

Byline



Bi-Monthly Newsletter for STC Chicago Members and Supporters

Volume 61, Issue 4

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Try Our Trivia!

The June meeting was the now-annual trivia contest. Linda Kelly presented the contest in the familiar bar format, of 22 questions, ranging from easy one pointers to difficult four pointers, a bonus half time question, and the final question, where betting it all makes or breaks teams. Throughout this issue there will be three questions. Try answering them yourself without using phones or computers. The answers are on the last page.

President's Message

By MaryKay Grueneberg

"When something can be read without great effort, great effort has gone into its writing."

-Enrique Jardiel Pencela

I came across that quote back in the early 90s and fell in love with the pure truth of it. As technical communicators, we spend our careers putting great effort into our writing so that our readers can expend less effort to understand and comprehend what we are writing about. When I am asked what I do for a living, I first say "I am a certified professional technical communicator." When their eyes glass over, and they looked confused, I follow up with "I demystify technical things." That's when the look of confusion changes to a look of understanding.

I've been working in the field of technical communication for 35 years. Over the years, the tools we use and the skills we need to create clear and understandable technical communication have changed tremendously. And the change is constant. It can sometimes be a full-time effort just to keep up with the changes! Sure, we can find all sorts of information we need through virtual exploration on the Internet. However, it

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STC Chicago's Award Streak

STC Chicago is very excited to announce that we have won an APEX Award of Excellence in the category of Newsletters – Electronic & Email. We are very proud that this is our eighth APEX Award for our Byline newsletter.

The APEX Awards, sponsored by Communications Concepts, Inc., is an annual competition for publishers, editors, writers, and designers who create print, Web, electronic, and social media. The 2018 APEX Awards were based

on excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and the success of the entries in achieving overall

communications effectiveness and excellence. There were over 1,400 entries and less than 500 winners overall in the 30th anniversary competition. There were 102 newsletter entries, with a total of 32 winners in all

newsletter categories combined. We are very proud of this accomplishment and congratulate our 2017-18 Byline editor, Elizabeth L. Burke. Ω



Call for Judges

STC Chicago Chapter Annual Technical Communication Competition

STC Chicago is recruiting judges for our annual STC Chicago Technical Communication Competition. As a judge, you have a unique opportunity to review entries from different companies across a variety of industries.

The entries you review can be websites, manuals, online help, posters, newsletters, and more. Past entries included industries as diverse as aerospace, manufacturing, agricultural, software, and medical associations. Reviewing such different work can be educational as well as inspiring. Additionally, you also get the opportunity to engage with other judges and benefit from their experience.

How does judging work?

Judges are placed in three-member teams with a

designated team lead. The team members receive three to five entries that must be reviewed over a nine-week period. Judging this year will run from November 3, 2018 through January 5, 2019.

Each judge reviews the entries using a four-page form that highlights different elements of technical communication. Responses are shared among team members and modified, as necessary, as the team reaches consensus on the award status of each entry.

Where do I sign up?

A link to judge applications will be posted on our website by September 1, 2018. If you have any questions, please contact our Competition Committee by email at competition@stcchicago.com. Ω

August Meeting August 16, 2018

Negotiation Skills: The Missing Ingredient to Tech Comm Success

Artificial Intelligence and Chat Bots and IoT, oh my!

It seems like publishing options are evolving faster than ever before. We work hard to stay ahead of technology changes. But truthfully, there's no point in going the extra mile if you are constantly undervalued, under-recognized, and underpaid.

In this session we're not going to talk about the tools you need to learn to stay competitive. Instead, we'll focus on soft skills like conflict resolution and workplace negotiation skills.

Attend our August 16 meeting for a fun and interactive session that is guaranteed to increase your success at work and advance your tech comm career.

About the Speaker

Returning speaker Jack Molisani is the president of ProSpring Technical Staffing, an employment agency specializing in content professionals: <http://ProspringStaffing.com>

He's the author of *Be The Captain of Your Career: A New Approach to Career Planning and Advancement*, which hit #5 on Amazon's Career and Resume Best Seller list.

Jack also produces The LavaCon Conference on Content Strategy and Tech Comm Management, to be held in New Orleans this October <https://lavacon.org>

Be sure to bring your business card to the meeting. Jack will be raffling off copies of his book—and a free entrance to LavaCon! Check the STC Chicago website for full meeting details and registration information. Ω

June Meeting – Another Great Trivia Night!

Our June meeting was a great way to end our 2017-2018 STC Chicago program year. We had both the necessary business information to share and our annual trivia game. Additionally, there was plenty of good food and drinks to enjoy!

For business, we thanked our outgoing officers and committee managers for the generous sharing of time and talent. And, on the flip-side, we welcomed our incoming officers and committee managers for an exciting new year of activities. You can see a list of our new officers and committee managers on the back page of this newsletter. Contact information is provided for each role and committee so that you can reach out with any questions or information to share.

Once we settled into the trivia game, there was a lot of laughter and giggles. It was easy to tell that there

was a lot of brain power and experience in the room. For all the knowledge and experience, it was interesting to watch each team second guess themselves on answers, which was the reason for all the giggles *and* groans as we would switch the correct answer for an un-confident second guess. But in the end, only one team could win first place. All-in-all, everyone agrees that this meeting is one of the highlights of our program season.

Stay tuned as we begin the 2018-2019 program year with lots of new and interesting topics to explore. Ω

Trivia!

One Point Trivia

In which Alabama city did Rosa Parks refuse to give up her bus seat on December 1, 1959?

Explore new directions

Network | Learn | Grow | Lead



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If it's Not Broken, Then Break It

By Robert Delwood, Lead API Documentation Writer

A few years ago there was an odd situation at airports. There'd be 50 taxis and 50 people and yet both groups would have to wait up to an hour. You'd think about the obvious solution and that the problem would be solved in five minutes. Instead, there was a system in place that guaranteed to make everyone wait. In fact, you'd get in trouble if you tried picking your own taxi. I'm not sure what it was designed to do but the net result didn't move efficiently, neither for the people nor the taxis, even though both groups had a vested interest in moving. Let's call this system broken. We'll get back to this in a moment.

I have always maintained that technical communicators are among the most put upon groups. Specifically, we'll never get the tools we need. In contrast, developers get all the tools they want. Perhaps because they're the very group who can write their own tools, but more likely it's because they're a large enough group that third parties support them. We're neither. Until each writing group has their own developer, we're seemingly stuck in a rut. By tools, I mean both high level and low level ones. Low level ones are those tools that would be unique to each writing group, idiomatic to individual writers, but may even be one off tools. It's clear why no business would write something for a single usage. High level tools are those applications like MadCap Flare, and Microsoft Word. But we already have Flare so what's the problem? The problem is we need tools that work exactly the way we want them to, more tools, and better tools. So as a group, we have to ask one question: What can we do to get more tools?

It turns out, plenty. We have to learn to make our needs known. We can do this in three ways. First, if it's not broken, then break it. That is, the tools need to do exactly what you want them to do, so any other result you can see as being broken. There is no perfect tool, so this one should be easy. This means to start viewing things critically. Make notes of features that don't work, and keep lists of what you want. Tomorrow when you first open your authoring tool, write down things you don't like about it, no matter how small or trivial. And I know trivial. For example, when I click on Flare, I want an immediate splash screen so I know it's opening. Then, when it does open, I don't want it to barge in as the active application. That makes it intercept whatever I'm typing from an-

other application. When you get ten items, write the company and tell them you want these fixed. Do this even if you think these are unique to you. Chances are it's not. At any rate, it'll be the collective voice that effects change.

Second, ask for new tools. In the same way as mentioning existing things that don't work, keep lists of things that don't currently exist but that you'd want them to. These are the tools you need to do your job better. It also includes seeing things in ways no one has thought of before. If you're coming up with a dream list, why not dream? The software manufacturers are playing a game predicting what we want when in fact they're shouldn't be predicting at all. We're betting our careers on their tools, so tell them out right what we want.

Finally, advocate your ideas tirelessly. Get on forums and write others in your field. Publish articles. Go to conferences and talk to company representatives. Push your ideas and see what the response is. This marketplace of ideas is where concepts get spread, and forged into actionable ideas. Get to be known as That Person who advocates an idea. Through reading this, you probably thought that one person can't change an industry. And perhaps one can't but organize the collective and the companies will respond.

Then again, maybe one person can change an industry. Going back to the taxi story, Garrett Camp founded Uber when he noticed a problem in the then current system. The solution was simple: Use cell phones to make cars come to you. Better yet, it's one of those ideas that make you say "I could have done that." It's admirable because they're using resources we all have but in a new way. Ω

Trivia!

Two points for each correct answer. -2 points for each incorrect answer.

The following four items are either a Yankee Candle fragrance, a NY Yankees player, or both. Pick one answer for each one.

Macintosh, Lily, Jasmine, Balsam

An Intern's Experience: How I Got To Write

By *Sasha Strait*

Since I was a child, everyone always told me that writing was my strong suit. My parents encouraged me to pursue writing competitions throughout elementary and then advanced English classes throughout high school. In my spare time, I read and journaled. I can remember documenting the anatomy of a dragonfly just for the sheer sake of learning about it.

After high school, choosing English as my major seemed like the natural next step, but I was clueless about what I wanted to do with such a degree. I enjoyed dabbling in creative writing and poetry but didn't seem to possess the drive to pursue it full time. I knew that I had yet to find my passion.

In 2015, my academic advisor sent me a notification about a job opening, which is how I ended up applying for a technical writing internship on a whim. The eventual job offer came as a surprise, and I was excited to try something new. I gladly accepted.

Eagerly committing myself to my new interest, I enrolled in as many technical writing courses as possible,

focused my Honors College projects on technical writing, and was inspired to start a professional writing blog.



Strait at graduation.

The Honors College at Wayne State led me to volunteer with the STC in the beginning of 2017. My time with the STC became one of the most influential experiences of my life and it solidified my decision to pursue a career in technical writing.

I've since learned that technical writing isn't just about writing. It has adapted through the years, but that's what I appreciate the most. This field perfectly combines my writing skills with my desire to learn and communicate with others.

I would like to thank the STC for not only helping me find a purpose, but also for providing me with this generous scholarship. I am so grateful that this organization exists and I sincerely look forward to finally becoming an established member.

Note: A special thank-you to Pat Martz of the STC-Southwest Michigan for supporting me through my journey and guiding me in the STC! Ω

The LavaCon Content Strategy Conference

New Orleans 2018/lavacon.org. The LavaCon Content Strategy Conference: A gathering place for content strategists, content engineers, documentation managers, and content professionals. New Orleans, LA: October 21-24, 2018. Ω

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is only through professional organizations such as ours that we can experience important one-on-one networking opportunities, attend presentations from key leaders in the field of Tech Comm, and listen to webinars that offer insights into the new skills and tools that we need. I am proud to be a member of such an active professional community. I hope you are, too.

STC Chicago is one of the oldest chapters in the Society for Technical Communication and we are looked upon as a leader in the Society and I hope to

continue that legacy. As I begin my term as president of STC Chicago, I want you to know that I will do everything I can to provide you with what you want and what you need to further your professional interests. We recently held our two-year Strategic Planning Meeting and have created what I feel is a very solid and focused plan for the next two years. As always, we welcome your input. After all, this Chapter is for you and about you. My virtual door is always open, and I welcome your suggestions and ideas. You can contact me at any time via email at president@stc-chicago.com. Ω

September: How to Beat Procrastination and be More Productive

"Every Man, Woman, and Child Has Infinite Potential Just Waiting to be Tapped." William James

According to the best research, less than 3% of Americans have written goals and less than 1% review and rewrite their goals on a daily basis. Even more staggering is the fact that 92% of people don't achieve their goals.

What is the secret of success of the elite 8%? It starts with understanding WHY many people fail to achieve their goals. In this dynamic, interactive, and educational presentation Lou will share with you the POWER of goal-setting and present several factors contributing to a lack of goal achievement – the failure cycle, reasons for procrastination, and living in the past.

He will also provide you with 3 powerful tools to break bad habits, gain control of your life and create the reality you prefer.

If you feel you are not living up to your potential or otherwise lack the motivation and discipline to achieve your goals, join us downtown on September 20 because this valuable training session will surely help you get "unstuck!"

Watch the STC Chicago website for meeting details and registration link.

About the Speaker

Louis (Lou) M. Brown, DTM, is the founder of Apex Professional Training and an Empowerment Engineer.

As a Personal, Professional and Wellness Coach, he motivates individuals, across many industries, to commit to change, break through barriers, and take action, resulting in greater professional success and personal fulfillment.

Lou has conducted numerous workshops on leadership development, team building, coaching and mentoring that have resulted in improved team performance and millions of dollars of added value (increased revenues or reduced costs).

He has achieved the highest credential in the Casualty Actuarial Society – Fellow of the Casualty Actuarial Society (FCAS) – and the

highest designation in Toastmasters – Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM). Currently, he is actively pursuing the Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential with the International Coach Federation (ICF). Ω



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The June 2018 meeting. Members playing trivia.

Trivia!

Four Point Trivia

What drink is two parts vodka, orange juice, and cranberry juice and one part peach schnapps?

STC Summit – what's in it for you?

By Becky Hall

In May I attended the 2018 STC Summit. I came back with new ideas, new energy, and validation that I'm doing what I can for the users of my documents. That's a lot for just a few days in conference rooms!

The Summit provides multiple tracks of learning opportunities, ranked by level: Foundation, Practitioner, and Expert. Don't let the levels limit your choices; a foundation level session on a topic outside your normal work is a great introduction to new skills. I attended sessions covering a wide range of topics, from designing chat bots to making infographics to the science of page design. I started using things I learned at the Summit in my work the week I got back, and I continue to find uses for my new knowledge.

But there's another session level: Society. This year I went to the leadership sessions on Sunday, a SIG meet up at lunch time on Tuesday, and the Society's annual business meeting. Without the Society part of STC we wouldn't have a Summit, we wouldn't have our chapters, we wouldn't have the certification program, the opportunities to grow as leaders, the great networking opportunities ... the list goes on.

On the fence about the value of going to the STC Summit? Jump on over. See you next year in Denver? Ω

New STC Special Interest Group on Technical Communication in Health and Medical Contexts Forming

Interested in a new STC Special Interest Group on Technical Communication in Health and Medical Contexts? We need 50 members to get it started. If you're interested, please provide your name and email in the LinkedIn thread at <https://lnkd.in/e-KGNZy>. If you have any questions, you can also contact Ben Woelk, STC Rochester, at ben.woelk@gmail.com. Ω

STC Chicago 2018 Technical Communications Competition

STC Chicago's 47th annual Technical Communications Competition opens on September 1, 2018. Our Chapter has one of the longest running annual competitions in STC and we are proud of our long-standing tradition. The competition is an invaluable opportunity for technical communicators and their teams to receive recognition for outstanding work, receive detailed feedback from multiple peer reviewers, and to provide employers or potential employers with validation of technical communication expertise.

You do not need to be a member of STC to enter – everyone is eligible to submit entries to our competition. You can enter work that you created, or you can submit an entry on behalf of a colleague or subordinate, with their permission. The entry must have been produced or substantially revised within the 24 months prior to September 1, 2018 and cannot have been submitted previously to any STC competition.

Submission deadline is October 15, 2018. Full competition and submission details will be posted by September 1 on the competition page of our website: <http://www.stc-chicago.com>. Submission and payment links will be posted online by September 1 as well.

If you have any questions, please contact our Competition Committee via email at competition@stc-chicago.com.

One note about this year's competition: There will not be a 2019 Summit Awards competition. Therefore, Distinguished winners from our local competition will not move on to an international competition as in years past. Ω

LavaCon 2018
Enhance Your Skills. Find Your Tribe. Make a Difference.

VIP Program is Back – Will it be you?

Due to popular demand, we are bringing our Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) back for a third year! During the entire program year (August 2018 through June 2019), all members who volunteer in big or small ways will be entered into a drawing for a gift card for dinner for two. Members will receive one ticket for each time they volunteer. At our end-of-year celebration next June, we will pull the name of one winner. The winner of the 2017-18 VIP program was Stacey Lohman, who was given a \$100 gift certificate to Texas de Brazil! Next June, it could be YOU!

Remember...volunteer in big ways or small ways...it all counts! Here are just some of the ways you can be entered into this year's VIP drawing:

- write an article for Byline
- be a competition judge
- work check-in at a monthly chapter meeting
- print name tags for a monthly meeting
- write a meeting recap for Byline
- make centerpieces for our annual banquet
- help contact schools regarding our scholarship program
- secure a sponsor for a meeting

...and so much more! Let's see what ways you can come up with to volunteer!

For questions or ideas, please contact our Program Manager at program@stc-chicago.com Ω

eLearning & Technology Showcase

The 11th annual Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase will be Tuesday, August 14 at Northern Illinois University (NIU) in Naperville, Illinois.

Since our first event in 2008, the Chicago eLearning & Technology Showcase has earned the enthusiastic praise of attendees and presenters alike. We will gather again this summer to celebrate the evolution of learning technologies.

The Showcase provides a full day of presentations with an emphasis on the role of technology and interactive methods in organizational training. Our speakers will explore all aspects of elearning—instructional design, development tools, media resources, virtual classrooms, social and interactive applications, mobile learning, rapid elearning, and more.

Who Attends?

Anyone who wants to experience the latest elearning technology platforms, tools, and delivery methods.

If you attend the Showcase, you will have an opportunity to network with a wide variety of industry professionals, including: Instructional Designers, Instructional Developers, Trainers, Technical Writer, eLearning & Technology Marketers, Training Managers/Directors, Content Managers, and New Media Developers/Managers.

The west suburban conference center is easily accessible just off Interstate 88. For complete details and registration information, see the showcase website at:

<http://www.chicagoelearningshowcase.com/>

Ω

STC Chicago 2018-19 Officers

President – MaryKay Grueneberg, president@stc-chicago.com

Vice President – Michael Burke, vp@stc-chicago.com

Secretary – Dan Dornbrook, secretary@stc-chicago.com

Treasurer – Pete Wagner, treasurer@stc-chicago.com

Immediate Past President – Elizabeth Gecas, ipp@stc-chicago.com

Byline

Byline is a bi-monthly publication of the STC Chicago chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC), a non-profit membership organization serving the needs of technical communication professionals.

STC mission statement: Creating and supporting a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

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Subscriptions: The current issue of Byline and all archived editions are available on the [STC Chicago Website](#).



2018-19 Committee Managers

Alliance – Linda Jansak

Bylaws – Becky Hall

Competition – Elizabeth Burke, competition@stc-chicago.com

eLearning & Technology Showcase – Linda Jansak

Historian – Bill Leavitt

Byline Newsletter – Robert Delwood, byline@stc-chicago.com

Nominating – Pete Wagner, nominating@stc-chicago.com

Get Real! Professional Interview Program – Dan Dornbrook, interview@stc-chicago.com

Programs – MaryKay Grueneberg, program@stc-chicago.com

Social Media – Dan Dornbrook

Scholarships – Elizabeth L. Burke, scholarships@stc-chicago.com

Sponsorship – Francis Bao, sponsorship@stc-chicago.com

Webinar Series – Adam Evans

Web/Online – Linda Kelley, web@stc-chicago.com

Trivia!

Here are the answers for each question. 13 is a perfect score. 10 is respectable. 5 and below, you're having too much sex on the beach.

Montgomery; Both, player, candle, candle; Sex on the Beach.

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