

April 2004

Volume 37 No 8



The San Diego Signature



Award of Excellence 2003 Newsletter Competition

## Feature Article

### Making your own luck

By Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave

*For most independents and especially for independents in technical communications, I see a strong tendency to rely on others rather than on oneself for work.... Try as I might to be part of that tiny percentage who can confidently rely on the kindness of strangers, I have finally resigned myself to the truth: you've got to make your own luck.*

### STC's 51st Annual Conference

May 9-12, 2004 at the Baltimore Convention Center.

For more information, contact the society office: 703-522-4114 / [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org)

### STC San Diego receives thanks from Red Cross

By Lance-Robert, Treasurer and Hotel Liaison

The San Diego and Imperial Counties Chapter of the American Red Cross formally thanked STC San Diego Chapter for its \$500 contribution to the October fire victims.

Red Cross CEO Ronne Froman said that our contribution helped the Red Cross workers and volunteers to provide assistance to victims during San Diego's worst disaster on record.

Read the letter for yourself at: <http://www.stc-sd.org/newsletter/RedCross1.pdf>.



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### Humor

By Karen Field Carroll  
Tech writers unite!

### Usability

By Jeff Freeman  
Software usability testing

### Editor's Desk

By Catherine Robinson  
Have you taken inventory lately?

### President's Podium

By Walter Hanig  
Half empty or half full?  
It's up to you!

### New Members

By Sue Heim  
What's new in Membership?

### Member Scoop

By Kitt Medrano  
The WOTE Scoop?

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Newsletter Staff

Newsletter Information

Advertising Information

2003-2004 Chapter Council

STC Mission Statement

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LavaCon 2004  
Call for speakers

2004 Region 8 Conference  
Ambitious Region 8 Conference set for July

## Press Release

*Write on the Edge  
wins Psychologically  
Healthy Workplace  
Award*

## Region 8 Director- Sponsor Candidates

- Beau Cain
- Alison Reynolds

## Chapter Meetings

- April Meeting
- March Meeting

## Join STC

*By Sue Heim*

## Sponsorship Opportunities

*By Michael Cárdenas*

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[Return Home](#)

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[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
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April 2004

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[Return Home](#)

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## About the San Diego *Signature*

*Signature* is the newsletter of the San Diego Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to educating and advancing the careers of technical communicators. Newsletters are published monthly during the chapter year (September through June).

STC has more than 25,000 members and 150 chapters nationwide. For more information about the San Diego Chapter visit our Web site at [www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org) or call our hotline at (619) 525-7716. Write to us at:

STC San Diego  
PO Box 501261  
San Diego, CA 92150-1261

### Article Submission

This newsletter invites writers to submit articles to be considered for publication. Send your query and request for writer's guidelines to [stcsignature@yahoo.com](mailto:stcsignature@yahoo.com). Submission deadlines are the 1st of the month prior to the publication month. Publication is dependent on space availability.

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[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
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### Publication Overview

*Signature* is a Web newsletter published by the San Diego Chapter, Society for Technical Communication (STC). It is issued ten times a year to more than 300 local technical communication professionals, managers, and educators. Other STC chapters, special interest groups, and related organizations also receive e-mail notification when each issue is posted. Because *Signature* is on the World Wide Web, readership is potentially unlimited.

*Signature* contains information produced by technical communicators for technical communicators. Advertising in *Signature* is the most direct way to reach the growing technical communications market in San Diego and the surrounding area.

### Publication Schedule

*Signature* is published every month except July and August. Each issue is posted on the Web within the first three days of the issue month. Closing date for advertising is the 10th of the prior month.

### Advertising Rates

Rates are based on type of ad (banner, rectangle, button, or text link), which newsletter page it is on (home page, feature article, or other), and where it is on the page (top, bottom, or side).

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[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

April 2004

2003-2004 Chapter Council

[Return Home](#)**Chapter President, Walter Hanig**[wghanig@alumni.rice.edu](mailto:wghanig@alumni.rice.edu)

Walter is responsible for a project converting a large suite of internal and end-user documentation to structured FrameMaker 7 at NCR.

He has served the chapter as Finance Vice-President and Administrative Council jester for four years before last year's adventure as chapter president.

**VP-Professional Development, Michelle Petersen**[mpetersen3@cox.net](mailto:mpetersen3@cox.net)

Michelle is a senior technical writer at Alaris Medical Systems in Sorrento Mesa.

**VP-Employment, Beth Peisic**[bethpeisic@san.rr.com](mailto:bethpeisic@san.rr.com)

Beth has a varied background in finance, accounting, and technical communications. She is a Senior Technical Writer at Intuit.

**Treasurer and Hotel Liaison, Lance-Robert**[treasurer@stc-sd.org](mailto:treasurer@stc-sd.org)

Lance is the senior technical information engineer at Tarari in Rancho Bernardo. This is his second term as chapter treasurer, and first term as chapter hotel liaison.

**VP-Membership, Sue Heim**[sue\\_heim@msn.com](mailto:sue_heim@msn.com)

Sue is a technical writing consultant in San Diego. She previously served in the San Diego Chapter as Vice President-Professional Development and as JobMail coordinator.

**VP-Programs, Michael Cárdenas**[mcardenas@multitrans.com](mailto:mcardenas@multitrans.com)

Michael is president of Multilingual Translations, Inc., a localization company headquartered in San Diego since 1985.

**Newsletter Managing Editor, Catherine Robinson**[stcsignature@yahoo.com](mailto:stcsignature@yahoo.com)

Catherine is a technical writer at Websense. She has enjoyed contributing her time and efforts to STC in the capacity of judge of the technical writers' competition and proofreader of

the monthly newsletter.

**Newsletter Assistant Editor, Jennifer Mallory**

[jmallory100@hotmail.com](mailto:jmallory100@hotmail.com)

After Jennifer graduated with a degree in literature, she waited for the job offers to flood in. When the surprise and rejection wore off, she began a lengthy career in marketing and editing. Currently, Jennifer works as a Health Information Specialist II with the County of San Diego.

**Chapter Web Site Manager, Kelley Wilson Mesterharm**

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Kelley has an instructional and curriculum design background with experience in Web accessibility and usability.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
[Members](#)

April 2004

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[Return Home](#)

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## STC Mission Statement

Our mission statement is: **Designing the future of technical communication**

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is an individual membership organization dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. STC is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 25,000 members include technical writers, editors, graphic designers, videographers, multimedia artists, Web and Intranet page information designers, translators, and others whose work involves making 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.

- **Member:** \$125 per year (plus a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)
- **Student Member:** \$50 per year (enrollment fee not required)

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
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LavaCon 2004



## LavaCon: Calling for speakers

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LavaCon, the International Conference on Technical Project Management, is now accepting proposals for speakers. LavaCon 2004 will be held in New Orleans from September 25 through 30.

Sessions should address how to manage tech comm projects, tech comm teams, and your tech comm company/career. Non-tech-comm-specific sessions are also needed.

The complete call for speakers is available at [www.lavacon.org](http://www.lavacon.org).

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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2004 Region 8 Conference



## **Ambitious Region 8 Conference set for July**

By Patrick Lufkin

[Return Home](#)

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Contact Patrick Lufkin,  
Region 8 Conference  
Publicity Manager,  
with any questions at  
[lufkin@ix.netcom.com](mailto:lufkin@ix.netcom.com).

*May 15 is the last day  
to qualify for your  
early registration  
discount to the  
conference. Don't  
delay!*

Planning is currently underway for the 2004 Region 8 Conference, which will take place near Sacramento, California, in July.

"Charting a Bold Course" is the theme of the conference.

In light of post dot-bomb realities, conference director Eric Butow says, "Difficult times demand bold action and the ability to reinvent ourselves and our profession. We have chosen the conference theme in hopes of giving attendees the information and the tools they will need."

### **Ambitious Offerings**

Conference planners say this will be one of the most ambitious conferences to date. In addition to several dozen presentations and seminars, the three-day conference will include a leadership retreat, a pavilion trade show, a job fair, a bookstore, computer terminals where attendees can check their e-mail and surf the Web, hands-on computer tutorials, and a keynote speaker for each day.

Incoming STC President, Andrea Ames, will be one of the keynote speakers. A full list of keynote speakers will be posted on the conference Web site as soon as it becomes available.

The conference hopes to draw approximately 300 attendees from Region 8 and adjoining regions. Region 8 includes California, Nevada, Hawaii, Australia, and New Zealand.

### **Location and Price**

The conference will take place July 25 through 27 (Sunday through Tuesday) on the campus of the University of California, Davis, which is

located about 10 miles southwest of Sacramento. Housing will be available on campus and at nearby hotels.

Conference attendees are being offered several price packages, depending on how they wish to participate. Early registration discounts are available to those who register before May 15.

### **Volunteers Needed**

To make it all happen, additional volunteers are needed. "We have a great team in place, made up of STC leaders from throughout the region," Eric says, "but they will need help to make this the best conference it can possibly be."

To encourage volunteers and lower financial barriers to attending, the conference is offering deep discounts to volunteers. Those interested should contact Anne Mehaffey at [mehaf2@comcast.net](mailto:mehaf2@comcast.net).

Eric notes that while discounts are important, the biggest benefits of volunteering are in the opportunities to make new friends and work behind the scenes with some of the best people in the field.

### **More Information**

For more information, and for updates as they occur, visit the conference Web site: <http://www.stcregion8conference.org>.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Feature Article



## Making your own luck

By [Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave](#)

[Return Home](#)

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A lot of consultants' and independent contractors' standard operating procedure can be characterized by Tennessee Williams' Blanche DuBoise in *A Streetcar Named Desire*: "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers."

For most independents and especially for independents in technical communications, I see a strong tendency to rely on others rather than on oneself for work. Clearly, we need others; otherwise, we would have no clients, no network, no references. What I'm talking about is a tendency among my self-employed peers to abrogate their personal responsibility for marketing and sales to others, relinquishing their own ownership of these functions and ultimately depending on the kindness of strangers to spread the word about their value and to point "buyers" in their direction.

I know what I'm talking about here because I often struggle with the desire to rely on others to send work my way simply because they know how good I am. If only it were so!

Well, I'm here to tell you that for only a tiny percentage of us, this method works reasonably well. And for a slightly larger percentage of us, it works a little bit. But for 90 percent of us, it spells doom for our dreams as independents. (And for those of you who are working on behalf of an employer or an agency, keep reading. There's a message here for you, too.)

Try as I might to be part of that tiny percentage who can confidently rely on the kindness of strangers, I have finally resigned myself to the truth: you've got to make your own luck.

Now, my mother would argue that if it weren't for bad luck, she'd have no luck at all, so let's be clear: if you're going to make your own luck, make it *good* luck.

Last year was a challenging one for my consulting firm, *dgh enterprises*. The previous year, 2002, had almost been a walk in the park by comparison. And even early last year looked like we might be able to rest on our laurels and rely solely on the kindness of strangers to find more work for my firm.

And then, WHAM!

As I did a mid-year assessment in June, I saw that I had no projects lined up for the remainder of the year. Proposals that I had been told were mere formalities were languishing. Work that had been contracted was stalled because of internal issues at the client's organization. There was no joy in Mudville. By August, we were 80 percent behind goal.

Staring down the barrel of having to sell the house, I knew I had to do something differently. As the queen of networking, I had already talked to everyone I knew looking for leads. I had scheduled and attended as many service presentations as I had energy for. I had gone into the fourth level of my contact list. (That's the level where they answer the phone with "Deborah who?") And all to no avail.

By the end of August, I had exhausted the company's reserves and I was at a loss as to how to get the business back on track. That is, until I saw a small PR piece in a colleague's newsletter. It was from the three or four sentences in that blurb that I figured out how to rescue the rest of 2003 from fiscal disaster.

You'll have to hang with me to the end of this article to learn how I was able to convert the content of that newsletter article into a whole new business venture. That's where you will learn how this experience convinced me forevermore to be the mistress of my own destiny and to forsake relying solely on the kindness of strangers.

### ***Making your own luck requires work***

Making your own luck has nothing to do with chance. It is not about serendipity. Making your own luck requires:

- knowing what you're about
- singing your own praises
- getting others to toot your horn
- connecting the dots

Making your own luck is an ongoing, conscious awareness of and commitment to a process. No element of this process can stand on its own. And if you attempt to execute it out of its necessary order, the process will not bear the desired fruit.

So, if you want to take control of your work—whether you're an employee or an independent, whether you want more control of the kind of work you do or the frequency at which you secure work—begin practicing these steps and begin making your own luck.

### **Step 1—Know what you're about**

What do you do well?

The first step to making your own luck is really understanding what you do well. If that voice inside your head is saying, "Well, I'm a technical writer," then you have failed this step.

So what? So are the rest of us.

What do you do so well that it distinguishes you from the rest of us?

For me, the answer is, I excel at working at the enterprise level to connect people and processes and to optimize the performance of both. I'm also a process nut who is just ditzy enough to be really effective in fluid and ambiguous situations. Top all of that off with my ability to put words to paper in a fairly fluent fashion and BAM! I've just set myself up as someone unique who can bring value to many engagements.

### **Step 2—Sing your own praises**

Who else but you, your best friend, your mother, and your mirror know what you do well?

Just knowing your own unique worth and being able to articulate it is only part of this process. Who else knows what you do well?

Think back over the last month or two. Think about discussions you've been a part of or have listened in on that involved topics that align with what you know you do well. How often did you pipe up and say something that shows your expertise in that topic?

When I'm working with a client who needs help complying with regulatory requirements (such as HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act]) or quality standards (like ISO), I openly share my expertise about process improvement, policies and procedures, and training. On those occasions when I'm engaged in developing user

documentation, I keep my eyes open for opportunities to share my experience with user-centered design and adult-learning theory. Up to the point where I wind up coming off as an intemperate know-it-all, I make a point of singing my own praises in the context of offering more solutions, more service, and more value to my client.

So, if your boss, your clients, your network associates, your brother-in-law, and your across-the-street neighbor don't know what you do well and how it fits in with their experiences, you are not doing enough to sing your own praises.

Start slowly. Find one opportunity to tell one person how a topic the two of you are talking about matches up perfectly with something wonderful that you can do for them. After a few repetitions, increase the ante and practice this step in small group settings among folks who know you. When you find that you can comfortably and authentically connect what you do well to other people's contexts, you will have mastered this step.

At this point you should be out in the world singing your praises to one and all!

### **Step 3—Get others to toot your horn**

This is where the rubber hits the road.

The purpose of step 2 was to educate others in what makes you and what you offer special. If you execute step 2 without connecting your excellence with the context of others, you are simply a braggart. No one will pick up a braggart's horn and play it for him.

However, folks who can connect to the value you bring, who have converted what you do into information that aligns with their world, those are the folks who will be in a position to tell others about you and will be able to do it at a level of detail that will continue to have meaning—even in the retelling.

So how do you get others to toot your horn for you? Give them the information they need. And then simply ask them to.

If you've mastered step 2, then this will be easy. If you haven't mastered singing your own praises, then your attempts at this phase may come off as self-conscious and will definitely be less effective. Make sure you can confidently sing your own praises before you ask someone to toot your horn for you.

So how do you do this?

Reconnect with their context. Ask them to discuss your value with their

team, with their boss, with their clients. And don't be shy!

Your goal here is to create a buzz about who you are and what you offer. This buzz is as important within a traditional organization where you're an employee as it is out in the world if you're an independent. You want people to know who you are and why you're special. And you want them talking about you in a meaningful way that allows them to expand your reach and your influence *for you*.

As you continuously perform steps 2 and 3, you will create an environment in which you can now make your own luck.

#### **Step 4—Connect the dots**

All right. You know what you're about, you can confidently and effectively sing your own praises, and you now have a network of advocates who toot your horn because you have connected with something meaningful to them.

Throughout these steps you will have developed a highly tuned sense of what you do best because:

- you will have had to meet many people from many disciplines and industries
- you will have listened to their stories
- you will have made connections between their contexts and what makes you special

And by engaging in all of these steps you will have created an environment to make your own luck.

Connecting the dots requires that you step away from what you know works and take a chance on the less known. Before writing my first users guide, I had written materials for use in K-8 classrooms and for the teachers and parents of special needs students. When I had the opportunity to develop my first set of user documentation, I recognized that there were far more parallels and similarities between those two efforts than there were differences. I connected the dots and realized that in both cases I needed to be able to distill complex concepts and information to a form that served the information needs of my audience.

Perhaps you have spent the bulk of your technical writing career developing ancillary written products for software products. Have you considered adding hardware support products to your services? Are you highly skilled in developing online help? Then perhaps you should

consider developing e-learning products. What about policies and procedures? If you enjoy working with people directly, think about being a job training specialist.

A limit to making your own luck is the degree to which you can see how what you do can and should be applied to new and novel situations. Think about what you do, and see if you can list at least three new ways you can apply your current knowledge, skills, and expertise. Then, break each of the three items you listed into two or three specific products or services—by name—that you can offer.

Example: I write users guides. From this basis, I can:

- train people to use products
- develop product marketing materials
- assess products' usability

Taken to the next most granular level, this means when I:

- train people to use products, I can also
  - perform needs assessments
  - develop training materials
  - provide customer support
- develop product marketing materials, I can also
  - write data sheets (also known as "fact sheets")
  - perform product demonstrations
- assess products' usability, I can also
  - perform expert reviews
  - design and conduct usability tests

### ***Real-world examples of making your own luck***

Here are some real-world scenarios to help you see how others have applied these steps and are making their own luck.

## **Know what you're about**

*Steven:*

Steven is leaving his job of 30 years in less than 8 months. For 30 years he has not had to do anything except demonstrate his usual exemplary performance, and he has achieved the highest position possible. But now it's time for him to launch his next career in a completely new sector for an entirely different industry.

Unlike most folks in his position who have no clue what they have to offer the world, Steven has no doubt about his worth. So go ahead and ask him what he's going to do next. If you do, he will tell you that he has just wrapped up an "extraordinary first career" and that he is "looking forward to combining his superb management and technical skills in telecommunications to become a program manager for an exciting telecommunications or high-tech company that wants to enjoy successes similar to those I have previously created with my first employer."

Clearly, Steven knows what he is about.

## **Sing your own praises**

*Larry:*

I have never in my life seen someone who is so comfortable singing their own praises without coming off as a braggart as Larry. Larry knows what he is about and is fluent in the language of what makes him one of the most sought-after practitioners in his field.

I recently had the opportunity to join Larry at one of his favorite coffee houses where lots and lots of independents in various fields hang out, work, and network. Although Larry knew quite a few of the folks in the café, he engaged a fellow he had not met before and seamlessly wove *his* story into and around the context of his new acquaintance.

Now, will the gentleman with whom Larry conversed ever hire Larry? Probably not. But that fellow, David, is a financial planner and he will have opportunities to meet and work with clients who may well have need for Larry's services.

Did it make sense for Larry to explicitly ask David to refer business his way? No, and he didn't. But in addition to the possibility of future referrals, all those people in the café who could and who did eavesdrop on Larry's recitation of his value got the chance to solidify the story of Larry in yet another context.

And, yes. Larry had a meeting the very next day with a fellow he had met at that same café some weeks previously. Last I heard they were negotiating the details of a consulting agreement. (Late breaking

news: Larry and Henry are now winding down phase one of their project and getting ready for phase two. I'm told that this will likely unfold into a long-term relationship of many more phases across a couple more projects. Good work, Larry!)

## **Get others to toot your horn**

*DGH:*

I have a friend who is a practitioner in another field, and he is often called on to include instructional and user-centered content in the projects he does for his clients. About two years ago I finally figured out that, although he knew full well what I do for a living, it never occurred to him to pitch me to his clients.

Duh.

For the 1 percent of you who haven't figured out how this ends, I'll tell you.

One fateful day two years ago when my friend was debriefing me on some proposal he had just submitted, I took it upon myself to beat him soundly about the head and shoulders to remind him that he should have included me in his proposal to provide the prospect with a complete team for their development effort. From that day on, he has included me in each of his full-cycle development proposals.

As a result, I've secured two contracts from that relationship to the tune of more than \$10,000. Not bad for a few minutes of effort telling him what he should say about me and asking him to say it!

## **Connect the dots**

*DGH:*

Remember that three- or four-sentence PR piece I told you I had read in a colleague's newsletter this past August? In that blurb, she announced that she had added HIPAA consulting services to the solutions she offered her clients. Now, I knew full well that although she had experience helping clients comply with other regulatory requirements, she did not know jack about HIPAA.

I also knew that I had recently partnered with an HIPAA expert on a non-HIPAA project.

After conferring with my partner as to his receptiveness to adding HIPAA consulting to our collective bag of tricks, I phoned my colleague and called her bluff. Sure enough, she had sent one staff writer to a HIPAA training seminar. And that was it.

We chatted a bit, had a meeting later that week, and concluded that,

with her reputation as a regulatory guru; with my partner's connections in the healthcare industry; and with my abilities to work within organizations as a change agent, to develop best-of-class policies and procedures, and to train diverse populations, we all would do well to partner on this new business venture.

By connecting the dots from the blurb, to the expertise of my new partner, to what I knew I brought to the table, we all became winners.

And, yes, we are enjoying some early successes helping small practices get current with HIPAA's Privacy Rule, and we're looking forward to helping clients comply with the pending Security Rule. (More late breaking news: As a result of a friend's knowing that I offer HIPAA consulting and because I have some small experience as a technical writer, I've just secured a project for a Web-based product that has to support the HIPPA compliance of the companies that purchase the product. Because my friend tooted my horn and I connected the dots, I have distinguished myself from two competitors who offered bids on this same project!)

### **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks to Julie Reynolds, editorial director for *El Andar* magazine ([www.elandar.com](http://www.elandar.com)) and associate with the Center for Investigative Reporting, for helping me to organize the material for this article.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)



[Return Home](#)

[Author Bio](#)

[Contact Karen](#)

## Tech writers unite!

By [Karen Field Carroll](#)

I will remember three things from the fall of 2003: Howard Dean's out-of-nowhere rise to Democratic presidential candidate, the San Diego wildfires, and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) strike.

Howard Dean's ascent to popularity was strange, and the wildfires were tragic, but it was the grocery workers on the picket lines—and those signs with big red letters they carried—that impressed me most.

How much nerve does it take, I wondered, to stand outside your employer's business and ask customers to shop elsewhere? I couldn't imagine doing more damage to a working relationship if I told my boss his kids looked like his gardener.

The difference between the grocery workers' situation and mine, however, can be explained in one word: "union." When you are part of a union, walking off the job and broadcasting your discontent is called "strategy." When you're an at-will worker in the corporate world, it's called "professional suicide."

Still, union tactics work. The grocery workers happily returned to their posts in early March.

So I've been thinking: we tech writers have bones to pick. If grocery workers can strike in protest, so can we.

But, first, we need a union.

Forming a union is less challenging than it sounds. All it takes is a common grievance; a long name, which we'll then condense into an even longer acronym; and an angry spokesperson to do the negotiating.

Let's start with the grievance. Because the grievance is the foundation on which we'll build our cause, it's got to be good. It's got to be the type of grievance that evokes droopy,

sympathetic looks from even the most hardened souls. When people see our picket signs and hear about what we're being asked to put up with, in other words, our grievance must inspire them to gasp in indignation and refuse to give our bosses their business.

Unfortunately, the grocery workers snatched the healthcare and retirement issues. They've fought that battle and won. But we've got Word.

It's true. Word is our weapon. I mean, can you imagine anything more ghastly, more pathetic, than a technical writer forced to use Word when a perfectly good desktop publishing tool like FrameMaker is available? Need I say more?

Cause at hand, we can now name the union. How about United Technical Writers Against Word As A Documentation Device—UTWAWAADD. Perfect.

Now, united in spirit, jaws set, we can start picketing. We'll hoist signs that say things like, *Word Is Just Wrong* and *FrameMaker or Bust*. We'll give the evil eye to people who cross the picket line, and the more determined among us will get arrested for acts of civil disobedience, like forming a human chain around the Microsoft building in Washington.

Then, insoles worn and bank accounts dwindling, we'll grudgingly drag ourselves to the negotiation table for serious talks about the costs of FrameMaker licenses or maybe just for water balloon fights. Here's where the angry spokesperson comes in.

So who's that gonna be, you ask? Well, I hear Howard Dean is available.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
[Members](#)

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April 2004

Usability



[Return Home](#)

[Author Bio](#)

[Contact Jeff](#)

## Software usability testing

By [Jeff Freeman](#)

Why is usability testing so important to the success of a company's software? Today much software is provided over the Internet. If a person does not like the interface or it proves to be overly difficult, the person will likely find another Web site with the same software.

There is much bad usability on the Web. However, people are becoming less tolerant. This will likely cause companies increased revenue loss in the next decade unless corrected.

Jakob Nielson, one of the nation's usability gurus, says "The next 10 years will see the Web become routinely integrated into everyday life, with mobile devices that actually work as advertised and sites where people can find what they are looking for. . . .We have only scratched the surface in terms of making the Web useful and intranets productive."

Nielson says he measured traffic at 42 sites where usability had been emphasized at the design stage and found that they performed 135 percent better on average.

"There is no reason we should continue to suffer the clumsy user experiences that currently dominate the Web," he adds. "I am optimistic for the future. By 2014 the Web may reach the level of user empowerment defined by the Macintosh in 1984. Web usability is improving but at a snail's pace. However, as long as the snail is moving in the right direction, we should be happy, and that is exactly what's happening."

This article discusses how to prepare a software prototype and conduct one-on-one usability testing. The prototype is not created haphazardly. Rather, much preliminary research goes into creating a prototype that will be beneficial to the users.

### ***Creating a Prototype Before Usability Testing***

The following phases are conducted to create a good prototype that can be used for usability testing:

1. surveys
2. one-on-one interviews
3. interpretation sessions
4. consolidation
5. work redesign
6. revision of user interface design
7. creation of storyboards

### **Surveys**

Preliminary surveys can be conducted on the user population as a means of collecting demographic data and other information.

### **One-on-One Interviews**

After completing the surveys, you can conduct one-on-one interviews with key users. During the interviews, your audience may be asked to perform certain scenarios using a software prototype. You then let the students evaluate their experience. In particular, note the features they use and those they do not.

Each member of a team of usability testers may interview different subjects. At the end of the one-on-one interviews, the entire team meets for interpretation sessions.

### **Interpretation Sessions**

A few days after the conclusion of the one-on-one sessions, the entire team should get together to conduct an interpretation session. During the interpretation session, each team member describes one of his or her interviews to the entire team. During the sessions, the team tries to explore interviewee interactions in terms of work models.

The goal of the interpretation sessions is to obtain a better understanding of the audience's work sequence as well as the artifacts that are used to perform tasks.

## **Consolidation Phase**

During the consolidation phase, the goal is to broaden the knowledge obtained from the interviews by expanding them to cover everyone who uses the software or system that you will be testing.

The consolidated work models are based on the same work models discussed in the interpretation sessions (flow, sequence, artifacts, physical, and cultural), except that the entire population is considered.

After the consolidation sessions, you can create an affinity diagram. An affinity diagram is a technique for grouping common issues from a nonstructured discussion, such as a brainstorming session (Binstock 1999). A hierarchy is created on the basis of individual points captured during the team's interpretation session (Beyer & Holtz 1998). The individual points are summarized in groups. The small groups are then summarized to create a larger group. Finally, the larger group issues identify areas of concern that should be studied later. These concerns form the basis for redesign.

## **Work Redesign (Visioning)**

After the workflow of the entire user population becomes clarified and understood, you are ready to redesign the work process so that it is more efficient. Note that the product being evaluated is not redesigned at this point, only the work process. By redesigning the work process first, the design of the product becomes easier.

When you redesign the work process first, the team members meet to discuss various design ideas (visions) for improving the product. At this time, a high-level storyboard can also be created to capture each vision (sequence) used to accomplish the tasks.

## **Revision of User Interface Design**

Only after completing all of the above phases do you actually revise the user interface design.

If the product that you are revising is currently in use, your team needs to make a major decision. You need to decide whether to refine the current methods or to redesign the entire interface.

Microsoft, like many companies, uses usability tests to identify "show stoppers" and fixes them right away. Ken Dye, leader of Microsoft's usability testing program, says, "All observations on possible improvement are prioritized on the basis of how serious the problem is and how often the user is likely to encounter it" [Binstock 1999].

In contrast to Microsoft's approach, Allan Cooper, inventor of Visual Basic and founder of Cooper Interaction Design, believes the "fix it" mentality of Microsoft is what is wrong with the current approach to usability testing. Cooper says, "You look at a product like Microsoft Office, and you see this very complicated interface that is not at all intuitive. You realize that Microsoft has relied on its usability testing solely to confirm its decisions" [Binstock 1999]. Cooper stresses that interfaces should be redesigned to make solid improvements rather than refined.

## **Creation of Detailed Storyboards**

The last step before you create your prototype is to prepare detailed storyboards representing each part of the new design. The storyboards are used to create the prototype. Once the prototype is created, you are ready to begin planning your usability test.

## ***One-on-One User Testing***

Prototype interviews may be in a group or one-on-one. I prefer one-on-one user testing on a prototype because it avoids the possibility that users can influence others.

The goal of one-on-one testing is to interview a small number of people and achieve the same findings as if you had interviewed many more.

The following steps are recommended to ensure the most accurate results during one-on-one testing.

1. Set the interviews up a few weeks in advance.
2. Offer some type of incentive for customers to participate in the one-on-one interviews.
3. Prepare a list of tasks that you want the user to perform. This will become your usability test. Your job is to evaluate how each user responds to the provided tasks.
4. Prepare a list of evaluation questions that you want the users to answer when they finish performing the tasks.
5. Use a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being best.
6. Do not provide hints or assist users. This includes using hidden body language.

7. If users request assistance, tell them that they should do the best they can to figure it out on their own.
8. Be sure to ask the same questions in the same order for each user.
9. Take written notes during the interview session.
10. You may also want to videotape the users to review results later. Be sure you can get a shot of the screen as well as the user.

### ***Usability Test Report***

After obtaining 8 to 12 usability test results, prepare the usability test report.

In short, the usability test report is designed to provide a summary of the findings and recommendations of the usability tests conducted.

The following guidelines are recommended when you write your usability test report.

- Provide the average ratings for each evaluation question that you asked.
- Come up with recommendations, based on the findings, for each major area tested.
- End the report with a summary of the findings.
- Refer to users by their numbers, not their names. For example, "User 1" and "User 2."

Also, appendices can be included that contain the usability test plan questionnaire as well as your user notes.

### ***Summary***

Preparing a prototype and conducting usability testing requires much preparation involving detailed tasks. However, the efforts pay off when you produce a site that accomplishes the needs of users in the most efficient way. Despite the complexities of the process, the purpose and the goal are simple. Know and understand your audience, and use good design techniques. These two principles go a long way to

achieving an efficient and easy-to-use product.

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[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

---



[Return Home](#)

## Have you taken inventory lately?

By [Catherine Robinson](#), Managing Editor

Are you looking for a professional development opportunity? You might want to consider becoming the next newsletter editor.

We're looking for a new editor for the 2004-2005 publishing season of *Signature*. If you are interested contact us at: [stcsignature@yahoo.com](mailto:stcsignature@yahoo.com).

Have you taken inventory lately? I'm not talking about checking the kitchen cupboards or your office supplies cabinet but looking at the stuff that's on your inside—your talents, creativity, expertise, and other skills you developed in your personal and professional life (work and professional organizations). You might be able to offer more to your current employer or move on to bigger opportunities elsewhere.

After reading Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave's feature article in this month's newsletter, I took my own inventory.

In Deborah's steps for successfully "making your own luck," I found in Step 1 that I must first learn what I am about. She asks: "What do you do so well that it distinguishes you from the rest of us?"

In Step 4 Deborah talks about connecting the dots. As she shares her experiences, Deborah speaks about when she wrote materials for use in K-8 classrooms and for the teachers and parents of special-needs students. About this, Deborah says, "When I had the opportunity to develop my first set of user documentation, I recognized that there were far more parallels and similarities between those two efforts than there were differences."

After reading the "real-world examples" in Deborah's article, I was convinced that we must take the first step to improving ourselves and recognizing the skills we have and where they can be used. Whether it be getting out there and marketing ourselves, taking courses to improve our skills, or just down-right evaluating what it is we do, we can eventually learn how to transfer the skills we have into new territory that presents bigger, better, and more exciting opportunities for us.

As I take inventory now, I realize that this will be an ongoing task that I need to put on my regular "to do" list.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
[Members](#)

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April 2004

President's Podium



## Half full or half empty? It's up to you!

By [Walter Hanig](#), President

[Return Home](#)

[Author Bio](#)

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I'm writing this fewer than 24 hours after returning from a nine-day vacation in Costa Rica. As with most vacations (and any outing involving children), stuff happens. Unexpected stuff. I was reminded by my wife that we can choose to dwell on the bad stuff or enjoy the good. So, we enjoyed the good and had a great time despite high winds, a missing hotel room, rain, and roads that shouldn't be dignified by the word "road."

And so it is in our professional lives. I don't think I'm the only one to have interviewed for the perfect job and not been offered it. In those situations, we can feel sorry about the outcome, or we can realize that we were asked questions we'd never been asked before, and now we're prepared for them when they're asked in another interview. We can recognize that there are now more interviewers who know a little about us and will remember us for the next opening.

When you are reassigned from a book or help system that you were almost satisfied with to a "fixer-upper," you get to choose how to react. If you're lucky, your manager will point out that the new assignment is a reflection of her conviction that you have the skills necessary to take on the ugly duckling project. Use this situation as an opportunity to capture the "before" so you can use it and the "after" in your portfolio. Moreover, you can use the before and after to justify your value to the firm.

We don't always get to work with the colleagues of our choice. It's easy to complain about having to work with someone we don't get along with. It's also an absolute waste of time. Instead, use the situation to learn about different ways of interacting, to try new approaches. When you're successful, you have a great story for a job interview. (We managers always ask about challenges and how you overcame them.)

Remember, you cannot always control what happens in your personal and professional life. You can, however, control your reaction. Negative reactions yield only frustration and alienation. Positive reactions yield positive results in your outlook and your career.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Chapter Membership



## What's new in membership?

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

[Return Home](#)

Welcome to our new and reinstated members and to those transferring to the San Diego Chapter!

### ***New Members***

Carrie Brown

Leona J. Heraty

Kimberly Hiland

Johanna Jones

Dina Levy

Kathleen Onofiro

Jay Conrad Price

Ronald Shimell

Richard Tharin

Nazarena Washburn

### ***Reinstated Members***

Karen L. Howard

Lin Laurie

## ***Members Transferring to San Diego Chapter***

Preethi Ganapathy

Michael J. Smith

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Member Scoop



## The WOTE Scoop?

By [Kitt Medrano](#)

[Return Home](#)

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Due to lack of gossip, this month's "Member Scoop" column has been temporarily re coined "The WOTE [Write on the Edge] Scoop." Come on, now, there must be someone out there who has fun, personal tidbits to share—new grandkids, new significant other, heck, even your recent divorce or "vacation" last July in Phoenix—anything! Let us in on it! (Write me at: [Kitt.Medrano@wote.com](mailto:Kitt.Medrano@wote.com).)

For now, WOTE has earned bragging rights in more ways than one.

- **Kimberly Hiland**, a new STC member but not new to STC (because she has been active in the STC for a year), recently accepted a technical writing position at WOTE. A relative newcomer to the field, she has a communications background with exposure to Web and graphic design. Kim enjoys travel and Macs, and she started to learn how to bodyboard this year. She expects to see your registration forms for the Region 8 Conference (*shameless plug*). Welcome, Kim, to WOTE and to STC San Diego!
- **Richard Leatherman**, STC member and WOTE marketing manager, recently published an article for the *San Diego Business Journal* about the importance of technical writing.
- **Suzy Hosie**, CEO of WOTE and past president of STC San Diego, was interviewed by the *SanDiego Union-Tribune*. Her Q&A writeup was published on the SignOnSanDiego.com Web site. You can read it here: <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/northcounty/20040222-9999-m1m22qa.html>.
- On a healthy note, the California Psychological Association has awarded WOTE the 2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award for "WOTE's creative and innovative practices in ensuring the health and well-being of its workforce." They presented the

award on March 27 at their annual convention in San Diego.

And, as you may have heard, **Catherine Robinson** started a new job at Websense in Sorrento Valley on March 1. It was a great opportunity that she just couldn't pass up. Catherine can be reached at home, 619-282-4418, or at [crobb2@yahoo.com](mailto:crobb2@yahoo.com) or [crobi0902@cox.net](mailto:crobi0902@cox.net). Congratulations, Catherine, and best of luck to you!

That's it for this month. If you have news that you want to share, don't hold back. Give me a call at 760-598-2490 x103 or email me at [Kitt.Medrano@wote.com](mailto:Kitt.Medrano@wote.com) Your news can be our news only if you "give it up."

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Press Release



## Write on the Edge wins Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award

[Return Home](#)

The California Psychological Association has awarded Write on the Edge, Inc. (WOTE), the 2004 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award "for the company's creative and innovative practices in ensuring the health and well-being of its workforce."

WOTE President and STC San Diego Past President Suzanne Hosie said, "I think this award illustrates our level of commitment to providing our employees with a healthy workplace, both physically and mentally."

According to the California Psychological Association, the benefits of a healthy workplace can include increased productivity and employee retention rates, recruiting advantages, company image enhancement, and a better workplace atmosphere. And failure to provide a psychologically healthy workplace can impact the bottom line.

Among the programs that WOTE has used to foster a psychologically healthy workplace are:

- flexible work schedules for employees
- company sponsorship of work-related classes and programs
- annual sponsorship of employees to regional and national STC conferences
- an extensive orientation program for new employees
- a variety of social events for employees

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

April 2004

Elections: 2004



[Return Home](#)

## Region 8 Director-Sponsor Candidates

### Region 8 Director-Sponsor Candidates

[Beau Cain](#)

[Alison Reynolds](#)

Election time is approaching, and once again *Signature* is printing campaign articles by the candidates for Region 8 Director-Sponsor.

We welcome submission of articles by other candidates for this position. *Signature* does not endorse any candidate.

Send your article to the editor at [stcsignature@yahoo.com](mailto:stcsignature@yahoo.com).

To ensure publication, we'll need your article by the 5th of the month prior to publication. Articles received after the 5th will be inserted if possible.

### Beau Cain, Candidate for Region 8 Director-Sponsor by Beau Cain (Silicon Valley)

During the next three years, our Society will attempt radical changes in order to serve members better in our more competitive professional climate. I want to be "the man in the middle" for the next three years, helping Region 8's chapters voice their needs to STC's Board of Directors as we tackle ambitious transformations. I ask that you vote for me for Region 8 Director-Sponsor in the upcoming Society election.

What qualifies me to undertake this challenge is my professional experience in managing clients' communication needs--whether they are planned and organized or unforeseen and chaotic--plus my continuing experience as a volunteer and as an elected chapter official. As a child, I spent my young life moving from school to school, client to client, state to state, and sometimes even country to country; so I can state confidently that I flourish in situations that require quick adaptation to unknown situations.

I've provided information about my other qualifications to STC, and they're posted at [http://www.stc.org/STCElections/election\\_cain.asp](http://www.stc.org/STCElections/election_cain.asp).

What I want to do during the next three years is to visit each chapter's elected council in the far-flung and culturally diverse Region 8, listen to their concerns and their ideas, and work with each chapter to address those concerns as effectively as possible. Additionally, I'm excited about the prospect of working with the Society's Board of Directors, and of having a voice--your voice--in developing Society policy that best addresses the challenges our profession faces.

I've accepted Andrea Ames' offer to serve on the Board's Communication Support Sub-committee, and I have experience serving chapters other than my beloved Silicon Valley chapter. I'm proud of the role I played in producing two leadership events that helped each of the six Northern California chapters address their common challenges. In particular, I'm very

pleased that my efforts helped stop membership attrition and, after a two-year struggle, increased Silicon Valley chapter's membership to over 1,000 members.

As a member of the World Future Society, I avidly study the trends and predictions of acknowledged experts and try to apply their foresight to the changing fortunes of our profession. I've presented more than a half-dozen lectures and I've moderated panel discussion about the future of our profession, even before the dot com bust.

As a teacher in the Business and Technical Communication Certificate Program at SJSU-Professional Development Center, I created and taught two new courses that address the changing demands of local companies who hire our colleagues. I've also addressed San Jose State University's Community of Writers twice about career management.

I'm prepared to continue serving in all these capacities because I care about our profession and for my colleagues. By nature, I approach all projects with a desire to assist others, and I'm driven to serve my colleagues as they strive to achieve their professional goals. I ask that you vote for me to fulfill the exciting, challenging, changing duties of Region 8 Director-Sponsor for 2004-2007.



Alison Reynolds, Candidate for Region 8 Director-Sponsor

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**Alison Reynolds, Candidate for Region 8 Director-Sponsor**  
by Alison Reynolds (Christchurch, New Zealand)

Greetings to all of you from "down under"! My picture is probably a surprise to those of you who think New Zealand is a land of hobbits, orcas and strange, flightless birds that venture out only in the dark. I am sorry to disappoint you! I don't have large hairy feet and I do make appearances in the daylight (although some of you who have met me at conferences might disagree).

Let me tell you what I can offer if I am elected as your director sponsor.

My greatest "claim to fame" is my experience building virtual and real communities of technical communicators and information designers from all around the world. In recognition of this experience, I have recently been asked to be a member of the STC Board Communities Support Committee.

My "community" experience has grown from my association

with STC and from my role as the director of the world's first international online Graduate Diploma of Information Design (formerly Technical Communication) beamed "live" from Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology here in New Zealand. We have a talented student group from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the US, India and Europe. Our staff and advisory board also span the globe and we have a virtual STC student chapter of over 100 students. I arrange and supervise work placements nationally and internationally and I have worked steadily to raise the profile of technical communication among employers and in organizations.

In my role as an academic, I am a front line leader in the development of technical communication and information design as a profession and as a research-based discipline. I have a master's of business management and a graduate diploma of business administration in communication management from Massey University (New Zealand). My thesis was a comparative study of technical communication and information design trends in New Zealand and North America.

Forget flightless birds! This "bird" is a sought-after international speaker. I have presented papers at STC's 45th, 49th, and 50th Annual Conferences; at the 2002 region 7 conference; and at the 1998 region 8 conference. I taught in China and India as part of an STC initiative to promote technical communication in developing countries, was a guest visitor at the San Francisco chapter meeting 1998, and attended STC's 43rd Annual Conference in Seattle.

In 2003 I trebled the New Zealand chapter membership with the creation of virtual student membership. I also established the first New Zealand STC student scholarship and arranged seminars by international STC speakers such as Carol Barnum, JoAnn Hackos, and Raymond Uργο.

I believe my experience, innovativeness and skills to represent the international face of the region will ensure its continued growth, strength and diversity.

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
[Members](#)



[Return Home](#)

[Click here for April 14 meeting details.](#)

If you make a reservation but find you cannot attend, please cancel your reservation by sending an e-mail to Lance-Robert at [treasurer@stc-sd.org](mailto:treasurer@stc-sd.org). The chapter has to pay the hotel for all no-shows, which takes money away from various programs that could otherwise benefit the chapter members.

There is no financial penalty for cancelling your reservation. If you used PayPal to pay for your reservation in advance and need to cancel, the full amount will be refunded to your account within three working days.

## April Chapter Meeting Preview: Is the independent life right for you?

By [Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs](#)

If you have ever said to yourself, "I want to be my own boss," our April STC San Diego meeting is for you. Becoming self-employed is a serious decision that will affect every part of your life. This meeting will feature an interactive presentation designed to help you explore whether life as an independent consultant or contractor is right for you.

During this meeting you will:

- explore some self-employment options
- visualize life as an entrepreneur
- assess your qualifications
- identify pros and cons of self-employment
- develop an action plan

This is for anyone interested in looking at the options and issues surrounding becoming their own boss.

Our speaker, **Deborah Gill-Hesselgrave**, is a founding partner of *dgh enterprises* where she develops integrated, knowledge-centered programs, services, and products. She is passionate about creating opportunities that support success for the real people who use her solutions.

Deborah began her career as a special education teacher. From there she continued in the K-12 education field as an editor for CTB/McGraw-Hill where she developed diagnostic assessment tools and wrote ancillary instructional support products for teachers and parents. Following that, Deborah moved into high-tech and became a product manager for Jostens Learning Corporation where she was responsible for the definition, development, and deployment of multimedia learning programs for students in grades K-8. Over the intervening years, Deborah migrated her career away from the education market into the B2B space where she has held senior management

positions and has guided the efforts of teams responsible for customer support, product documentation, client training, and product design and usability.

In 1994 Deborah launched *dgh enterprises*. Since then she has leveraged her extensive background in information products, process improvement, and management to help her clients succeed.

Deborah is currently on the Board of Directors for the San Diego chapter of CHI---Computer-Human Interactions (a SIG of ACM, Association for Computing Machines). She is also on an Advisory Board at National University and is a founding member of the national expansion of the User Experience group (formerly a special interest group of the San Diego Software Industry Council).

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March meeting attendance numbers:

40 attendees  
3 cancellations  
7 no-shows  
12 used PayPal

## March Chapter Meeting Highlights

### ***Featured Topic: "Dine with Managers"***

By [Eric Hurd](#)

San Diego chapter meeting - Wednesday, March 10



Walter Hanig, President & Sue Heim, VP Membership

STC San Diego President Walter Hanig opened the meeting by welcoming the first-time attendees. He asked that they tell us about themselves and discuss their reasons for coming, which included interest in the topic and speaker, the desire to discuss a newly acquired skill, and the need to find writers for new positions.

Walter then invited those looking for work to describe their skills and desired positions and members with job announcements to describe the positions available. For the first time in quite a while, there were more job announcements than job seekers.

### ***Announcements***

Meeting announcements included the following.

- STC San Diego Chapter had the second highest growth rate in the country since July. Congratulations to us!
- Professional Development will be hosting two local workshops:



Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs



Featured speakers: Suzy Hosie and Walter Hanig

- March 20, Michael Cardenas, localization workshop
- May 4, RoboHelp workshop ([www.stc-sd.org/profdev/profdev.htm](http://www.stc-sd.org/profdev/profdev.htm))

- Preliminary results of the STC San Diego Chapter salary survey are in. With 128 responses, the average salary for the San Diego Chapter is \$65,000 and ranges from \$30,000 to \$130,000. Ninety percent of the responders are satisfied with their positions.
- The Region 8 conference in Davis will take place July 26 and 27 ([www.stcregion8conference.org](http://www.stcregion8conference.org)).
- Our next regular meeting topic will be "Is the Independent Life Right for You?" on April 14 at the Red Lion Hanalei.
- AuthorIt expert Char James-Tanny will be here on Thursday, March 25, along with special guests Paul Trotter, AuthorIt Software Corporation's CEO, and Ray Duncan, director of Marketing, to discuss AuthorIt single-source content management software.

This is a special meeting in addition to our regular March 10 meeting and will cost only \$10 (dinner included), regardless of membership or employment status. PayPal will be accepted. Be sure not to miss this very special event. A free copy of the software (a value of \$459) will be raffled off at the end of the meeting.

For more information about AuthorIt, visit: <http://www.authorit.com/>.

### ***Featured Topic: "Dine With Managers"***

"Dine With Managers" was a forum hosted by Suzy Hosie and Walter. They opened with a little background about themselves and discussed the following questions:

- Who gets hired and why?
- How do I ensure a continuing career?
- What do we do as managers all day long?

The following is a short summary of the points that were made by Suzie and Walter during their talk and Q and A.

### **Who gets hired and why?**

Cover letters don't hurt. They are samples of complete sentences not in your résumé. You can consider the email that you send with your résumé to be a cover letter.

In your cover letter, be sure to introduce yourself, and acknowledge that you read the job posting and are familiar with the requirements of the job. If your experience doesn't match the requirements precisely, explain your reasons for responding. Don't write a book.

During the interview, be ready to discuss problems that you have solved. Avoid canned answers. Bring questions, and show enthusiasm for the job. If your portfolio is lacking, be prepared to discuss your ability to solve problems. Be sure to tell those you listed as references that you listed them as references.

Ideally, a résumé should say what you need to say and nothing more. Be sure to use styles to show off your knowledge of the tool you used to make it. Your résumé should be attractive and professional. Practical experience may be more important than certification with specific tools.

### **How do I ensure a continuing career?**

Stand out. Not only does standing out help you financially, but you also usually get the fun jobs. Suzy and Walter mentioned that they look for the following qualities in their employees:

- initiative
- dependability
- flexibility
- ability to be teamworkers
- ability to learn quickly
- ability to see the big picture

- ability to solve problems

Walter and Suzy also mentioned a few things that you can do to ensure your future.

- When you bring a problem to a manager, bring possible solutions.
- Investigate the trends, and learn a variety of tools.
- Teach others your skills. You can't move to a new position until someone can fill your shoes.
- Get out of the comfort zone.
- Try to get along with your coworkers. San Diego is a small town.

### **What do we do as managers all day long?**

Walter and Suzy ended the forum with a quick discussion of what they do as managers.

- Look for weak spots in the team or process, and try to address those issues.
- Keep an eye out for new work.
- Keep the writers busy.
- Provide constructive criticism.
- Plan for the long term.
- Plan budgets.
- Put out intrapersonal fires.
- Conduct performance appraisals.
- Support the project leaders.

## ***March Meeting Wrap-Up***

This month's raffle winner was Victor Roick. He won a Wally Buck (redeemable for a free STC San Diego dinner and presentation).

We'll see you next month!



Victor Roick

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council](#)  
[Members](#)

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Technical Issues](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#)  
[Humor](#) | [Advice](#) | [Employment Desired](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Membership Drive



## Join STC

By [Sue Heim, VP Membership](#)

[Return Home](#)

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

STC is dedicated to advancing the arts and sciences of technical communication. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, STC is the largest organization of its type in the world. Its 25,000 members in 150 chapters 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, translators, and others whose work involves making 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.

## Society Goals

Three goals of STC are: 1) enhance the professionalism of the members and the status of the profession; 2) provide information through publications, reports, and conferences; and 3) report new communication technologies, methods, and applications.

In addition to the publications you will receive, you will have many opportunities to further your own education by attending dinner presentations, seminars, and conferences. You can submit your work in our annual competitions and receive recognition and awards from your

peers. And you will have plenty of opportunity to network—to meet fellow STC members.

## Benefits of Membership

Among the benefits of Society membership are subscriptions to *Intercom*, the Society's monthly magazine, published 10 times a year, and to *Technical Communication*, the Society's quarterly journal. These periodicals contain essential articles on the theory and practice of technical communication.

Other membership benefits include discounts on STC's annual conference, the largest gathering of technical communicators in the world; eligibility for association group-rate insurance; and access to STC's special interest groups. For more information on these and other benefits, visit the STC Web site at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org).

## How to Join

STC membership dues are paid per calendar year. Members who join after February 1 receive a prorated credit on their next year's dues. Dues are as follows:

- member: \$140 per year (including a one-time \$15 enrollment fee)
- student member: \$50 per year (no enrollment fee)

To join STC, you can fill out an electronic form or download a membership application at [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org). You can also contact the STC office at the following address and request that a membership application be mailed to you:

Society for Technical Communication  
901 North Stuart Street, Suite 904  
Arlington, VA 22203-1822  
(703) 522-4114  
[stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org)

For more information on the San Diego Chapter of STC, visit our Web site at [www.stc-sd.org](http://www.stc-sd.org) or contact Sue Heim, vice president of Membership, at [sue\\_heim@msn.com](mailto:sue_heim@msn.com).

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)

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April 2004

Sponsorship Opportunities



## Sponsorship Opportunities

By [Michael Cárdenas, VP Programs](#)

[Return Home](#)

[Contact Michael](#)

Would you like to promote your company, get your company name recognition, and, at the same time, help the San Diego STC Chapter? Well, we have an excellent opportunity for you!

Your company can sponsor a monthly meeting. You will have your company logo and name on the San Diego STC Web site; you will get additional recognition at the STC meeting; and you will have a minute or two to present your company's products and services to the meeting attendees.

The cost per presentation is \$150. This includes dinner for one attendee, who must register in advance of the meeting.

Please contact Michael Cárdenas for sponsorship opportunities: Phone 619.295.2682 or email [mcardenas@multitrans.com](mailto:mcardenas@multitrans.com).

[Return Home](#)

---

[Feature](#) | [Editor's Desk](#) | [President's Podium](#)  
[Membership](#) | [Chapter Meetings](#) | [Humor](#) | [Usability](#)  
[Mission](#) | [Author Bios](#) | [Newsletter Staff](#) | [San Diego Chapter Council Members](#)