

In This Edition

Announcements of Upcoming Meetings

- » August 2005 Meeting -- Get Organized for Success, presented by Emily Wilska (page 1)
- » September 2005 -- Visio for Technical Communicators, presented by Beau Cain (page 1)

Reviews of Previous Meetings

- » May 2005 Meeting -- What You Need to Know about Security, presented by Mark Kadrich and reviewed by Patrick Lufkin (page 2)
- » June 2005 Meeting -- How to Use a Portfolio to Ace a Job Interview, presented by Jack Molisani and reviewed by Patrick Lufkin (page 3)

Chapter News

- » Vice-President's Notes and News, by Tim Bombosch (page 4)
- » New and Transferred Members, by Marc Smircich (page 4)

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For information about copyrights, reprinting articles, and submitting articles, see the article submission policies on page 5.

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.

August 2005 Meeting -- Get Organized for Success

Presented by Emily Wilska

The August meeting is on Wednesday, August 17, 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

Whether you work alone from a corner of the dining room table or oversee a large staff from the corner executive suite, getting organized can help increase productivity, decrease stress, and boost your professionalism.

Gone are the days when a messy desk was a sign of a creative, free-thinking genius and being late to meetings was considered fashionable. To succeed and thrive in the modern world of work, it's become increasingly important to take charge of your office, your files, and your schedule.

But if the thought of trying to attack the stacks of paper towering on your desk or trying to fit one more meeting into your already packed schedule sends you fleeing, you're not alone: the prospect of getting organized can be a daunting one, especially when the "rules" of organization seem overly rigid and out of touch with the demands of the average workday.

In this presentation, we'll cover some of the benefits of an organized office, regardless of its size or location. We'll also look at some of the biggest hurdles to getting organized in the first place, or to staying organized once you're there. Finally, we'll focus on some realistic, flexible, and effective methods of making organization a painless part of your workday.

About the Speaker

Emily Wilska spent seven years as a writer and User Assistance lead for MSN TV before leaving to start her own professional organizing company, The Organized Life (organizedlife.org). In addition to working with clients to organize their homes, offices, and travels, she does freelance creative and technical writing and is a volunteer copyeditor for Boxes and Arrows (boxesandarrows.com).



Emily's previous speaking engagements include the April 2004 San Francisco chapter meeting, the 2004 STC International Conference, the 2004 Conference of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of NAPO (National Association of Professional Organizers), and the 2005 WritersUA Conference.

September 2005 Meeting -- Visio for Technical Communicators

Presented by Beau Cain

The September meeting is on Wednesday, September 21, 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

Microsoft Visio is likely the simplest software program to use: one simply drags and drops objects onto a page to create a diagram. But it takes more than just dragging and dropping objects onto a page to create effective diagrams.

Beau Cain demonstrates some of Visio's less obvious features while he describes how to convert procedures into diagrams. Along the way, Cain will show how to find and use the many categories

ries of objects that Visio offers, as well as how to perform some unobvious tasks, such as sizing diagrams for inclusion in pages, creating new objects and adding them to stencils, continuing a flowchart or other kind of diagram on more than one page, and adding hyperlinking hotspots in objects.

About the Speaker

Beau Cain is a technical communication consultant who troubleshoots documentation projects. Although not a graphic artist, Cain routinely creates his own simple diagrams to be included in documents he creates or troubleshoots, and he fluently uses Visio, Windows Paint, and even the drawing features in MS Word and PowerPoint to save his clients time and money.



Cain is currently enjoying his second year of a three-year term as an elected official on the Society's Board of Directors.

May 2005 Meeting -- What You Need to Know about Security

Presented by Mark Kadrich and reviewed by Patrick Lufkin

Computer security is a major problem and it is growing worse.

Attacks and infections aimed at your computer or network can clog up your system, erase or steal your data, invade your privacy, steal your identity, spy on your shopping and surfing habits, and make you an unwitting participant in fraud and attacks on others. In May, Mark Kadrich treated the attendees at the monthly meeting of the San Francisco STC to a whirlwind tour of the security issues that all computer users -- not just technical communicators -- need to be aware of.

Kadrich is a senior scientist with Sygate Technologies, a firm that provides end-point security solutions for business. Mark has been in computer security more than 20 years. Before joining Syg-

ate he built firewall systems for Oracle, Cisco Systems, and Netscape and was director of security for a large ISP.

His message was clear: if you use a computer, use email, or connect to the Internet, you are under attack and you need to take steps to protect yourself.

Scope of Problem

The extent of the problem is staggering. In 2004 computers suffered an estimated 37 million infections, up about 8 percent from the year before. Kadrich said a scan of more than 3 million PCs done by AOL found 83 million pieces of spyware, for an average of 25 pieces of spyware per PC. The same scan found nearly 500 thousand system monitors and more than 500 thousand Trojans. It is estimated that 90 percent of Internet computers are infected by at least one type.

Security people often classify infections by their behavior. The major types are adware, spyware, viruses, worms, bots and Trojans. For those new to the terminology, adware displays ads on your computer while certain programs are running. Spyware sends information about you (user ID, passwords, keystrokes typed, internet sites visited) back to the "mother ship." Viruses and worms and are malicious code designed to annoy and destroy in various ways; they might do anything from displaying an insulting pop-up message to reformatting your hard drive. The main difference is that a virus requires a user action (such as clicking on an infected program) to start working, while a worm can start on its own. Bots (short for robots) are pieces of purpose-filled code that can interact with a system as if they are a person. A Trojan (from Trojan horse) is a program that appears benign, while doing something harmful in the background. Trojans are used to allow someone unknown to you to take complete control of your computer, which can then be used to relay SPAM, clean out your bank account, and so on.

The problem is also expensive. Kadrich said viruses and worms cost business \$55 billion in 2003 and are estimated

to have cost more than twice that -- well over \$100 billion -- in 2004. About half the cost is actual damage; half is the cost of security to ward off attacks, he said.

Growth of the Dark Side

Kadrich stressed that while the dark side of computing has long been with us, it has become much more sophisticated and dangerous in recent years.

Early on, the threat came largely from teen-age hackers -- Kadrich calls them 'script kiddies' -- who broke into systems for the sake of malicious mischief and the challenge and adventure of going where they weren't supposed to be. They wrote and released destructive code in a spirit of rebellion and to earn bragging rights among their peers. Most of the code they produced was pretty sloppy, Kadrich said.

While the script kiddies are still with us, so are seasoned professionals. As Kadrich tells it, yesterday's kids have grown up, have families to support, and now sell their skills to people whose purposes are far more evil and focused -- people bent on various forms of theft and on corporate and civil disruption.

The new professionals have the skills and patience to disassemble entire operating systems byte by byte looking for vulnerabilities to exploit, Kadrich said. When they find one, they write an exploit and use it, but keep the knowledge of the vulnerability to themselves. The exploits they write are often blended threats that share the characteristics of both viruses and worms.

By the time a good guy finds and reports the vulnerability, Kadrich said, the bad guys have already had months to use it. Once discovered, the bad guys release it to the world as a zero day threat -- one that the world knows nothing about and is totally unprepared for.

Such zero day threats can be tremendously disruptive. It will usually take the world 30 to 90 days to get and apply patches to close the vulnerability. In the meantime, the threats are free to run through the network, often spreading

with blistering speed. Within 25 minutes, Sasser infected 75 percent of the vulnerable systems in the world, Kadrich said. At such speeds, he calculates, whole networks can be brought down in less than 20 seconds, and kept down for days.

What Can Be Done

Whether you use a computer at home, or are on a business network, there are steps you should take to protect yourself. Kadrich stressed that it is important to use a layered approach; and that there is no silver bullet that can protect you from everything.

- Live behind one or more firewalls. Firewalls use hardware and software to hide your machine from attackers and to filter out those attacks whose signatures they recognize.
- Use access control -- IDs and passwords.
- Keep your anti-virus software and definitions up to date. Anti-virus software scans incoming email and programs you are installing for known viruses. New viruses are being written all the time; your anti-virus software can't protect you from what it doesn't know about.
- Keep your operating system and applications patched. When a vulnerability is discovered, a patch (or fix) is written by the vendor to close the vulnerability. The patch can't protect you if it hasn't been applied.
- Live a clean life. Many infections result from visiting websites. If, out of curiosity, you (or your kids) visit hacker websites where malicious code is traded, you can expect to get mugged. Stay out of those places.

People and Policy

While technology got us into this mess, and must be used to help get us out of it, Kadrich stressed that security solutions do not work in a vacuum. You also need good policy covering access to systems and data, mandating the updating and use of security measures, setting the steps to be taken in case of

attack, and so on. "Policy is the underlying foundation for the application of all security products," Kadrich said, because without policy you can't apply, test, or enforce any of the other measures you may be taking. Without enforced policy, people will subvert whatever protection you thought you had.

Patrick Lufkin is Secretary of the San Francisco chapter, and co-chair of the Gordon Technical Communication Scholarship.

June 2005 Meeting -- How to Use a Portfolio to Ace a Job Interview

Presented by Jack Molisani and reviewed by Patrick Lufkin

Many technical communicators treat portfolios simply as collections of their work. If they have produced it, they include it. Such an approach fattens a portfolio, and may alleviate anxieties about not having something on hand when needed, but it does little to make you stand out from the crowd. This June, Jack Molisani visited the San Francisco chapter to discuss another approach.

Molisani is the founder and president of ProSpring, Inc., a technical placement agency, and LavaCon, Inc., an international conference for technical project management. He is a very active member of STC, and was chair of the 2000 STC Pan-Pacific Conference in Hawaii.

At the end of the meeting, Molisani held a drawing for free attendance at the upcoming LavaCon conference. It was won by outgoing chapter president, Susan Becker.

Rather than using the portfolio as a sample collection to be scanned by the client or dipped into at opportune moments, Molisani suggests using the portfolio to control the interview.

Because people respond to stories, and tend to believe what they are shown even more than what they are told, he carefully arranges his portfolio to tell the

story that sells the idea that he is right for the job.

Molisani arranges his portfolio to:

- Establish that he is an expert
- Show that he has really done what he claims to have done
- Make the interviewers see that he has already solved the kind of problems they are having and can do the same for them.

Molisani carefully selects material for his portfolio to support each of these points. Specifically he suggests using the following arrangement:

- Project plan
- The results of the plan
- Samples tailored to the client
- Awards and Recognitions (PR stuff)
- Statistics
- A radical before-and-after sample

A good plan gives you a chance to show that you have "been there," and that you understand the development or documentation process.

If you have done a plan for a project you have worked on, use it. If you haven't, Molisani suggests that, for portfolio purposes, you can do a plan in reverse: think of a project you have worked on and record how it should have been planned. You can even mention what you have done in the interview -- while pointing out how much better the project would have gone if it had been so planned from the beginning. The important thing is that, as a portfolio piece, the project plan gives you a chance to discuss what you know about managing a project, which goes a long way toward establishing your expertise.

Next, Molisani suggests, show the results of the plan. This can be the manual you produced, but it can also be advertisements for the product, data sheets, product reviews, or anything else that shows that the project was a success.

As an example, Molisani showed a review that was published in PC Magazine that stated that a product he had worked on was easy to install because of the excellent documentation. A review like that, Molisani suggested, may go a lot further than showing the documentation itself.

Speaking of samples, Molisani made a number of points:

- Tailor the samples to the client.
- Be proactive. Get permission to show work while you are still working on a project, and get it in writing. If there are confidentially issues, see if there are parts of the work that you can show.
- You don't have to wait to have a job to create samples. He suggests creating as many samples as you can with as many authoring tools as possible.
- Find something that is really bad and rewrite it; then use it as a before-and-after sample.

If you have awards and recognitions, include them. They serve to bolster your standing as an expert. If you have statistics, include them; they are useful in demonstrating that hiring you would give the client a good return on their investment. An example would be a testimonial saying that calls to the support center had decreased as a result of the Getting Started guide you produced.

Finally, Molisani suggests ending off with a radical before-and-after sample. Molisani showed a chart that had been scribbled on a napkin, followed by a neat, well organized chart that had been made using a graphics program. A radical sample drives home the idea that you can bring order out of the usual workplace chaos, and reinforces the idea that you are an expert who can produce.

What more could the client want?

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.

Vice-President's Notes and News

By Tim Bombosch

Greetings Chapter Members!

I'm writing on behalf of our president, Julia Cope, who is out of the country right now. Here is a summary of what is happening with the chapter.

First of all, I want to thank Susan Becker on behalf of the chapter. She has passionately and ably represented our chapter at every level of the society for a number of years now, and she is taking her duties as "Immediate Past President" very seriously. We're lucky to have someone with such a great sense of humor and duty keeping an eye out for the chapter. Thank you Susan! We're glad you did such a great job! We look forward to having you on our side!

The next thing I'd like to mention is that while Marc Smircich has been a perfect chapter treasurer, he is looking to retire from that role. If you know of an able and willing candidate, including yourself, please contact any chapter officer with your suggestion.

We have a lot of good news to report:

- The transition to the new slate of officers has gone well.
- Julia has taken a firm role in leading us, and we will be well led.
- Our group of volunteer leaders remains strong.
- We are also one of the fastest growing chapters for our size in the STC.

Julia and I have decided to divide our duties as follows: While we will both be involved in all chapter activities, she will focus primarily on internal chapter matters and I on relations with other Northern California chapters.

On the Northern California front, leaders from all Northern California chapters have been consulting and

meeting to ask how we can create a Northern California leadership council which would support chapters and regional activities. There is strong interest in this movement, and we'll keep you informed as things progress.

There was a bit of a disappointment recently. Those charged with organizing the Northern California Technical Communications Competition (NCTCC), otherwise known as Touchstone, had to report that there were not enough key volunteers to go forward with the competition. Many people put in a lot of work to revive the competition, but the human resources simply weren't there. I'd like to thank two chapter members for their efforts -- Gilbert Gonzalez, who had volunteered to be the Director, and Susan Becker, who was a dynamic support to Gilbert and his team. In my personal opinion, the competition is an ambitious undertaking and may need some revisioning in the future.

Finally, I'd like to ask you to consider volunteering your talents to the chapter. We are a lively bunch and enjoy working together to serve our members and profession. If you have any desire to volunteer, or just want to volunteer your opinion, our ears are open.

New and Transferred Members

By Marc Smircich

We welcome those who have chosen to become part of the San Francisco chapter during May and June. The STC membership report includes the following new members and transfers from other chapters:

- Paul A. Goldman
- Glenn S. Goodrich
- Heather M. Hayse
- Marcus Jordan
- Roger G. Mainard
- Peter Marques
- Aprille J. Pihl
- Mary C. Rosberg
- Karen R. Scipi
- Kim M. Shain

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 look-

ing 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 is 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.

Editorial Discretion

The Society for Technical Communication, San Francisco Chapter reserves the right to edit all submitted articles for length and appropriateness. The chapter is the sole arbiter of whether to accept an article for publication and when to publish it, either in whole or in part.

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