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Intuit's Knowledge Management

Creating and maintaining accurate and appropriate content for software applications is challenging, especially in a rapid-development, multi-version environment. With two releases a year and more than ten different versions of QuickBooks, the Knowledge Management (KM) Team at Intuit's Tucson location was struggling to keep up.

KM Team Content Manager **Sara James** describes the application of Six Sigma methodologies to measure, analyze, and make improvements to Intuit's processes. Sara discusses how these methodologies resulted in significant improvements to productivity and customer satisfaction, as well as additional initiatives that are currently underway in content management and other areas.

Save the Date: Thursday, March 11

Where: Tucson Courtyard by Marriott, 201 S. Williams Blvd. (in the Williams Centre near Broadway and Craycroft).

Registration and networking: 5:30 to 6 p.m.

Dinner and program: 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Menu: Roasted turkey, baked potatoes with sour cream and chives, sweet potatoes, and steamed vegetables. Served with assorted soft drinks, iced tea, bottled water, and dessert.

Cost: \$15 for members and \$20 for nonmembers. Never attended a Southern Arizona Chapter meeting? Use the **\$5 Off Coupon** on page 3!

RSVP: Send an e-mail message to Helen Marty (hmarty@cox.net) by 4 p.m. on Monday, March 8. No-shows will be billed. Walk-ins are always welcome, but we cannot guarantee a meal. ■

**Mission statement for
STC's Southern
Arizona Chapter:**

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

Clip and Save:

Chapter Program Schedule

Southern Arizona Chapter – 2003/2004

September 11:

Network and Nibble

October 9:

Trends in Technical Communication Panel Discussion *

November 13:

Getting User Input During Development, Not After

December 11:

Holiday Party and Silent Auction

January 23:

National STC Board Meeting

February 12:

Whine and Cheese

March 11:

Intuit's Knowledge Management Implementation – **Sara James**

April 8:

Avoid Clichés Like the Plague: A Lighthearted Safari through the Jungle of the English Language – **Dave Carlson and Victoria Yuki**

May 20:

Recognition party and awards

June through August:

Summer sabbatical

Unless otherwise noted, programs are held on the second Thursday of each month at the Courtyard by Marriott, 201 S. Williams Blvd. (in the Williams Centre near Broadway and Craycroft, in Tucson, Arizona). Program schedule is subject to change without notice; for up-to-date meeting information, visit www.stc-saz.org.

* Meeting handouts are available at www.stc-saz.org/resources.html. ■



Review: Last Month's Program

Kitty Aughey, Program Manager

The February program – our annual progression meeting – was a great success! The topic was Instructional Design.

There were three excellent speakers, each presiding over a table: **P. Michael Carter**, M.Ed., a full-time faculty member working in the Instructional Design and Development Center at Pima Community College; **Dr. Margaret Raisglid**, Director of Content for Persistech, LLC; and **Karen Martin**, president of eStudio for Learning. Each speaker had a unique presentation; all were terrific!

Kudos go to **Brenda Huettner** who developed and coordinated this program and kept us on schedule as we moved from table to table.

The meeting resulted in 16 evaluations (out of 26 attendees), with an overall score of 3.8 out of a possible 4. Comments from attendees include:



- Great group, great meeting!
- This definitely needs to be repeated next year!
- Enjoyed - thank you!
- Wow!
- Great information and interaction!
- Speakers were prepared and concise.
- Great information and easy to understand for beginners.
- What great presenters – all so different and all so good!
- The progression format was super! ■

Don't belong to the STC yet? Want to just check out our chapter? Clip this coupon to save \$5.

STC, Southern Arizona Chapter

Nonmember \$5 Off Coupon

Save \$5 at Your First Meeting

We encourage nonmembers to attend a chapter program to learn about the STC and the Southern Arizona Chapter. Bring this completed coupon to the first chapter program you attend, and you'll save \$5 off the cost of admission.

Name (please print): _____

E-mail address: _____

Date of program: _____



Letter from Linda

Linda Oestreich, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

Here's an article written by Rahel Bailie, the Director-Sponsor for Region 7. Since I haven't written another lately, I thought you might want this. As usual, Rahel has done a great job and written an article that makes us think.

In the driver's side pocket of my car door, I keep a red clown nose, those foam bulbs you find in joke shops. I got it from a dynamic speaker who talked about giving ourselves permission to be an oddball, to shock people out of complacency by daring to be different. I don't use the nose all the time, but in the times I have, the nose has effectively deflected road rage (who can resist a middle-aged woman in a Jaguar with a red foam nose?), helped me make traffic maneuvers requiring the cooperation of an adjacent driver, and brought smiles to the drivers around me. It's weird, but a powerful tool.

Being weird, the outsider, the oddball, has never bothered me much...

Being weird, the outsider, the oddball, has never bothered me much. So you can see why I like this quote from Tom Peters: "The only way to effect true transformation in the workplace is to enlist the outliers in your organization to your cause. Find the weirdos and the freaks, offer support for the projects they're secretly pursuing, then get them to help you with your own revolutionary change ideas."

I – and many other technical communicators – identify with being an "outlier" in an organization.

Part of the reason I like this quote is because I – and many other technical communicators – identify with being an "outlier" in an organization. TechComm has traditionally been seen as an outlying department. Until recently, we hadn't been seen as a group poised to help an organization go through "revolutionary change." But as the importance of good user experience takes hold, we are clarifying our license to contribute, and contribute in ways that the corporation has really thought of until now.

As I've discussed in previous columns, the global economic shift is pushing us to become contributors of value. To contribute value, we have to change the way we think about business and think about our skills.

Now, more than ever, we need to "think weird." Some may call it thinking outside the box. But that expression has become trite, and the inner bureaucrat has used that concept to promote bureaucratic thinking in new and different ways. That's not what I mean here. I mean, we have to think, weird. Embrace your inner clown (my apologies to past STC president, Mary Wise, who actually went to Clown School before becoming a technical communicator) or your inner wildbrain (as coined by Dale Douten to describe certain types of people whose creative genius often goes unrecognized, and too often punished, in the workplace). Tap into ways of working, ways of managing, ways of being that shake up the hunker-down-till-the-economy-picks-up attitude we've taken on.

What would this look like in your professional life? What could this look like? Let me counter that with a question for you: How far can you stretch your imagination? Let me give you a small example with big implications.

Scene: An software engineering firm creating C code, about to branch out into C++ using UML. The developers want to use the code comments to generate the bulk of the API documentation. Is this a techcomm nightmare, or a fabulous opportunity?

Cut to: The "inside the box" thinker who says: *Oh no, we'll be reduced to glorified proofreaders. Give me back my control over the documentation!*

Cut to: The “out of the box” thinker says: *Great, once we clean up the comments in the source code, I'll spend less time maintaining this documentation, and have more time for other things.*

Now cut to: The weird thinker, who is so out of the box that they're in a whole other box, says: *Wow, what a concept! How can I leverage that technology or a similar one to get that same result on other projects? Maybe I can eliminate most of the production work and spend my time doing strategic thinking to add end-user value!*

This is a true story, and as you may guess, I was the “weird thinker.” (If I wasn't, the story would have been told from an entirely different perspective.) When that situation arose, my in-the-box colleagues branded me a renegade, a troublemaker. Why couldn't we just churn out work like we'd been doing for years? Wasn't that our core business – editing documents using the assembly-line production model?

Now, after barely weathering the economic storm, the department is no longer. The I-like-the-box thinkers have moved on, some to other in-the-box positions, others to new in-the-box opportunities. The “weird thinker,” on the other hand, became a consultant, bringing out-of-the-box thinking to clients as a “strategic contributor who can write.” Happy clients, happy consultant.

In the various informational interviews I give, I hear people ask a similar question in many different ways: Where does one start in the quest to “think weird”? How do I differentiate myself from the rest of the market? How can I get someone to “pick me” from amongst their choices? The answers are as varied and personal as the number of questioners. I imagine it's much like beginning any other venture – a diet, a fitness program, or even therapy – that requires self-reflection and action. For me, it started with that little red ball of foam. ■



2004 Chapter Election Candidates

Helen Marty, Chapter Immediate Past President

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce our preliminary slate of candidates for local Chapter offices for fiscal year 2004 – 2005. We have some terrific candidates, people we think will contribute to our Chapter and to the technical communication community. I'd like to thank the Committee (**Judy McCabe** and **Rick House**) for all their hard work in a short time frame.

Any Chapter member can submit a nomination for someone else to be added to the ballot. The nomination must be in writing, and must be signed by five voting members of the Chapter. Send the nomination to Chapter President Pat Markey (c/o P.O. Box 14333, Tucson, AZ 85732-4333). Nominations must be received by March 12.

The nominees have prepared the following statements:

Candidate for President

In accordance with our Chapter bylaws, the office of President will be assumed in 2004 – 2005 by current Vice President **Kitty Aughey**.

Kitty has spent twenty years in professional technical communication as a writer, editor, supervisor, and manager of writers at Eastman Kodak Company. She retired from Kodak and built a group of three communicators, KBAssociates, who develop and mentor clients in documentation and delivery processes. She became an STC member in 1984 and is now an Associate Fellow. Kitty has served the Society as manager of a Region 1 Chapter leader's seminar, editor of the Chapter Handbook, and Director-Sponsor of Region 1. She has held

Chapter positions from Membership Manager to two-term President. Her STC awards include the Distinguished Chapter Service Award, twelve awards at chapter-level competitions, and two special awards from the Rochester Chapter. As president, Kitty will work to increase awareness of STC in our community and present the benefits of STC membership as an effective tool to keep pace with our ever-changing technical communication workplace.

Candidate for Vice President

Carrie Cooper has over ten years experience in technical communication and holds a BA in English (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Arizona. Carrie is a bug hunter: she works as a Quality Control Analyst for ACS, testing the MIDAS+ healthcare information system. Areas of professional interest include usability testing, information design, and concise documentation. She has been a member of STC since 2000 and has served the Chapter in many capacities: Treasurer (two terms), Scholarship Manager, Newsletter Editor, speaker at meetings, and competitions judge. Leisure activities include singing with the Desert Voices chorus, knitting, and soap making.

Candidate for Treasurer

Richard Cook, Chapter Treasurer, has 11 years experience in the profession. He currently works at Intuit as a Business Systems Analyst. Richard is a senior member of STC and previously served as the Chapter's first secretary. He has a Master's degree in Econometrics and has been trained as a financial advisor. Previous experience includes work as a technical writer and documentation project manager at GE, writing as an independent contractor, and as a technical writer and Director of Technical Communications at Persistech, a software development company in Tucson.

Candidate for Secretary

Robert Epstein has worked in the aerospace industry and for several hospitals. He is currently a technical writer for ACS MIDAS+, a medical software company. His publications include seven articles in engineering and biomedical journals as well as a medical text chapter in angioplasty. He has received the Instrument Society of Americas National first prize for a paper on lasers in medicine and was also a board member for the Hawaii Association for Biomedical Instrumentation. Bob would like to help continue bringing career-developing ideas and topics to our chapter meetings.

Watch for these dates:

- **March 12** – Deadline for submitting additional nominees.
- **March 26** – The Election Committee mails ballots by regular mail to chapter membership.
- **April 19** – Members must return ballots postmarked by April 19.
- **April 23** – Election Day (votes are counted).
- **May 7** – Deadline for notifying chapter membership of election results. Results will appear in the May issue of this newsletter. ■



We'd like for you to help us, but we don't want to overwhelm you either.

Jump in – the Water is Great!

Kitty Aughey, Vice President

Many chapters, including our own, have difficulty recruiting sufficient volunteers to carry out all desired chapter activities. We are always in need of your assistance and commitment.

Soliciting help through this newsletter is not very effective, but we are always delighted when one of our readers contacts us with an offer of help. More often, however, one of our recruiting chapter members will contact **you** to find out your interests, talents, and availability can be matched with an a volunteer opportunity.

So don't be surprised if this happens to you! We'd like for you to help us, but we don't want to overwhelm you either. As technical communicators, we are naturally creative and flexible, so we can find the right opportunity to fit you and your schedule.

To find out more about the Chapter and its needs, please plan to attend the Planning Meeting in early June (the exact date will be announced in a future newsletter), or contact any officer or committee chairperson listed on the last page of this newsletter.

In addition to new friendships and personal growth, here's what you gain by volunteering for the Chapter:

- Networking with communication professionals
- Developing new skills and learning new tools
- Discussing what is happening in the communication job market
- Feeling involved and important in your profession
- Making a difference
- And last but not least, having fun!

Ready - Set - Jump! ■



STC Announcements

Seminar Speakers Wanted

The STC 2004 Region 8 Conference is looking for speakers for a variety of topics including:

- Using the latest tools and technologies
- Editing and indexing techniques
- Creating graphics, Web-based training, or Web sites
- Developing course materials or online user documentation
- Designing user interfaces
- Managing people and projects

Speakers will receive a substantial discount on registration and invitations to attend the post-conference activities free of charge. For more information about the conference, please visit www.stcregion8conference.org. ■



Chapter Announcements

Baltimore Bound

STC's 51st Annual Conference is being held in Baltimore, Maryland this year. The dates are May 8-12, 2004. This is the world's largest gathering of technical communicators and provides opportunities to learn new job skills, network with other professionals and enjoy demonstrations of new products useful to your work. For more details, please visit www.stc.org.

Our chapter attendees to date are: **Christine Abbott, Kitty Aughey, Brenda Huettner, and Helen Marty**. If you plan to attend also, please let us know by sending an e-mail message to Kitty Aughey at kaughey@cox.net. Perhaps we can assist each other in planning or travel.

ASTD-GTC Offers Discounts to Chapter Members

The Greater Tucson Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD-GTC) will make their monthly programs available to Chapter members at the ASTD-GTC member rate of \$15. Cost for guests is \$20. Rates for ASTD-GTC seminars vary; please visit www.astd-tucson.org for details. Chapter members can attend other seminars for the member rate of \$95 (\$115 for guests).

Creating Powerful PowerPoint Presentations

Do you want to make your PowerPoint presentations better? Give them more punch? Learn how to use Powerpoint for your presentations?

Brenda Huettner of the Southern Arizona Chapter is an expert in PowerPoint training and will help you learn about basic design, adding graphics without overwhelming your slides, how to use templates more effectively, when best to use animation, and how to automate PowerPoint. This how-to presentation is on Friday, March 19 from 8 to 10 a.m. and is sponsored by the Greater Tucson Chapter of the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD-GTC). For more information and to register, please visit www.astd-tucson.org.

Southern Arizona Chapter members can attend for the ASTD-GTC member rate of \$15. The cost for guests is \$20.

Chapter Member Speaks at the U of A

Dave Carlson and two other Raytheon associates will be giving two one-hour seminars to the University of Arizona graduating classes in Aerospace Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. The first seminar, *You're on the Elevator with your Customer – The Importance of Briefing Skills in Industry* will be given on March 24. The other, *Avoid Clichés Like the Plague – A Lighthearted Safari Through the Jungle of the English Language* is scheduled for April 28.

Planning Committee Meeting

The next Planning Committee meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24 at the Barnes and Noble Cafe (Broadway and Rosemont). All members are invited. For more information, please contact Pat Markey at pat.markey@prodigy.net. ■

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About the Newsletter

The Border Line is the official publication of the Southern Arizona chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC-SAZ). Issues are published monthly from September to May. The design and layout of this newsletter are copyright STC, 2004.

Submissions

We welcome contributions, book and product reviews, letters, and articles that are relevant to the field of technical communication. The submission deadline for the next newsletter is **Friday, March 26**. Your text may be edited to conform to style guidelines and space restrictions of the newsletter.

Send submissions by e-mail (Word file or RTF) to the [Editor](#). Include your name and telephone number. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to run the article and you permit other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Unless otherwise noted, authors retain copyright.

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Distribution

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About the STC

Our Mission...Designing the future of technical communication

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest professional association for anyone whose job involves communicating technical information. Contact the STC at 901 N. Stuart St., Ste. 904, Arlington, VA 22203-1822. Phone: (703) 522-4114; Web: www.stc.org

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