

Good Project Management Skills Critical for Technical Communication

by George Slaughter, Information Developer, BMC Software, Inc.

"I put a piece of paper under my pillow, and when I could not sleep I wrote in the dark."

—Henry David Thoreau, quoted in *The Writer's Chapbook*

Unfortunately, technical communicators cannot put their computers under their pillows and expect to write in the dark like Thoreau. In a literal sense, the activated computer screen illuminates the room. And in a figurative sense, having solid project management skills gets the technical writer "out of the dark" in terms of organizing his or her work and ensuring its timely delivery.

But just as writers have their own styles, so too do they have different work habits. This article offers a look at how various authors have designed and produced their books.

Identifying the situation

The late James A. Michener, author of such best-sellers as *The Source*, *Texas*, and *Caribbean*, wrote that he would do a lot of reading, and possibly outline plots for, various books.

Then he would reach a decision as to what book he would write. He would write a statement about his frame of mind when he decided his topic.

Technical writers do not have the luxury of reflecting like this. The decision on what to write is made for them, and their challenge is to identify the sources of information they have at their disposal to successfully complete their assignments. Fortunately, those sources are usually nearby for immediate access, including such items as online help, web sites, previously published manuscripts, books, manuals, literature, and so on.

Identifying the necessary steps (a.k.a. outlining)

As with any major project, one should "chunk," or break down the task into smaller, more manageable objectives. Michener, for example, after deciding the topic of his book, would then write "a kind of summary of the content of the proposed book, and then I immediately outline in the space left the ten or twelve or

fourteen chapters that I suppose will constitute the book."

Some writers have compared outlining to using a paint-by-the-numbers kit instead of creating a masterful painting. But Tyler Hicks and Carl Valorie, authors of *Handbook of Effective Technical Communications*, write that an outline helps save the writer work.

continued on page 4

In This Issue

From the Editor	2
From the President	3
Creating Links in Lotus Notes	4
Building the New STC Web Site	5
From the Members: Keep Printing! ..	6
New Award Guidelines.....	6
Contractor's Corner	7
New Member News	8
Volunteer of the Month.....	9
New Sustaining Member	9
Director-Sponsor Report.....	10
Calendar	11
November Meeting Details.....	12

Dateline Houston

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Submit newsletter contributions by the first of each month for the coming month's issue. Submissions in ASCII, Microsoft Word 97, or FrameMaker 5.x format are appreciated. Send submissions to Rhonda Hector:

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All submissions are subject to editing.

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From the Editor . . . Changing Roles

by Donna Marcotte, Independent Consultant

This is my final month and last column as managing editor of *Dateline Houston*; my contracting work and other commitments force me to relinquish the reins. Please join me in welcoming Rhonda Hector as our new *Dateline Houston* managing editor.

Rhonda is the principal officer of New Millennium Communications. For the past few years, Rhonda has worked in communications management positions with several Houston-area companies. She has strong project management and newsletter development skills and has created an impressive portfolio of work. In addition, Rhonda is pursuing a degree in professional writing at the University of Houston–Downtown.

Rhonda enters an exciting opportunity. As you've seen, *Dateline Houston* has been redesigned with a fresh new look. Rhonda will be working with an outstanding team of people to take our award-winning newsletter to a new level of excellence.

We've realigned the duties of the managing editor a bit—partly because we had people who were willing to take on specific tasks of the job, but also to lighten the workload of the managing editor. Erika Frensley, from BMC Software, is the new layout editor; she will perform all layout and production work. Lisa Muenchow, also from BMC Software, has assumed the role of coordinating editor. Lisa will import articles into FrameMaker and assign them to the article editors. Greg Van Pelt, who has ably coordinated printing and distribution for the past two years, is leaving to pursue a job opportunity in California.

Though I am stepping down from my role as managing editor, I will stay on as feature editor. My goal is to ensure that the feature article corresponds to the topic of each month's meeting.

So you may not have heard the last of me. I may call you up some day soon to say, "Hey, I heard you're doing some great things with, on, or for X...How would you like to write a feature article about it for the newsletter?" Consider yourself warned!

I'd like to thank some people for their support during my brief tenure. First, I want to thank Deborah Long, our president, for her assistance while I was the editor and for her understanding about my decision to step down. I think this year is off to a great start under her leadership. Second, thanks to George Slaughter, STC Houston director of communications. George has been an invaluable resource, helping with many tasks, large and small—even writing the feature article for this month's issue. Third, I want to thank the story editors—Melanie Boston, Jamie Diamandopoulos, and Jim Hunt—for their continued good work. A special thank you to Jim, because I depended on him for many last-minute things—he always delivered and seemed happy to do so. Finally, I want to thank all the authors who volunteered to write articles or agreed to write them when asked. *Dateline Houston* would literally not be possible without you. Thank you all!

The mission of the Society for Technical Communication is to improve the quality and effectiveness of technical communication for audiences worldwide.

From the President . . .

Hats Off to the Judges!

by Deborah Long, Strategic Communications, Enron Net Works

November is the month when judges swing into full action at all STC chapters that sponsor competitions. On behalf of the Houston chapter, I would like to thank everyone who has agreed to participate in judging for this year's chapter competitions.

We will soon be receiving a shipment of submissions from the Twin Cities chapter for our judges to evaluate. Whether you are looking at Technical Publications, Online, or Art competition entries, remember that someone very much like you is going to receive and be grateful for the comments that you provide. So, use your "professional eye" to carefully compare and contrast the materials that you review against industry standards. Begin by making positive comments about the entry, and use tact and diplomacy when evaluating the entry in its entirety.

All judges should definitely plan to attend the November 4 orientation meeting hosted by Karen Questell, strategic communications manager at Enron Net Works. The session is from 9:00 a.m. to noon on the fifth floor of the Enron Building, 1400 Smith Street, Houston. Karen can be reached at karen.questell@enron.com.

Heather Shelly, our chapter director of competitions, and Jeanne O'Meara, competitions general manager, will be at the meeting to explain the entire procedure and answer any questions. This is a great opportunity to meet the other judges, receive information packets with instructions, and hear directly from experienced "veterans" about what to do. If you are curious or need a little encouragement before making a commitment, please join us to learn more about what's involved. You might find that judging is for you after all.

We will gather at BMC Software on December 2 for the judging consensus party. It's always lively, high-spirited fun when entries are presented as Best of Show candidates in the three disciplines. You can network with old acquaintances and make new friends. It really is a small technical communications world.

I hope to see you at the judging seminar in November and the judging consensus party in December!



Deborah Long

Looking for judges: Heather Shelly, director of competitions, and Jeanne O'Meara, competitions general manager, are recruiting judges for the upcoming STC competitions. Don't miss your chance to participate in this special event. For more information, contact Heather Shelly at 713-918-5216.



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Good Project Management Skills Critical

by George Slaughter

continued from page 1

“Actually, a good outline allows you to write a better book in shorter time with less effort,” they write. “Of course you will probably make some minor changes in your outline as you write your book. This should cause you no concern...Do not hesitate to revamp your outline if necessary. The effort required is usually slight compared to rewriting a major portion of your book.”

Outlines, of course, include time estimates for producing the chapters, pages, and so on. This helps everyone who is waiting for the completed documentation.

However, this process isn't limited to writing books. It can be used for other projects, such as the STC Houston web site. (For more information about how STC Houston revamped its web site, see “Building the New STC Houston Web Site” on page 5 of this issue.)



Getting product out the door

When the writer has planned the work, it's time to work the plan. How best to do it? Robert W. Bly, author of *Write More, Sell More*, offers these thoughts:

Take a “seat-of-the-pants” approach. “You apply the bottom of your pants (your rear end) to the seat (your chair) and stay there until the work gets done,” Bly writes. One way to encourage this approach is to design your office to minimize distractions and have your resources and references within easy reach.

“You apply the bottom of your pants (your rear end) to the seat (your chair) and stay there until the work gets done.”

Set production goals. According to Bly, Stephen King has a daily quota of 1,500 words—except on his birthday, Christmas, and the Fourth of July. Michener, meanwhile, writes that “on a good working day when all goes well, I can complete six or seven pages between 7:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., never in the afternoon and not more than three or four nights a month. I get it done in the morning or I don't get it done.”

The cliché, “If you don't know where you're going, you'll never get there” has a certain truth in technical communication. Planning your work and working your plan are two critical elements for successful technical communication.

Sources

Bly, Robert. *Write More, Sell More*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest Books, 1998.

Hicks, Tyler G., and Valorie, Carl M. *Handbook of Effective Technical Communications*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989.

Michener, James A. *James A. Michener's Writer's Handbook: Explorations in Writing and Publishing*. New York: Random House, 1992.

Plimpton, George, Ed. *The Writer's Chapbook: A Compendium of Fact, Opinion, Wit, and Advice from the 20th Century's Preeminent Writers*. New York: Viking, 1989.

Creating Links in Lotus Notes Memos

by Timothy Notzon, Analyst—
Technical Communication,
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When referencing file locations in Lotus Notes memos, you have the option to create a URL “hotspot” rather than typing only the physical file location, forcing the memo recipient to search for the file.

To create a URL hotspot in a Lotus Notes memo:

1. Type the name of the file (whatever you choose to call it) in the text area of the memo.
2. Highlight the area of text that you want to form the hotspot.
3. From the Notes menu bar, select **Create, Hotspot, URL Link**. The **Properties for:** window opens.
4. In the **URL:** text box, type the physical location of the file (for example, “C:\Folder\Work”) and click the green Check button at the left side of the window. To cancel the link, click the corresponding Close button.

Note: As with a standard (web-specific) URL, the file-specific URL will be active only after the memo is sent. To test the hotspot, send a copy of the memo to your user ID.





Building the New STC Houston Web Site

by George Slaughter, Information Developer, BMC Software, Inc.

The idea of redesigning our STC Houston web site had been discussed for some time, but we needed a plan for how to go about doing it.

Designing, or redesigning, a web site is hard work. It doesn't happen overnight; our project took several months. This was going to be a multifaceted project.

We therefore had to break this project into certain measurable objectives. First, we had to identify the situation. Second, we had to decide if a redesign was feasible and, if so, how we would do it. Third, we had to get the work. Finally, we had to be careful to deal with last-minute changes to our plan.

Identifying the situation

The original STC Houston web site was launched some years ago, and the effort was led by John Reynolds, III, now the chapter's director of volunteer resources. John's leadership produced a strong, successful site that we maintained over the years.

Now, years later, the site needed a redesign for several reasons. We wanted a new URL so people could more easily remember the address and could find it faster. We wanted some graphics to add color to the site. We wanted more links for easier navigation. We wanted more information on the site. And, not least, we wanted a page devoted to the Region 5 Conference, which Houston will host in October 2001.

Gerri Huck, our incumbent web master, favored a redesign and wanted to help with the project. John also

favored a redesign. Also involved was Joelle Hollowell, an STC Houston member.

Feasibility studies and blueprints

Like other nonprofit organizations, STC Houston faces the ongoing challenge of balancing its goals against its resources to achieve those goals.

The first part of the challenge was to see if we had the resources (manpower and expertise) to do the work. If we didn't have the resources within the chapter, we could outsource the work to a professional web design firm or we could put the project on hold until we had the resources. Gerri, Joelle, and I conducted a feasibility study and determined that we could redesign the web site inhouse at minimal cost.

We then had to provide a vision of what the redesigned web site should look like. We prepared a redesign proposal, which was approved by the chapter administrative council. The plan called for a new URL, new colors and graphics, more links from the home page, and a Region 5 Conference page, among other things.

Our feasibility study said we could do the job if we got some volunteers to help Gerri. But, as time progressed, Gerri was unable to continue in her role and we had to recruit a new team.

Recruiting the team

An old proverb says that the teacher appears when the student is ready. In our case, a project leader appeared when the plan was ready. Two project leaders, actually.

Kate Gilvary and I first met at a seminar in February. We renewed our acquaintance at the Region 5 Conference Kickoff Meeting this spring, and she was interested in participating. Kate recruited a colleague of hers, April Cooper, a new STC member who has web site experience.

Two other key volunteers came forward at this time: Steve Cunningham and Robin Scott. While they did not have as much experience as Kate and April, they both had good ideas about improving the web site.

Changes to the plan and meeting deadlines

There are always last-minute changes to any plan. In our case, one change dealt with our web site server.

The STC international headquarters hosts chapter sites. Unfortunately, the international headquarters staff was reevaluating its ISP situation and could not work with us on two critical initiatives: implementation of our new URL and implementation of a survey for our Region 5 Conference page. With the consent of the international headquarters staff, we found a new ISP.

Our deadline was September 1, to coincide with a new STC year. Our team came through and launched the site as scheduled. For their efforts, the web team members were selected as volunteers of the month for October.

See the site for yourself at www.stc-houston.org.

From the Members . . . Keep the Printed Newsletter!

Last month we asked whether the chapter should continue to print *Dateline Houston*.

While the volume of responses was not overwhelming, the message was clear—we like our printed newsletter.

Members like receiving it in the mail versus having to log on to the web site and search it out, and being able to carry it with them to read at their convenience.

Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond.

The following commentary was submitted anonymously by a member.

I'm fixing to work late again, and I'm bummed.

As I'm walking upstairs to my home office after a day that started over 14 hours ago, I daydream that I'll just go ahead and accept that \$80/hr tech writing job I applied for on dice.com.

Ok, well, I haven't got it yet. But the family wouldn't miss me; I'm either onsite or in my upstairs office 24x7 anyway.

And then I spy the latest copy of *Dateline Houston*.

How nice. Hubby knew to place it on the upstairs landing for me.

Hmmm....I see that the Contractor's Corner has a new series, as I dial into the office. "Increasing your Value (and Your Pay)," it says. I guess that's where my sympathies always return, to the contracting life. I set down the newsletter and check my mail.

I live to add value. Good technical writers must attain the broadest of skill sets, with the ability to go both wide and deep as the situation demands. I wonder if I'm paid what I'm worth. I make a mental note to watch for the next issue. Though I'm a permanent employee—scratch that—fulltime status, I try to appear invisible

so as not to discomfit my manager's relationship with my non-telecommuting colleagues.

A pity. Everyone is such a character, so unique, so skilled, so much to offer. Like this city we live in. And I long to reciprocate. But again, the image thing. Surely it can't be long before we're all teleworking. Hopefully not 24x7, though.

I pick up the newsletter again and continue to scan. I recognize names, stop to read of new projects, break a wide grin and nod my head in congratulations. My virtual community. We are a tight-knit bunch, we Houston writers. *Dateline Houston* is our medium. What is it that futurists say about the Information Age? Oh yes, "high tech, high touch." Goodness, when did "high touch" come to mean the printed word, and not the spoken! But so it has become.

Please, don't take away my *Dateline Houston*.

STC Revises Chapter Achievement Award Guidelines

by Jocelyn Williams, STC Houston Vice President

The STC Chapter Achievement Award (CAA) program has been revised for the 2000-2001 year. In addition to a "top" STC Board-selected award (Chapter of Distinction), the program now offers two levels of earned awards—Chapter of Merit and Chapter of Excellence.

The CAA program recognizes chapters that demonstrate outstanding, innovative, and sustained performance in advancing STC goals.

The STC Houston administrative council uses the CAA criteria and activity checklists to evaluate chapter operations and to plan activities for the year.

Activities cover the following areas:

- administration
- chapter communication products

- expanding community leadership
- membership and member services
- programs
- recognition programs
- society and regional participation

Chapters applying for any achievement award must complete all items on a specified checklist. Additionally, all applications for the Chapter of Distinction award must include up to ten pages of supplemental materials (for example, newsletters, meeting announcements, correspondence, and media articles) to demonstrate chapter achievements. STC permits the substitution of an activity for a similar activity.

Criteria for the chapter achievement awards apply to activities and events that occur between April 1 of the pre-

vious year and March 31 of the current year. The revised CAA guidelines and application are posted on the STC web site, www.stc-va.org.

Awards will be presented, and all Chapter of Distinction applications and supporting materials will be showcased at the annual STC conference.

I am compiling information and gathering materials for our 2000-2001 application, so please notify me about your STC activities and accomplishments. You can contact me at 713-918-2489 or at jocelyn_williams@bmc.com.

With your help, STC Houston will add another Chapter Achievement Award to its list of accomplishments!

Contractor's Corner: Increasing Your Value (and Your Pay), Part II

by Kent Drummond, Senior Member

Last month we discussed the emerging requirement to market yourself in your profession. This month we look at ways to increase your value.

If your career is not as fulfilling as you want it to be, ask yourself:

- Where am I in my career?
- Where do I want to be?
- How can I get there?

Successful writers, whether contractor, temporary, or permanent, find that they have to market their careers like a product. You cannot imagine what your value is unless you are marketable. So, like a product, you may have to adjust, improve, and advertise yourself. You know that you need to keep abreast of the marketplace. You also have to understand your company's business and that of the clients you serve.

In one success story, in 1998 Arlene, Bob, Cathy, and Don (fictitious names) were hired as technical writing contractors for a Houston company. Their hourly rates ran between \$60 and \$80 per hour. When the company reorganized in 1999 (some called it restructuring), all four supplanted other employees at salaries ranging from \$35 to \$45 per hour. Bob became the publications manager. The health insurance, paid vacations, and an annual bonus were sufficient incentives to opt for permanent employment. This situation may be unusual—or is it?

People thrive in today's career market because they adapt to changes. Here are some tested methods that successful people have discovered work:²

- Compare your company's mission to your values.
- Appreciate your company's ability to make a real difference.

- Value the passions of the people who work for you.
- Choose trust over negative interpretation.
- Share your resources with other people.
- Stay in the job market by developing your contacts.
- Choose at least one fun activity that doesn't involve competition.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How good are my editing skills?
- How good is my ability to use online and web software?
- What do I do well, and what do I need to improve on?
- Where do my interests lie? For example, am I most interested in software development, finance, or energy trading?
- What new industries are emerging where writers like me can succeed?

Make a list of the activities that you do well, things that immerse you, and things that come naturally. Which activities make your capabilities unique?

Sometimes the things you do naturally, you take for granted. For example, as a writer you probably organize and plan your work efficiently. This means you can tell your client or employer how long it takes to complete your work. In effect, this translates into how much it costs to get a job done. That's important!

You must determine how far your experience can take you and what you still need to learn. Every job can be a new learning experience, whether it is a new field or different work. This is true whether you are happy with the field you are in and want to continue to increase your workplace value

within that field or you want to change fields and use your building blocks as the foundations for the change.

Our skills are worth only as much as someone is willing to pay for them. Companies will pay well for what they perceive are the latest skills and knowledge. You need to be able to provide them. If you don't, someone else will. If you don't keep up, you may be replaced³.

Here's one method for assessing your skill values:

1. Pull out the classified section of your newspaper. (Don't worry, you're not looking for a job.)
2. Use a piece of removable, nontransparent tape to temporarily block out all major professional headings in the section.
3. Use a transparent marker to highlight the skills that match your identified skills.
4. Uncover the headings. Are you surprised?
5. Narrow down a variety of fields requiring your skills, and list where most of the opportunities are.
6. Check those fields that have the greatest appeal.

You might identify jobs in some fields that you never would have considered. Often ingredients and activities of an effective person are similar in many fields. Your writing and organizing skills make you a candidate for a wide range of jobs that don't have the tag "technical writer."

continued on page 8

Contractor's Corner

by Kent Drummond

continued from page 7

You may have to change your routine and take an information inventory every day. Here are some ways to do this:

- Read company materials, and look for relevant information including changes in staffing, service and market emphasis, new management, resignations, and financial considerations.
- Read articles about your company. Use the Internet, look in professional journals and business periodicals, and find reviews by financial analysts.
- Track how your company's stock is doing—and why.

- Routinely talk with people who might be “in the know” or “in the loop.” Have informal discussions with well-placed administrative staff, managers, and people who take pride in keeping up with what's going on. Meet them for lunch, at a coffee break, or for coffee after work.

If a major shift that could have severe consequences appears to be afoot, you need to focus on getting the latest news. Simultaneously, you may want to consider intensifying a search outside the company, getting your resume updated, and contacting friends in other organizations.

No matter what your profession, you can enhance the value of the skills that you use in your career.

Sources:

1. Sandler, Mel and Gray, Muriel, *Wall Street Journal*, Careerjournal.com, “Increase Your Value to Boost Your Career.”
2. Finney, Martha, *Wall Street Journal*, Careerjournal.com, “How to Love the Job You Land.”
3. Sandler, Mel and Gray, Muriel, *Wall Street Journal*, Careerjournal.com, “Increase Your Value to Boost Your Career.”

New Member News

by Lisetta Lavy, Aspen Technology

Tere Burton

Before making the move to technical writing in March of 1998, Tere was a middle school Language Arts teacher for 10 years. At that time, Tere joined a consulting company where she created SAP documentation and end-user training materials. She then worked at a client site, where she maintained their online and printed SAP documentation and produced their bimonthly SAP newsletter. Tere now works for a small software company as their technical writer and also maintains their web site.

April Cooper

April describes herself as a Yankee girl from Flint, Michigan, where the infamous film “Roger and Me” was filmed. Since moving to Houston three and a half years ago, she has worked as a report writer and freelance Web designer. She attends UHD and will graduate in May 2001 with a degree in Professional Writing. You may recognize her name, as she helped design the new STC Houston

web site for one of her internships. (Great job, April!) She still needs to complete another internship before graduation. In her studies, she has concentrated on software documentation, printed and online.

Toni Echeverry

Toni is the Technical Writer for Ashford.com, a Houston-based e-commerce company. She began her communications career in 1986, when she started drafting commerce legislation for Florida business interests. Toni prefers online Help and user manual projects.

Lisa Haberle

Lisa has worked in the communications industry for about 10 years. She is currently a technical writer at Compaq Computer Corporation. Lisa's work group serves as the liaison between the technical pre-sales field engineers and product development engineers. They focus on producing deliverables (white papers, multimedia CDs, and videotapes) that inform

the field engineers of emerging technologies.

Kassi Diane Tallent

Kassi attends Rice University in Houston, though she recently transferred from Texas A&M University. Actively involved in STC at TAMU, she is in her third year of college and is majoring in English and Spanish. Kassi would like to serve a technical writing internship in Houston before graduation.

Vidya Sunder

Vidya is the Project Leader—Documentation for BFL Software, a software company based in Bangalore, India. He has about six years of experience as a technical communicator and works as a contractor at Compaq Computer Corporation in Houston. Although he prefers writing, he spends about 70% of his time as a technical editor and the remainder of his time as a writer. A native of India, Vidya lived in Bangalore before moving to Houston in January 2000.

Dorothy Murray, November Volunteer of the Month

by Deborah Long, Houston Chapter President

An active member of the STC Houston chapter since August 1996, Dorothy Murray is November's volunteer of the month. Over the past few years Dorothy has contributed her vast knowledge of hotel and banquet arrangements to help the chapter negotiate contracts with various hotels in the Houston area.

We are now reaping the benefits of Dorothy's experience, as the contractual agreement for our monthly program meetings comes to life at a new, improved location, the Westchase Hilton. After researching several options during the "dog days" of summer, Dorothy recommended to the chapter administrative council that the Westchase Hilton is the best facility for our needs.

Recently, Dorothy's attention to detail and her perseverance resulted in saving the chapter a considerable sum of money while negotiating a contract for the chapter's upcoming competitions banquet. Dorothy has a knack for noticing errors in small print and ensuring that dates and dollar amounts are correct.

Dorothy's attention to detail and her perseverance resulted in saving the chapter a considerable sum of money .

When Dorothy previously served as manager of the Arrangements committee, she developed and followed an extensive checklist to produce smooth-running meetings

and events. This information has been passed on to Trinh Abrell (new Arrangements manager), as Dorothy takes on further responsibilities as our 2000-2001 chapter director of programs.

In addition to her directorship duties, Dorothy is filling yet another volunteer position as Arrangements committee manager for the Region 5 Conference, which is now in the planning stage. With Dorothy in charge, there is no doubt that all hotel arrangements will be in place for this important event we are hosting in October 2001.

Dorothy's shining record of volunteer activities is truly noteworthy.

Welcome to Ergos Technology, New Sustaining Member

by Janette Sexton-Shahout, Corporate Sponsor Committee Manager

Please join me in welcoming the Houston chapter's newest sustaining member, ERGOS Technology Partners. ERGOS, a leader in recruiting, staffing, and consulting for high technology opportunities, was recently named to the Houston 100 list as one of the city's premier staffing and consulting agencies.

ERGOS has recruited information technology (IT) professionals since 1989 and SAP professionals since 1992. ERGOS provides contract, contract-to-hire, and direct-hire opportunities to highly qualified IT professionals. The firm enjoys a strong national and international network and strives to exceed clients' and consultants' expectations.

ERGOS headquarters are located not far from the Galleria. The agency's web site, www.ERGOS.com, lists current job openings. Feel free to



ERGOS Vice President, Jan Vick, and Houston Chapter Past President Janette Sexton-Shahout

contact President Steve Winter, Vice President Jan Vick, recruiter Jason Broome, and all the other friendly folks at ERGOS at 713-621-9220 for your recruiting and consulting needs. ERGOS' generous contribution is tax deductible because STC is recognized

as an educational organization by the Internal Revenue Code. A portion of ERGOS' annual sustaining contribution will help the Houston chapter further technical communications in our area.



Region 5 Director-Sponsor Report: Leaders Light the Way

Do you know where you are going and how you will get there?

by Suzanna Laurent, Region 5 Director-Sponsor

Yogi Berra, the Yankee who told us “it isn’t over until it’s over,” also cautioned that “You’ve got to be very careful if you don’t know where you’re going, because you might not get there.”

When people ask me how I have achieved so much, I say you can do anything you want to do—as long as you know where you are going and how you’re going to get there! But you need an effective “road map” or plan to guide you, because it’s very easy to get off the right track. Personal goals can provide the “road map” you need to achieve it all. If you’ve done a good job of setting your goals, you not only know where you’re going but how you are going to get there.

The power to achieve outstanding success comes from within people; it’s called self-motivation. Each of us is the end result of what we think we are. When we mentally develop things like personal courage, enthusiasm, skill, confidence, and a belief in our own abilities, we sharpen our desire to achieve more.

Did you know scientific research indicates that average adults use only 25% of their total mental capacity? The other 75% remains idle and unproductive! A study by the Stanford Research Institute indicates that 88% of success is attitude and only 12% is attributed to knowledge and skill. Since all growth and progress comes from within, there is practically no limit to what a personally motivated person can accomplish. But how do you motivate yourself? Where do you begin?

Well, first you must make a frank and honest appraisal of where you stand now. Evaluate your strengths and weaknesses, your assets and liabilities. Put your answers down in black and white—because writing them down is very important. Face yourself squarely, honestly, and realistically. What are your goals in every area of life? Ask yourself, “How can I become successful through personal motivation?”

Paul J. Meyer heads the Success Motivation Institute. Paul is a world-renowned motivational speaker from Waco, Texas who owns more than 40 successful companies. Millions of copies of his works have been distributed around the world. He developed a five-step Million Dollar Personal Success Plan. I have used these five steps for many years to help me become all I can be, and I’d like to share them with you so you can be more successful.

Crystallize your thinking

Determine what specific goal you want to achieve. Then dedicate yourself to its attainment with unswerving singleness of purpose.

Develop a written plan for achieving your goal and a deadline for its achievement

Plan your progress carefully. Do you know that we spend more time planning our vacations than planning our lives? Organized activity and enthusiasm are the well-springs of your power.

Develop a sincere desire for the things you want in life

A burning desire is the greatest motivator of every human action. The desire for success implants “success

consciousness” which, in turn, creates a vigorous and ever-increasing “habit of success.”

Develop supreme confidence in yourself and your own abilities

Enter every activity without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat. Concentrate on your strengths instead of your weaknesses...on your powers, instead of your problems.

Follow through on your plan

Follow through regardless of obstacles, criticism, or circumstances, or what other people say, think, or do. Construct your determination with sustained effort, controlled attention, and concentrated energy.

If you use these five steps to develop your goals, you will be more successful at whatever you do.

One of my favorite poets is Amanda Bradley, because she has some wonderfully motivating works. I have this poem posted on the wall of my office because it is helping me become all I can be. I hope it motivates you as well as it does me!

Within our reach lies every path we ever dream of taking

Within our power lies every step we ever dream of making

Within our range lies every joy we ever dream of seeing...and

Within ourselves lies everything we ever dream of being



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Date	Time	Event/Topic	Location	Contact
Nov 1	EBD*	deadline for Dec. newsletter		Rhonda Hector rhonda@newmc.cc
Nov 4	9:00 a.m.	competition judges orientation meeting	see "From the President" on page 3	Karen Questell karen.questell@enron.com
Nov 14	5:30 p.m.	general meeting "Preemptive Project Planning"	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)
Nov 14	8:00 p.m.	STC Houston admin. council meeting	Westchase Hilton 9999 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)
Dec 1	EBD*	deadline for Jan. newsletter		Rhonda Hector rhonda@newmc.cc
Dec 2	9:00 a.m.	competition judges consensus party	BMC Software 2101 City West Blvd. bldg. 1, auditorium	Heather Shelly heather_shelly@bmc.com 713-918-5216
Dec 12	6:30 p.m.	STC Houston admin. council meeting	La Madeleine Carillon Shopping Center 10001 Westheimer	Deborah Long (see "Chapter Contacts" on page 3)

Please note: Because of the holidays, there is no general meeting in December. See you at the awards banquet in January!

* end of business day

November 14, 2000 Program

Preemptive Project Planning

presented by

John Hedtke

It's not the projects we know about that are the problems, it's the ones which surprise us that cause us the most grief. John Hedtke will show us how to track projects that don't exist yet, while looking really organized in the process.

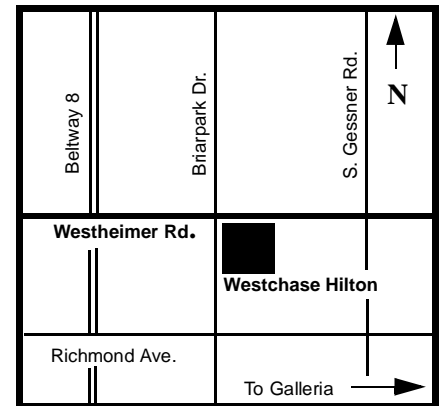
John is a lively and experienced public speaker and has been featured at local, regional, and international writing conventions. He has more than 20 years in the software business: 17 years writing, and 7 years in technical publications management.

Hedtke is the author of more than 20 books, including *The RoboHelp 2000 Bible*, *Visio 2000: The Official Guide*, *MP3 and the Digital Music Revolution*, and *Peachtree Made Easy*. He has written numerous articles for various STC publications and is past president and a long-time leader in the Puget Sound chapter. John lives in Seattle with his two cats.



Meeting Basics

Place: Westchase Hilton Hotel
9999 Westheimer Road
(at Briarpark, between
S. Gessner and Beltway 8)



Date: Tuesday, November 14, 2000

Time: 5:30 p.m. networking
(hors d'oeuvres)
6:20 p.m. announcements
6:30 p.m. program

Cost: \$10 (members)
\$13 (non-members)
\$3 (student and unemployed
members)
\$6 (student non-members)

Monthly Drawing

A drawing for various prizes is held at the end of each general meeting. Tickets for the drawing can be purchased at the registration desk. Proceeds benefit the Marx Isaacs Student Scholarship Fund.