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For information about copyrights, reprinting articles, and submitting articles, see the article submission policies on page 6.

This printer-friendly version of the ActiveVOICE includes the same content as the online newsletter on the chapter web site (www.stc-sf.org). The text has been reformatted to reduce the number of pages required to print the newsletter.

April 2005 Meeting -- Localization 101

Presented by Michael R. Cardenas

The April meeting is on Wednesday, April 20, 2005, from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the Elephant & Castle in San Francisco's financial district. For details about the location and instructions for purchasing tickets, visit www.stc-sf.org/stc-meetings.htm.

About the Presentation

If you have been involved in authoring content in just one language, let's say English for North America, you will definitely agree that it is not a cakewalk.

So what is different about authoring content that needs to be localized into several languages? Are there any special issues we need to take into consideration as technical communicators?

In this presentation, Michael will explore the special needs technical localizers face when taking your English content to other cultures and countries.

- How can I make sure that my well-polished English text will be just as polished in Greek or Japanese?
- What tools are used to author the source text and what tools are used in localization, i.e. computer assisted translations, FrameMaker, Quark, etc.

- Dealing with cultures.

To make the point, we will provide a hands-on writing exercise, and then localize it.

Whether you want to learn more on how to succeed in the international workplace or you want to experience a lively presentation, this is a presentation you do not want to miss.

About the Speaker

Michael R. Cardenas is President of Multilingual Translations, Inc.

May 2005 Meeting -- Network Security: Issues, Technologies, and Management

Presented by Mark Kadrich

The May meeting is on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm at the Elephant & Castle in San Francisco's financial district. For details about the location and instructions for purchasing tickets, visit www.stc-sf.org/stc-meetings.htm.

About the Presentation

Mark Kadrich, Senior Scientist at Sygate Technologies, will speak about fundamental issues in network security, including emerging technologies, risks, and management. His presentation begins with a discussion of network security basics and then proceeds to a discussion of regulatory compliance. The second half of the presentation will analyze state of the art security technologies and solutions, with an emphasis on how enterprises can effectively manage network security.

About the Speaker

Mark Kadrich has over 20 years experience in the network security industry. His strengths are in systems level design, policy generation, and risk manage-

ment. Kadrich is a CISSP, holds a BS in Management Information Systems, University of Phoenix, and degrees in Computer Engineering and Electrical Engineering, Memphis, 1979. Publications that he has contributed to include TCP Unleashed, Publish Magazine, Planet IT, and The Black Hat Briefings.

Kadrich is presently a senior scientist with Sygate Technologies, where he supports long-term product development for future security trends and manages government certification efforts. He has held CTO and CSO level positions at LDT Systems, Counterpane Internet Security, Conxion Corp., and International Network Services.

January 2005 Meeting -- An Overview of Trends, Tools, and Technologies in Software User Assistance

Presented by Joe Welinske and reviewed by Alison S. Gemmell

Do you want to get ahead of the curve? Joe Welinske, President of WritersUA (www.writersua.com), suggests learning about Microsoft Longhorn Help or Web-based Help. Longhorn Help requires knowledge of XML-MAML (Microsoft Application Markup Language). Web-based Help, which does not have specific standards, allows you to push the envelope -- to be a pioneer.

Tools and Trends

"User assistance is more than documents and traditional online help," said Welinske. "Although Help is still the prime deliverable, 90 percent of online help is not very good because it is written by people who do not want to do it." Effective Help explains the user interface and the knowledge domain. It also provides topic access through context sensitive links, a table of contents, an index, and search. User assistance tools include Microsoft HTML Help for Windows, Oracle Help for Java, Sun JavaHelp for Java, Apple Help / Guide for Macintosh, and PDF authoring. "Continued support and commitment for Sun JavaHelp and Apple Help is suspect," said Welinske. "People who are knowledgeable in JavaHelp are moving

to browser-based Help." Software development is moving away from HTML and toward PDFs, without indexing, for online help.

Microsoft is putting large amounts of resources into Longhorn Help. Longhorn is Microsoft's new operating system scheduled for developer release in mid-2005 and public release in 2006. Longhorn Help is a proprietary Windows solution that uses XML-MAML instead of RTF and HTML. MAML, Microsoft Assistance Markup Language, is a schema that defines vocabulary that the Windows platform can use to work more efficiently with Windows Help. The XML-based format is used for topic files and navigation elements, and topic-level metadata can be accessed throughout the operating system. Authoring support will be provided by outside vendors as it is now for HTML Help, and there is a new API for linking to Help applications. Longhorn Help is not backward compatible.

User Assistance Skills

The most valuable user assistance skills, according to a Writers USA survey, are: procedure writing, Help tool experience, reference writing, interviewing, and HTML coding. Additional desirable skills include indexing, quality assurance, graphics development, information design, usability testing, localization, task analysis, instructional design, coding Web content (for example, HTML, XML, CSS, and JavaScript), and programming (for example, C++, Visual Basic, and Perl).

Web-based Help

The Web has no specific standards for Help, so you can push the envelope -- be the pioneer. "Applications are moving to full Web compatibility and major platforms do not have Help solutions," said Welinske. "Browser-based Help is perceived as cheap, easy, and effective." There are many ways to do Web-based Help. Welinske showed us several examples: the Amazon.com Help Desk basic approach, the MSN.com Top Customer Questions idea, Monster.com's FAQs, and the more traditional, comprehensive context-sensitive help at CharlesSchwab.com.

Embedded User Assistance

Intuit and Microsoft are doing embedded help for their applications. Sentences or phrases are added directly in the user interface to anticipate questions ahead of time. This type of help requires that documentation people get involved very early in the design stage.

Additional Slides

Welinske provided more slides than he was able to cover in his presentation. Topics included two views on single source development, two views on structured authoring, writing by template, DocBook, Flash-based applications, trends in exporting user assistance jobs, and the RoboHelp acquisition by Macromedia. One slide listed trends on the horizon: lots of JavaScript, increased programming, more server-side deployments, weekly release schedules, support for Linux and PDA devices, ASP, JSP, and Voice Help.

For more information, visit the Writers UA web site at www.writersua.com. It is an invaluable resource for what is happening in the world of user assistance.

Alison S. Gemmell is a Senior Member of the STC who writes software user documentation, FAQs, Operation and Maintenance Manuals, procedures, and STC speaker reviews.

February 2005 Meeting -- ISO Auditing for Technical Communicators: An Introduction

Presented by Kathy Stanley and reviewed by Marc Smircich

At the February meeting of the San Francisco Chapter STC, Kathy Stanley provided an overview of ISO certification and explained how the skills of technical communicators are directly transferrable to ISO auditing. In doing so, Stanley drew upon 10 years of experience with the ISO process, both as an auditor and as an audit subject.

The ISO and ISO Certification

The ISO is the International Standards Organization, which has its headquarter

ters in Switzerland. This organization defines standards for many industries, such as airlines, rubber, pulp, mines, electronics manufacturing, paints, and computer software. Stanley's talk focused on ISO 9000, which is the set of standards for computer software.

Documenting procedures is a part of ISO certification, but there is much more than writing and maintaining procedures. The certification process focuses on constant improvement and inclusion of customer requirements in product design.

ISO certification means that:

- A company has an ISO team to focus on quality.
- A company has implemented and documented ISO-compliant processes.
- An external auditor has certified that a company's processes comply with ISO standards.

Why does a company go through the work in becoming ISO certified? It is important for marketing, especially in international sales. In the European Union and Japan, many companies do business only with ISO certified companies. In the USA, government agencies may require their suppliers to be ISO certified. Even when ISO certification is not required, it can give a certified company a leg up over its non-certified competitors.

The Certification Process

The certification process requires a great deal of time and effort. Therefore, it should have buy-in from the highest level of management. A company has an ISO team to ensure that the company's processes are ISO-compliant. At a large company, the ISO team includes a lead auditor, a representative for each division, and a quality team in each division. At a small company, one person may handle the entire process.

Each company has its own way of implementing ISO standards. The ISO standards are general principles. Each company's internal ISO auditor is

trained in interpreting those standards and applying them to specific cases. Each company creates its own detailed rules and procedures. The specifics vary from company to company. For example, an audience member mentioned that a company had a rule that all documentation be double-spaced. There is no such specific requirement in ISO standards, but that rule was one company's interpretation of how to create ISO-compliant documentation.

To get and maintain certification, a company has its procedures reviewed by an ISO-certified external auditor. There are two audits: the initial audit and an annual surveillance audit. The initial audit is the most difficult one to pass. A company must be able to consistently document the origin of customer requests, keep track of how they are acted upon, and show the path from the request to the action taken. The annual surveillance audit often is a review of weak areas. Few companies fail these audits.

ISO Roles

Once a company is certified, ISO plays a continuing role of a company. These roles include the following:

- Auditor who makes sure internal procedures are compliant with ISO standards.
- Quality council member from each department of a company. They meet every three months in a small firm and monthly in a large firm.
- Trainer who makes sure engineers, marketing people, and new people are aware of procedures and tools.
- Coach who puts people through a test audit.
- Advocate who sustains funding and reminds people that retaining certification helps to get business.
- Consultant who makes sure new products conform to ISO standards.

Transferrable Skills for Technical Communicators

Stanley identified the four cornerstones for an audit, which are very similar to the process for designing and creating a manual or a help system:

- Plan -- Set up the goals.
- Develop -- Create the plan for how to conduct the audit.
- Deliver -- Conduct the audit, issue the report, and correct any errors. Write the report in simple, clear language.
- Maintain -- Make ISO a part of every job, not just something for the annual audit.

The kinds of writing that an auditor does are similar to those for technical communicators:

- Training materials.
- Job aids, such as instructions for using the company's quality web site.
- ISO manuals that are posted on the company's quality web site. Usually, one person owns this site.
- Corrective action reports. For example, the latest edition of a book has no identifiable version number. The auditor works with all needed parties to correct the problem, then re-audits the problem area.

In addition, auditors give an annual presentation to top management. Stanley mentioned that it's good to know your audience. You should know how to make this report short and sweet if all management wants to know is that the ISO program is in place and that it's working.

Stanley pointed out that many technical communicators already possess the interviewing skills needed for an auditor:

- Being able to interview strangers.
- Sticking to questions without getting drawn off topic.
- Calming nervous subjects.
- Listening as well as questioning.
- Taking notes and transcribing them into a report.

Stanley pointed out some things that an ISO auditor should be prepared for when conducting interviews:

- Being perceived like an IRS auditor.

- Facing absences of individuals or entire departments on audit day due to sudden outbreaks of the audit flu.
- Getting doors closed in your face.
- Begging, bribes, and tears. An auditor can neither accept gifts nor show any favoritism.

Breaking In

So you want to be an ISO auditor? Stanley suggested a couple of steps for making this career change. The first step is to go to internal auditor school. You need some ISO experience before taking this class. The second step is to attend lead auditor school after you have gotten some auditing experience. Both courses last four days and cost about \$1,500. Employers usually pay for these courses.

For More Information

To learn more about ISO, check out these web sites:

- The official web site for the ISO (www.iso.ch/iso/en/Isoonline.frontpage)
- American Society for Quality (ASQ) (www.asq.org)

For information about training, check out these web sites:

- Accelerate (www.isoaccel.com)
- Excel Partnership, Inc. (www.xlp.com)

Marc Smircich is a technical communicator with over 15 years of experience documenting human resources, payroll, and financial applications. He is also the treasurer and newsletter editor for the San Francisco Chapter STC.

President's Notes and News

By Susan Becker

Ben Johnson Receives Distinguished Chapter Service Award

Congratulations to Ben Johnson on receiving the Distinguished Chapter Service Award! Ben joined the San Francisco chapter in 1999, while he was a student in the Technical and Professional Writing (TPW) Program at San Francisco State. He served on our chapter board as Secretary/Treasurer and then Treasurer for several years.

Ben was also the driving force behind the creation of our chapter handbook. He suggested that we create a document to detail the tasks of each chapter volunteer; he then recruited a student intern from the TPW Program to develop it and participated on the review committee. Although Ben has now moved to the Silicon Valley chapter because of work and family, he was part of the backbone of our chapter for several years, and we were proud to nominate him for this award. Also, we got to see him again when he attended our March meeting to receive the award from Beau Cane, our Region 8 Director. The citation on his award reads:

For your innovative ideas and valued contributions to the San Francisco chapter.

In case you didn't know, the DCS Award acknowledges the work of chapter members who provide exemplary service to the Society through their dedication to the chapter and its activities. Award winners are nominated by the chapter and approved by the Society's Board of Directors. You can see other chapter members who have received the award on the STC web site: www.stc.org/PDF_Files/STC_Distinguished.pdf

Chapter Scholarship Awarded to Shannon Seaberg

Each year our chapter sponsors a scholarship competition for students in the TPW Program at San Francisco State, the same program that recently

received a certificate of Excellence from the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

This year the scholarship committee awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Shannon Seaberg. The committee believes Shannon exemplifies a strong future in the field of technical writing. She already has a B.A. in English and a B.S. in Biology and Zoology and is currently pursuing her Masters in Ecology and Systematics while she completes her Certificate in Technical and Professional Writing. Shannon's writing samples were excellent; her procedures were clear and precise, well organized and direct.

Patricia Kalman, our Education Manager, presented the award to Shannon at the March chapter meeting. She stated that all the applicants had unique strengths but that Shannon's work, in general, showed a lot of polish-it stood out from the rest.

Transforming the STC in Northern California

The STC Transformation Initiative has appeared in my news and notes regularly in the past year. This month I have news on three fronts.

SF STC. Our chapter has completed rechartering as a geographical community in the STC as part of the Transformation process. Reyn Johnson, who led our effort, has forwarded our application to the Board and we should be officially rechartered soon.

Application is perhaps not the best word to describe what we submitted. It is a response to a series of questions, but reads more like a mission statement and perhaps even a strategic plan, something our chapter did not have before. If you would like to read it, you can find it on our web site at www.stc-sf.org/docs/SF%20Recharter_r3.pdf

As part of the process, we asked to change the name of our chapter to San Francisco Society for Technical Communication or SF STC. I think it's kind of sexy! Well, OK, maybe not.

STC NorCal. About thirty STC members from the six Northern California chapters (Berkeley, East Bay, North Bay, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Silicon Valley) came together for STC NorCal's Leadership Day 3 on March 12.

One of the hot topics that came out of the Leadership Navigator Workshops provided by Marie Highby and Bill Rosenberg was formalizing STC NorCal's status in the STC in order to act regionally on issues like Touchstone and the Gordon Scholarship.

Although workshop participants agreed on the desire to be a formal entity and had plenty of ideas about what we could do, we decided we needed to meet again to begin to work out the details. Tim Bombosch (our Program Manager) is working with Viki Maki (STC NorCal Director) and others to bring together a "constitutional convention" in early June.

If you would like to know more about our chapter's involvement or to join the STC NorCal list serve, let me know.

STC. If you are an STC member, don't forget to vote in the STC election. Cast your ballot to determine the Society Second Vice President (the office that leads to Society President) and the fate of the proposed referendum to change the Society's bylaws. For more information and links, see my column from February.

Last Call!

The next issue of ActiveVOICE (June/July 2005) will include my last crack at the President's News and Notes, so if there is a topic that you've been wishing I would cover, you'd better let me know soon!

Susan Becker is a technical communicator and online help developer. She has 16 years of experience working primarily as a contractor in software development for the financial services and human resources industries.

Third NorCal Leadership Day Held

By Patrick Lufkin

On March 12, about thirty STC members met to discuss the future of STC and to develop the leadership skills needed to meet today's challenges and deliver value to the STC membership. The all-day convocation was held on the Mills College campus in Oakland, and included members from five of the six Northern California STC geographical communities.

Organized under the title "Leadership for the Emerging Future," the one-day conference was the third in a series of NorCal leadership days that have been held over the past several years. The first leadership day was held in December 2002, the second in April 2003.

The first two meetings found the profession coping with a deep recession, and explored such topics as "reducing volunteer burnout" and "alternative jobs for technical communicators." With the economy showing signs of recovery, and the Society in the midst of a transformation, the current meeting focused primarily on building for the future.

STC NorCal Director, Viki Maki, welcomed everyone and got the day off to a rousing start by leading the group in singing "Happy Birthday" to Region 8 Director Beau Cain, who acted as Master of Ceremonies. Marie Highby set the tone for the day with a keynote talk on "New Definitions of Effective Leadership."

The day consisted of a series of breakout sessions. Session subjects varied from the theoretical -- what are the qualities of great leaders? -- to such practical matters as developing impromptu speaking skills. Other sessions dealt with such topics as the Touchstone Competition, the Gordon Scholarship, development of an inter-chapter speaker database, and the ongoing Society Transformation.

Over the course of the three leadership days, those who have participated have

come to develop a genuine sense of community. During the present meeting, this sense of community manifested itself in a decision to explore the possibility that NorCal might become a chartered STC community that could serve the STC in ways that are not really possible at the chapter level. In addition to its role as a leadership incubator, with some development NorCal might also help with Touchstone, the Gordon Scholarship, conferences, and other regional activities.

Several factors entered into the decision:

- A great deal of leadership expertise lies in people who have held offices in the past, but who are not currently holding an STC chapter position. Among other things, NorCal could provide a venue for these people to continue to participate and share their expertise with those who are just starting their careers as STC leaders.
- The collective STC membership in Northern California has long recognized itself as a unique geographical community with a commonality of interests that extend beyond chapter boundaries, but which are often narrower than the boundaries of Region 8. Over the years, the combined Northern California STC membership has repeatedly formed ad hoc committees to manage various area-wide activities, including Touchstone and NorCal itself. While these ad hoc entities have often demonstrated a great deal of creative energy, they have also been plagued with the problems that come with having to continuously "reinvent the wheel." NorCal may be able to help with such efforts by being a repository of knowledge and resources.

Whether STC NorCal can, or should, pursue certification as a recognized community, and if so, what form that community should take, are questions that will require long and thoughtful discussion. A meeting has been tentatively scheduled for June 12 to explore the issues.

Patrick Lufkin is a Senior STC member of both the East Bay and San Francisco chapters. He is currently co-chair of the Kenneth M. Gordon Scholarship. He can be reached at lufkin@ix.netcom.com.

New and Senior Members

New Members

We welcome the following people who joined the chapter during January and February.

- Michael I. Almond
- Erin B. Bernard
- Victoria M. Bias
- Linda J. Burton
- Paula J. Butler
- Ellen A. Chandler
- Pamela Ching
- Andrew T. Davis
- Robert Estrella
- Alison S. Gemmell
- Evanne B. Grate
- Marie B. Highby
- Vanessa Hunnell
- Ben T. Jackson
- Carol A. John
- Patricia Kalman
- Patricia L. Maes
- Melanie M. Meharchand
- Catherine L. Middaugh
- Ellen Perry
- Sudakshina K. Piercy
- Eah E. Scampoli
- Christine Stepan
- Stacia A. Topping
- Margaret E. Zold

Senior Members

The following people achieved senior member status during January and February.

- Julia M. Cope
- Lilac Epstein
- Joseph P. Gorin
- Abby L. Stoner

Getting Rejected

By Howard Miller

Several months ago, I was called to be in a focus group about business owners. I got to the meeting and waited 20 minutes to find out they overbooked the number of attendees needed. I was let go -- with the promised pay!



A couple of weeks ago I was called again, this time about a focus group on Blockbuster Video. I went, waited 20 minutes, and had a sandwich and read the paper. Again they overbooked, didn't pick me, and let me go -- with the promised pay!

On my way home I realized I was thrilled that I was rejected -- twice! It occurred to me perhaps there was always something good about being rejected. If you don't get the job or contract you want, if someone doesn't want to go out with you, it just means something else is going to happen.

When I think of rejection on those terms it enables me:

- To want to be daring and take chances
- To ignore the insecurity talk and go for what I want
- To be poised for all the good and not so good because in the end, it's all good!

So here's to trusting it'll all work out -- easier to do when things are going your way and much important to do when you are "rejected."

Howard Miller has been training, consulting and coaching for over 15 years. He currently works part time as a results coach for the Tony Robbins Corporation. In addition to his extensive work with corporate and individual clients, he brings about in people the ability to supply capability for action. Howard firmly believes that if people were more accountable to themselves, they would have more self-respect, which ultimately

leads to a better world. Howard Miller is founder of Howard Miller Consulting at www.hsmillerconsulting.com.

ActiveVOICE Article Submission Policies

The ActiveVOICE welcomes articles from technical communicators. Having a published article is a good addition to your portfolio. This document describes the guidelines for submitting an article to this newsletter. If you have any questions, you can email the editor at newsletter@stc-sf.org.

Publication Information

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Submission Guidelines

Submit all articles via email to the newsletter editor (newsletter@stc-sf.org) in either of the following ways:

- Microsoft Word format as an attachment.
- Plain ASCII text in the message body or as an attachment.

If your article contains copyrighted materials, you are responsible for obtaining permission for the ActiveVOICE to publish the copyrighted materials.

Please include the following with your article:

- Your name. Please spell it exactly as you want it published.
- The title of the article. If you get to choose the title, make it descriptive and inviting. When readers are looking at the front page of the online newsletter, the title is the only basis they have for deciding whether to click on the link to your article.

NOTE: For recurring monthly articles, such as reviews of meetings, you do not get to choose the title.

- Headings. Please include headings so that it is easy for busy readers to scan your article (just as you do when reading technical publications). Headings are especially important when people are reading online. If your article does not have headings, the editor may add them.
- A brief bio (no more than 50 to 75 words). This bio is a chance for you to say a little bit about yourself that you want to share with the world.

Articles Published

The ActiveVOICE publishes the following kinds of articles:

- Reviews of previous meetings. Each edition contains reviews of previous meetings. Normally, they should be no more than 1,000 words, but some meetings may require a longer article for adequate coverage. The purpose of these articles to provide a summary of the meeting for those who did not attend.

- Columns by STC officials. To keep our audience informed of what is happening with the STC, the newsletter accepts articles from STC officers at the chapter, regional, and international levels.
- Publicity for STC events and other professional organizations. The newsletter accepts publicity articles for conferences, seminars, and other events sponsored by the STC, an STC chapter, an STC SIG, and closely related non-profit organizations.
- Articles related to technical communication. The newsletter accepts software reviews, book reviews, information about industry trends, tips on how to use popular software packages, and other such articles. To be accepted for publication, the primary purpose of the article must be to inform and educate, rather than to market a particular product or service. If you have an idea for an article, please contact the newsletter editor at newsletter@stc-sf.org.

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