

SAN FRANCISCO  
December 2000

# ActiveVOICE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATIONS, SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

## December 20th Party

### Great door prizes, plus Touchstone winners on display

For chapter members and leaders only; ticket and advance registration required.

Instead of an open meeting, for this holiday month we're inviting all of our chapter members to mingle with their professional peers in a festive atmosphere. We'll be showcasing great conversation starters, too: selected winners from the Touchstone 1999 Northern California Technical Communication Competition. Wine and food will be included, as well, all for \$15.

Plus, you may win big! We'll be raffling thousands of dollars in door prizes, generously donated by eHelp, Quadralay, and Adobe. How does three days of RoboHELP training sound? Could you use a WebWorks training CD? We'll also be giving away current versions of RoboHELP, Adobe Framemaker, Adobe Acrobat, and Adobe Type Manager. Not to mention cool eHelp t-shirts.

So, please join us! Note: If you're a member of our chapter, but didn't receive your raffle ticket postcard with advance registration instructions, *contact Lu Rebling: [reblingl@sfsu.edu](mailto:reblingl@sfsu.edu)*.

## January 17th Meeting

### The 16 Most Popular Interview Questions

Presenter: Carole Hall

Have you ever been asked a question in an interview that made your mind go blank? Any question asked by an interviewer could cause problems if you're not prepared.

In this Q & A session, attendees will join in, providing answers to 16 questions that interviewers love to ask. Carole Hall's discussion of responses will help all who attend learn how to handle almost any interview situation—even those dreaded team-style interviews.

Carole Hall has been a technical communicator for many years and her company, HallTech, has provided writing and training consulting for both large and small Bay Area businesses and organizations. For the past five years, she has taught technical communication courses for universities and for local companies. Hall also is the author of a handbook, "Instructions & Procedures That Work."

**SEE INSIDE FOR MEETING TIMES, LOCATION, & MORE DETAILS!**



society for technical communication

## Officers

### President

Lu Rehling  
rehlingl@sfsu.edu  
(415) 338-3988

### Vice President

Ancilla Allsman  
allsmanwork@aol.com

### Secretary-Treasurer

Susan Becker  
sbecker@codewords.com

## Programs

### Manager

Kevin Kraynak  
kevin@kraynakk.com

### Committee

Keith Albert  
eidolon16@yahoo.com

## Publicity

### Email List

Bob Seitz  
bobseitz@tsoft.com

### Webmaster

Todd Hawley  
thawley@tdl.com

### Phone Hotline

Jennifer Crawford  
jrc10776@aol.com

## Hospitality

### Manager

Reyn Johnson  
rjohnson@cybersource.com

## Membership

### Manager

Marc Smircich  
marc@qss.com

## Newsletter

### Editor

Joe Gorin  
gorinclan@aol.com

### Production

Ancilla Allsman  
allsmanwork@aol.com

### Contributor

Carol Fager  
sailgirl@sirius.com

## Competition

### Liaison

Bill Westbrook  
wwestbro@aol.com

## Education

### Manager

Lu Rehling  
rehlingl@sfsu.edu

## Employment

### Manager

Yvette Helmers  
publication@earthlink.net

# Management Tips and Tricks for the Technical Writer

*by Reyn Johnson and Joe Gorin*

Beginning and veteran technical writers got some helpful hints on how to manage people in business from Meryl Natchez at the September meeting of our chapter. Natchez is a past president of the San Francisco chapter of STC and currently the CEO of TechProse in Lafayette. TechProse specializes in outsourcing technical writing, training, and development, as well as placing individual consultants on client projects as needed.

## Technical communication management challenges

The first subject Natchez discussed was the challenges technical communication project managers faced in the real world of technical writing. These include customers or bosses changing their minds about deadlines or changing the scope of projects. Also, project managers may find that their progress is further halted by a lack of access to subject matter experts, an inability to adhere to review cycles because of conflicting demands of multiple projects, and cranky corporate personnel.

## Success basics

There is a way to avoid the pitfalls described above and achieve success. Natchez says that first you have to find the right people—those technical writers who can get the job done with a minimum of direction. Another is to create and use a detailed plan and a proven process. A plan helps keep you on track.

Another important aspect of the project manager's job is to remove obstacles. Your job as project manager is to "drive the route." This phrase is analogous to navigating trees and wires when moving a house. Keep status reports to a minimum—the major items on a status report should be "Are there any delays? Are there any problems?" Keep the customer in

the loop and have them participate in the process. It is a key to success.

Natchez believes that project managers also should focus on what they can do today to keep people on track and monitor their progress. A manager should provide clear and measurable objectives for each team member.

## The hard part of management

There is a difficult part to being a manager—what does a project manager do with non-performers? According to Natchez, don't be afraid to be the bad guy. Project managers should not be afraid to discipline. Get rid of saboteurs and non-performers. Managers should reward smart work and not busy work. Encourage ongoing education for your people and touch base with them regularly to see how they are doing.

## Managing yourself

Lastly, managers, should manage themselves. First, you should reserve your most productive hours for uninterrupted work. Second, schedule blocks of time for you to work and screen your calls.

Personal goal setting is important. A project manager should set long and short-term goals. Project managers should monitor these goals regularly and revise them as needed. Natchez said managers should keep in mind that they will never get everything done that they need to, so they need remember to prioritize and delegate. It also helps if you remember the magic words: communicate, communicate, communicate.

*Reyn Johnson is the chapter Hospitality Manager and a technical writer for Cybersource in Mountain View: rjohnson@cybersource.com.*

*Joe Gorin edits Active Voice: gorinclan@aol.com.*

# A New Design Tool

by Dale McIntire

If you need a heavy-duty layout program that can handle lots of colors and complex graphics, then Adobe Systems' new InDesign 1.5 may be for you. Lisa Forrester, an applications engineer at Adobe Systems, demonstrated InDesign at the October meeting of our chapter.

"This is direct competition to Quark Express," Forrester said. (Quark Express is a magazine industry standard layout program from Quark Inc.) Forrester also said that technical writers generally don't use this kind of program, for long documents, such as manuals. However, sometimes writers may create pieces using a tool like InDesign. A basic familiarity with what the software can do is helpful.

## The basic look

The basic look of InDesign will be recognizable to anyone who has worked with Adobe PhotoShop, Illustrator, or PageMaker. It is designed to work seamlessly with Adobe products "providing a single, integrated design environment." InDesign uses the same shortcut keys and has many of the same toolbars. It also accepts native PhotoShop and QuarkXPress files.

Forrester demonstrated the integration of InDesign with other Adobe products by starting a layout in InDesign. She clicked on a picture and ran Photoshop 6.0 from within the program to modify the picture. When Forrester finished working on the picture in Photoshop, she closed the program and was returned to InDesign—which prompted her to save the file and pick up the changes in the layout.

InDesign also allows you to modify a graphic file without affecting the original. For example, if you lay out a picture in InDesign and later change it in Photoshop, InDesign will tell you to save it again. You also can save images in

InDesign and edit them without affecting the original file.

InDesign can zoom images to 4000 percent and handles page sizes up to 18 X 18 feet. It also reads six lines ahead to decide where to hyphenate or break lines. Photoshop and Quark Express only read one line ahead. "You no longer have to manually go in and hand edit," Forrester said.

## New features

Unlike other Adobe Products, InDesign is modular. Most of the features are separate programs called by a small main program. Forrester said this architecture allows Adobe to innovate faster. Version 1.0 was followed a few months later by version 1.5 with 180 new features. The modular design also allows third-party programmers to write plug-ins that integrate with InDesign the same way that programmers have written tools for Visual Basic.

Some of the features demonstrated include:

- Unlimited undo.
- Eyedropper, which copies and pastes colors and type styles from one object to another.
- Display Postscript, which sends the image to the screen so you don't have to print it to see where you are.

Finally, Forrester showed SmartLayout, a third party plug-in that automatically flows text around images and objects.

InDesign supports open type fonts and is available for the Macintosh and the PC. It ships with 13 languages and 20 dictionaries, and it has hyphenation and spell check in the other languages.

Those technical writers that are involved with graphics in the course of their work may be interested in trying out InDesign 1.5.

*Dale McIntire is an aspiring technical writer: dalepmc@pacbell.net.*

## Our Meetings

We meet the third Wednesday of every month.

Downstairs at the London Wine Bar: 415 Sansome between Sacramento & Clay.

6 pm: Networking and hors d'oeuvres; 7 pm: Program.

Cost: \$10 STC Members; \$12 non-members; \$8 students; first-timers free with coupon (from our web site).

## Directions

### From BART

Get off at the Montgomery BART Station. Leave by the "Sansome Sutter" exit and walk straight ahead.

### From the East Bay

Take the Bay Bridge (Hwy 80). Take the first exit, Fremont. Follow Fremont across Market, where it becomes Front. Go 1 block. Turn left onto Pine. Go 2 blocks. Turn right onto Sansome. Go 2 blocks.

### From the Peninsula

Take Hwy 101 heading N. Continue on Interstate 80 heading NE. Take the 4th St./Embarcadero exit. Continue straight on Bryant for 1 block. Turn left on 3rd. Turn right on Folsom. Turn left on Fremont. Follow Fremont across Market, where it becomes Front. Bear right on Front. Turn left on Pine. Go 2 blocks. Turn right on Sansome.

### From the North Bay

Take Hwy 101 heading S. Turn left on Broadway heading E. Go down Columbus heading SE. Bear right on Montgomery. Turn left on California. Turn left on Sansome.

### Parking

The closest parking garage is at One Embarcadero Center. The entrance is located on Battery between Sacramento and Clay.

# President's Notes and News *By Lu Rebling*

*Lu Rebling is Manager of Information Development for AvantGo, Inc. She is on leave of absence from her position as Director of the Technical & Professional Writing Program at San Francisco State University. Email: reblingl@sfsu.edu; phone: (415) 338-3988.*

## Welcome to Our Chapter!

### New STC Members

John J. Alt  
Penny J. Anderson  
Susan G. Elliot  
Julian A. Estrada  
Harrison C. Heyl  
Charles M. Huntington  
Johnathan Meier  
Drue Miller  
Martha Palazzolo

Less than 5% of our membership runs this chapter for the other 95%. If you're in the 5% group, thanks. If you're in the 95% group, you're welcome. Sincerely.

Fortunately, all on our leadership team seem motivated to keep our chapter's programs and services active for everyone. We volunteer because we should and because it's good for our professional development, too: we learn, we burnish our resumes, we network, and so on. Still, we're always looking for help and can't all stay in our roles forever.

Why mention this now? Currently we're forming our committee to nominate officers for election next year. I'd like to persuade some of you 95%-ers to join that nominating group, to run for a chapter office yourself, or to take on another leadership role. If you're interested, please be in touch. We 5%-ers would be happy to have you join us!

## San Francisco Chapter Information

**Web Site:** [stc.org/region8/sfc/www](http://stc.org/region8/sfc/www) **Phone Hotline:** (415) 561-9204

**Email List:** [bobseitz@tsoft.com](mailto:bobseitz@tsoft.com) [Subject: SF STC mailing list]

## Regional STC Chapter Meetings

**San Francisco chapter** meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month.

For details: [stc.org/region8/sfc/www](http://stc.org/region8/sfc/www)

**Silicon Valley chapter** meets the 4th Thursday of each month.

For details: [stc.org/region8/svc/www](http://stc.org/region8/svc/www)

**Berkeley chapter** meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

For details: [www.stc-berkeley.org](http://www.stc-berkeley.org)

**East Bay chapter** meets the 2nd Thursday of each month.

For details: [stc.org/region8/ebc/www](http://stc.org/region8/ebc/www)

**North Bay chapter** meets the 3rd Thursday of each month.

For details: [stc.org/region8/nbc/www](http://stc.org/region8/nbc/www)

**Sacramento chapter** meets the 1st Wednesday of each month.

For details: [www.calweb.com/users/s/sacstc](http://www.calweb.com/users/s/sacstc)

## San Francisco Chapter STC

P.O. Box 2706

San Francisco, CA 94126