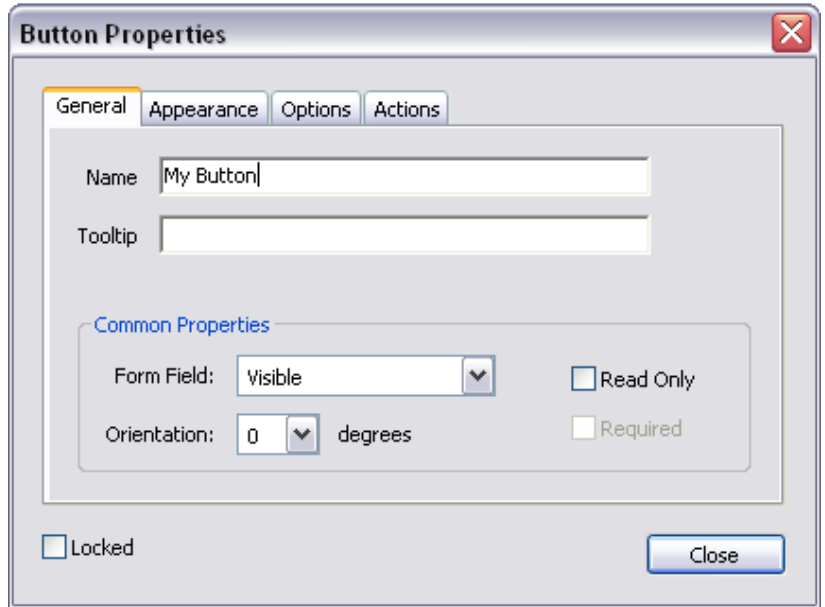
The actions your button can initiate are many, including all of those shown in the adjacent figure.



Procedure

How to add a button? Follow these steps (for Acrobat in the Windows environment):

1. Create and save a PDF file that includes button artwork, or a specific place where you want an Acrobat button. (I found that for a graphic button, having the graphic in the file yielded better results than selecting it as an icon from within the Acrobat file.)
2. Open the file in Acrobat Professional 7 or later.
3. From the **Tools** menu, choose **Advanced Editing > Button Tool**. The pointer changes to crosshairs, .
4. Create a button shape, or draw an outline (rectangular or square) around your button image.
5. Double-click the button. Complete the **Button Properties** dialog box (all four tabs):



If you want a label to appear on your button, here's a tip: the label is *not* taken from the **Name** field on the **General** tab; it is defined on the **Options** tab.

Another tip: If you are placing the Acrobat button over a button graphic in your file, you will need to make the Acrobat button transparent. On the Appearance tab, click the **Border Color** button and choose **No Color**. Ditto for the **Fill Color**.

I won't go into any more detail here—what's the fun in that? I'll leave it to you to explore, experiment, and read Acrobat's online Help! Another fine reference is an article on the Adobe Web site by Donna Baker, [Button up your PDF files](#).

Happy PDF-ing



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About STC and the Phoenix Chapter

The Phoenix Chapter community of STC is home to more than 200 of the Society for Technical Communication's members. The Chapter Web site is located at stc-phoenix.com. For a list of chapter officers and contact information, see stc-phoenix.com/contacts.html.

Society Mission Statement

Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

STC is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. It is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 17,000+ members include technical writers and editors, content developers, documentation specialists, technical illustrators, instructional designers, academics, information architects, usability and human factors professionals, visual designers, Web designers and developers, and translators-anyone whose work makes technical information available to those who need it.

Society membership provides opportunities for ongoing learning and professional networking. Through the efforts of a small, full-time staff and a large network of volunteers, STC promotes the public welfare by educating its members and industry about issues concerning technical communication.

For more information about STC, visit the Society Web page, www.stc.org.

Phoenix Chapter Vision Statement

The Phoenix Chapter is recognized as the driving force for technical communication, where members enhance their skills and knowledge while building professional relationships.

Phoenix Chapter Mission Statement

- As a world-class educational and informational forum, we discuss cutting-edge concepts and technology, encourage sharing information among members, and sponsor top-quality seminars and conferences.
- We give our members the opportunity to grow professionally and be creative; to develop leadership, management, and other skills; to be recognized for their outstanding skills and service; to be the most sought-after employees in our field; and to attain international status as Society-level leaders.
- We provide a fun and friendly, high-energy environment that fosters associations and friendships. We promote the value of technical communication and communication in general.

President's Personal Vision Statement

The current Phoenix Chapter president, Lisa Ford, has stated her mission for the chapter as follows:

In the spirit of inclusion and member retention, the Phoenix Chapter will continue to encourage growth, recognition, and investment in members and volunteers.

Phoenix Chapter Contacts

President: [Lisa Ford](#) lisafor-tsgl@cox.net

Vice President: [Dana Osborne](#) danaosborne@cox.net

Secretary: [Linda Glass Shacklock](#) lin@linztech.com

Treasurer: [Karen Forrester](#) kforres@cox.net

Immediate Past President: [Sherry Michaels](#) sherry.michaels@docntrain.com

Programs: [Karen Pasley](#) k_Pasley@hotmail.com

Membership Manager: [Sally Nielsen](#) Sally_Nielsen@inter-tel.com



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Rough Draft Advertising Rates

Do you have a technical communication-related service or business you would like to publicize on the Web? Would you like potential customers outside the Valley of the Sun to learn about you and your services online, for a reasonable price?

Now you can have what you want. The *Rough Draft* accepts advertisements you can run in both individual and multiple newsletter issues. Ads will appear at the bottom of all *Rough Draft* pages containing feature articles. You can choose among four different ad sizes, and you can provide either ready-to-publish ad files or ask us to create an online ad for you.

Ad Prices

The following table lists the four ad sizes available and the price for running each ad.

Ad Size	Run Times	Price
3.5 inches x 2 inches (business card size)	1 time	\$50 per ad
	3 times	\$40 per ad
	5 times	\$30 per ad
3.5 inches x 4 inches (equal to 1/4 of a printed, 8.5" x 11" page)	1 time	\$80 per ad
	3 times	\$70 per ad
	5 times	\$60 per ad
7.5 inches x 4.5 inches (equal to 1/2 of a print page)	1 time	\$150 per ad
	3 times	\$130 per ad
	5 times	\$110 per ad
7.5 inches x 9 inches (equal to a full print page)	1 time	\$280 per ad
	3 times	\$260 per ad
	5 times	\$200 per ad

Note: The rates listed above are for ready-to-publish ads. Prices for custom-created ads are available upon request.

Submitting an Ad

To submit an ad:

1. Make sure it meets the following criteria:

- Ad files provided should be in GIF or JPEG format, in one of the sizes described above.
- As prescribed by STC policies, the *Rough Draft* can accept only advertising that promotes products,

services, or providers of items related to the practice of technical communication.

1. Send your ad file, along with a completed [Advertising Order Form](#), to Rough Draft Managing Editor Karen L. Zorn at rough_draft@zorntech.com.
2. Send a copy of the completed order form, with a check made payable to the STC Phoenix Chapter, to STC Phoenix Chapter Treasurer Karen Forrester. To obtain her postal mail address, contact her at klforres@cox.net.

Ads will be published in the first issue of the *Rough Draft* following receipt of your order and payment.



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Rough Draft Advertising Form and Rates

Please complete this form and send it with your camera-ready ad (GIF or JPEG file) to:

- Karen L. Zorn, *Rough Draft* Editor and Manager, at rough_draft@zorntech.com
- Karen Forrester, STC Phoenix Chapter Treasurer, at klforres@cox.net

All charges are due upon receipt of the ad. Send a copy of this completed form with your check made payable to the **STC Phoenix Chapter** to:

Karen Forrester

STC Phoenix Chapter Treasurer

1453 W. Jacinto Ave.

Mesa, AZ 85202

The ad will appear at the bottom of pages containing feature articles.

Ad Size	Run Times	Price	Total Price
3.5" X 2" (business card size)	1 time	\$50 ea.	
	3 times	\$40 ea.	
	5 times	\$30 ea.	
3.5" X 4" (equal to ¼ of a printed, 8.5" x 11" page)	1 time	\$80 ea.	
	3 times	\$70 ea.	
	5 times	\$60 ea.	
7.5" X 4/5" (equal to ½ of a printed page)	1 time	\$150 ea.	
	3 times	\$130 ea.	

	5 times	\$110 ea.	
7.5" X 9" (equal to almost a full printed page)	1 time	\$280 ea.	
	3 times	\$260 ea.	
	5 times	\$200 ea.	
		Grand Total	



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Your Turn

Feedback and Comments

Rough Draft is your newsletter. We would like to know:

- What information you want to read: features, community news, society news.
- What is important to you?
- Is there anything we can do to improve the online functionality or readability?

Help us make this a newsletter you read, enjoy, and appreciate. Send us an [email](#) with your suggestions and comments. Of, catch one of us at the monthly meetings. No, we won't be wearing "editor" hats, but we will have name badges.

Send comments and feedback to: rough_draft@zorntech.com.



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About Rough Draft

Rough Draft is the official newsletter of the Society for Technical Communication, Phoenix Chapter community. The newsletter provides news about chapter events, members, and publishes members' opinions about technical communication topics.

Newsletter Staff

[Karen L. Zorn](#), Managing Editor

[Clare Turner](#), Editor In Chief

[Gloria McConnell](#), Contributing Editor

[Linda Shacklock](#), Contributing Editor

Chanda Child, Jane Rosignol, and Deb Paulsen, Reviewers

Submitting Content

We invite readers to submit articles, columns, photos, and other material on subjects of interest to chapter and Society members. Deadlines for submissions are as follows:

January, 2006	December 10, 2005
February, 2006	January 10, 2006
March, 2006	February 10, 2006
April, 2006	March 10, 2006
May, 2006	April 10, 2006
June, 2006	May 10, 2006
July, 2006	June 10, 2006

We accept articles submitted as e-mail, HTML, or files in Microsoft Word® or FrameMaker® format. We prefer GIF or JPEG graphics. Please include your e-mail address and your phone number. If you wish to send material by fax, first call the Managing Editor, Karen Zorn, at 408-354-0537.

The *Rough Draft* staff reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length and to reject submissions judged unfit for publication. We try to review substantive editing of feature articles with the author before publication. Our style guide is *Words Into Type*.

Newsletter Mailing Address

U.S. Mail: Karen L. Zorn, Managing Editor, 8515 E. Milagro Ave., Mesa, AZ 85209-7327

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