



M A N U S C R I P T

May 2007, Volume 19, Number 9

STC Manitoba Chapter's Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, May 1, 2007
Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St.
Matthews Ave. at Empress St.,
Ambassador M room

Andrew Forbes: *From unknown to
reknown: marketing the Manitoba
film industry*



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STC Manitoba re-chartering

by Stephen McKendry-Smith

Background

STC is attempting to renew itself through a "Transformation" process. As part of the Transformation, they have asked that each chapter renew its charter.

Our Charter is how STC recognizes STC Manitoba as one of its communities. The Charter will include our Mission, Vision, and goals, and will refer to our Chapter Bylaws.

On March 21, 2007, interested STC Manitoba members met for a brainstorming session to develop our Mission and Vision statements and to establish a number of goals that will help us achieve our Vision.

The session

Ice-breaker and introductions

With Nirdosh Ganske's able assistance, I acted as facilitator for the session. The members of the group all knew each other fairly well, so I selected an ice-breaker that would stimulate creative thought, and have members think about themselves in positive terms.

Brainstorming—Mission Statement

The next step was a brainstorming session, where creativity was encouraged through positive reinforcement and open-ended questions. The discussion was very lively, and the conversation was self-sustaining.

The session was free form and, as usually happens, people immediately started talking about goals, even though our intent was to develop a Mission Statement. However, keywords and themes kept arising out of the discussion, and the facilitators made a list of these as the discussion progressed.

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Manuscript

Manuscript and its shorter sibling *Micro Manuscript* are the official newsletters of STC-Manitoba Chapter. Together, they are published 10 times annually between September and June. The opinions expressed are those of the authors. Submissions, news, reviews, and other items of interest are welcome. Contributions may be edited for length. Deadline is the fifteenth of every month. For example, the deadline for the November issue is October 15.

Submissions and ideas are welcome. Please make arrangements in advance with the editor. By submitting an article, you agree to its publication in *Manuscript* and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. The writer holds copyright. When submitting an article, please let the editor know if it has been published or submitted elsewhere.

Steve Bagel
Newsletter Editor
sbagel@shaw.ca

Printed copies of documents can be mailed to the address below:

Steve Bagel
2-481 Corydon Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3L 0N9

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

For more information about STC-Manitoba, please visit our Web site at <http://www.stc-manitoba.org/>.

Executive Committee 2006-2007



President, Nirdosh Ganske, nganske@rrc.mb.ca
Vice-President, Brad Friesen, Brad.I.Friesen@gmail.com
Past President, Stephen McKendry-Smith
Secretary, Rachel Ines
Treasurer, Ron Blicq
Co-treasurer, Charlene Silla
Membership, Henry Shorr
Public Relations, Ted Anderson
Program, Ben Davies
Newsletter, Steve Bagel
Meetings, Nirdosh Ganske
Web site, Ben Dorge
Job bank, Bev Shafirka

Members of Manitoba's STC chapter gather at the Annual General Meeting in May and elect members to the STC Executive. Each member on the executive is elected for a term of one year.

STC Manitoba re-chartering continued from page 1...

These keywords and themes formed the foundation of the Mission Statement for STC Manitoba.

Mission

STC Manitoba collaborates with technical communication providers and consumers, and other organizations, to promote valuable learning and networking opportunities.

Brainstorming—Vision Statement

I asked the group to imagine STC Manitoba in 2012. What would the organization look like? How do we work? How do we communicate and interact with our members? The observations that came out of this discussion helped us to develop our Vision.

Vision

STC Manitoba successfully anticipates market needs and opportunities, encourages Manitobans to recognize the value of technical communication, and attracts a diverse group of practitioners.

Goals

Provide greater value to STC Manitoba members for their membership fee, and demonstrate that value.

- More professional development opportunities.
- Trade “member discounts” with other organizations like the MEA and Writers’ Guild.
- Keep members aware of changes in technology that will have an impact on technical communication.
- Ensure dinner meeting presentation titles and descriptions describe concrete benefits to those who choose to attend.
- Provide something (a certificate?) that attendees can take back to their bosses to show that they’ve participated in some professional development.

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President's message

by Nirdosh Ganske

I am pleased to be able to thank the co-chairs of the fourth annual technical communication conference Technology and Teamwork for a successful event. Thanks to Leslie McKendry-Smith and Brad Friesen for keeping a tight rein on the budget, detailed plans to keep us focused and on time, and encouragement and optimism to keep us motivated to do the best job we could.

Thanks go to two new conference session presenters this year: Helen Lansdell from Calgary and Amanda Le Rougetel from Winnipeg. Both presenters were a welcome addition to our speaker line-up.

Thanks to all the instructional staff of Red River College who presented this year, including a new speaker, Mark Nelson.

Thanks to the keynote speaker, Frank Francyk, and the concluding act, Shakespeare in the Ruins, for extremely popular and engaging presentations that had us beginning and ending our conference on a high note!

Thanks to our faithful conference program chair, Kevin Longfield, for again engaging a great slate of speakers for our conference. Having summarized the speaker evaluations, I can vouch for the quality of the speakers, as reported by the audience.

Thanks to Palliser Furniture for providing the signage and to Susan Haire for designing the

signage, and for putting up and taking down all the signs.

Thanks to Alexa Campbell for producing the conference program.

Thanks to MANCOM for providing funds for the reception refreshments and to Ben Davies for taking charge of hospitality.

Thanks to all our STC members who again gave generously of their time to organize the conference, to give interesting and informative sessional presentations, and to organize a portfolio competition. Congratulations to Susan Haire, the winner of the portfolio competition!

All those who gave so generously of their time, and all those who registered for the conference—your efforts are deeply appreciated. Through your generous contribution you have made possible the creation, once again, of two bursary/scholarship awards to deserving students studying full-time in the Technical Communication diploma program.

The proceeds from the conference will be shared equally between STC Manitoba and Red River College (RRC) and will once again create a STC Manitoba Chapter student award and a RRC Faculty award of \$300 each.

To all the members of the executive committee of STC Manitoba, and to the STC membership and the friends of STC, my humble and heartfelt thanks for all you have done to make this conference a success.

From the Editor

As a non-attendee at the Fourth Annual STC/RRC Technical Communication Conference, I've had to rely on those who were there. Although there is disappointment at the turnout, I've been told that the people who were there, the presenters and attendees, had a positive experience.

Thanks go to Nirdosh, Brad, and Rachel for providing write-ups of some of the presentations, and Stephen for providing an overview of the re-chartering session held at the end of March. The results of the session should help our chapter survive and thrive for years to come.

STC Manitoba re-chartering continued from page 2...

Attract more members and friends.

- More exciting and interesting dinner meetings.
- Increased outreach to the technical communication community.

Create a more formal relationship with the friends of STC Manitoba.

Some people want to participate in STC Manitoba activities, but the high cost of STC membership prevents them from becoming members.

- While staying within the framework of STC's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, come up with a way to provide services to non-members, while keeping STC Manitoba economically viable.

Leverage technology to our advantage

We can't tell where technology is going, but we can develop a framework for dealing with technological change.

- We may consider creating a New Technology position on the executive.
- With out new web-host, we can create on-line communities for STC Manitoba members at any time.

Form closer relationships with Industry, other organizations, and members.

- Identify organizations (including corporations) that require specific training in some aspect of technical communication, and partner with those organizations to bring in trainers.
- Ensure these sessions are economically beneficial to STC Manitoba, our partner, and attendees.

Next steps

The Mission, Vision, and Goals that we developed are a starting point. I've received feedback from other STC Manitoba members that will help refine these elements of our chapter. All of this information will be passed on to our next executive committee.

Nurturing trust in virtual teams

by Rachel Ines

What is a virtual team? "Geographically dispersed brainpower that rarely meets face-to-face and communicates principally through computer mediated communication," says Helen Landsdell. Drawing on her experience working on a virtual team with colleagues in the United Kingdom and based on her Masters Thesis research, Helen provided attendees with a different outlook on the team concept.

Technology has changed the way people do business, but not everyone is suitable to work on a virtual team. Teams require trust and they need to work on building relationships. Helen identified four strategies for working on virtual teams that focused not only on technology but also on building social ties. The challenge with working on a virtual team is that it does not allow for face-to-face contact, which results in some miscommunication.

As the business world adapts newer technologies for everyday business communication, it becomes important to remember that trust is not only a five-letter word. Without trust, teams cannot succeed.

Tips for beating writer's block

Susan Haire responded to Nirdosh's challenge to provide tips for overcoming writer's block. One technique Susan uses when she starts a new novel is she picks a CD that she wants to associate with that novel. For example, one of her novels involved time travel to a Viking village, so the music she played was the soundtrack from the movie *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, because of the theme associated with the Rohirrim. For another novel she played the soundtrack from the movie *Zorro*. Whenever she got writer's block, playing the appropriate CD pulled her right back into the mood, the plot came alive, and she was able to write on.

Making the switch to Linux

by Brad Friesen

Are you considering upgrading to Microsoft Vista or Mac OSX? If so, perhaps you should consider joining the millions of people worldwide who have already made the switch to Linux, more specifically, Ubuntu.

For those of you who are not familiar with Linux, Linux is a free open source operating system that is developed under the GNU General Public License. Linux is distributed with its source code so that anyone can modify or create their own Linux version.

But isn't Linux for geeks? Although that may be the common view towards Linux users, not all Linux users are geeks. In fact, even people who don't use Linux as their operating system of choice use Linux every time they surf the Web. The vast majority of Web hosting companies use Linux on their servers. So really, everybody already uses Linux, including Bill Gates himself.

Linux is available in many different flavours or distributions; www.distrowatch.com is an excellent Web site to learn about some of the different Linux distributions. Something to keep in mind is that a Linux distribution contains more than just an operating system. A Linux distribution, such as Ubuntu, comes pre-packaged with various open source applications, including office suites, games, email programs, graphic applications, web editors, and browsers. The best part of it all is that Linux is not only free, but it offers freedom from

- invasion of privacy
- forced upgrades
- proprietary file formats
- licensing and marketing schemes
- product registration
- high software prices
- digital rights management (DRM)

One of the more popular Linux distributions is Ubuntu. A new version of Ubuntu is

released every 6 months and is supported for 18 months after the release date. The latest version, Ubuntu 7.04 Feisty Fawn, was released on April 19, 2007, and can be downloaded from www.ubuntu.com. Ubuntu is available as a Live CD. Restarting your computer with the Live CD in place will load Ubuntu, allowing you to try it without actually installing it on your computer.

One thing to remember when using Ubuntu, or any Linux distribution for that matter, is that Linux is not Windows. Using Linux isn't necessarily hard, it's just different. If you run into troubles with Ubuntu, I recommend that you visit www.ubuntuforums.com. The Ubuntu Forums is an excellent place to search for common problems or to ask questions.

Responding to bids

By Nirdosh Ganske

Penny Staple's informative and well-organized presentation opened with a review of the terminology that she works with daily. We learned that a request for information (RFI) can be called a pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ) in the United Kingdom or an expression of interest (EOI) in Australia. A request for proposal (RFP) is also known as an invitation to tender (ITT) in Canada and the United Kingdom, a statement of requirements (SOR) in the United Kingdom, and an invitation to offer (ITO) in Australia. You'll want to be sure that your understanding of an acronym matches the client's because requests for proposal are usually legally binding while requests for information are not.

Organizations tender an RFI when they want to assess the range of options available in the marketplace. Responses to an RFI allow the organization to investigate the range of technologies, suppliers or vendors, and costs to undertake their project. Organizations tender a RFP when they want to find a supplier or vendor to deliver their project. The requirements of an RFP are

more rigorous, more detailed, and more focused than the requirements of an RFI; the RFP forms the basis of a contractual agreement between the parties to execute the project.

Penny stressed that relationships are critical to being included in the bidding process. Generally, the sales staff of vendors will work at developing relationships in their industry, at conventions and trade shows, because unknown vendors have a much slimmer chance of being included in a bid. Penny stated, “Ideally, [the organization making the bid] will contact your company and ask you to respond.” Few tenders are publicly advertised—most are sent to a short list of preferred vendors.

When preparing to respond to an RFI or RFP, Penny stressed the need to read the document carefully: “As the writer, you are likely the only person who will read the RFI or RFP in its entirety. You need to respond exactly to what is asked for.” The writer is in a unique position to assist in determining whether the company should respond to the request: “You know the company’s product well enough to do triage—is this worthwhile? Can we do it? Can we meet the deadlines? Were we **asked** to respond?” Sales staff in the company can be invaluable in assisting in the decision to respond to a RFP. Sales staff can identify the client’s preferences, and they usually know the client well enough to know whether the company stands a chance in the bidding war.

Sometimes, the decision to bid hinges on the company’s inability to meet a part of the specifications. Penny summarized the company’s basic choices as follows:

- “We don’t do that, but we’ll develop it.” In the case of an RFP, the company will want to be very sure that it can deliver on its development promise, because the proposal or bid is usually legally binding.

- “We don’t do that, but we can give you x, which will address your needs this way...”
- “We don’t do that, and you don’t need it, for these reasons...”
- “We don’t do that; we won’t bid.”

Though writers don’t generally carry the final decision to bid or not, they are powerful organizing influences in the bid process. Writers interpret the RFI or RFP, and they cannot afford to get the proposal or bid “wrong”—doing so will disqualify the proposal or bid. Writers identify any problems or issues with the RFI or RFP. They work with the bid response team by portioning out the workload according to team member strengths; apprising the team of deadlines; writing, editing, and assembling the response; troubleshooting; and following up at all stages of the process to ensure that responsibilities are carried out and deadlines are met.

The organization of the response depends on what the client has specified. Typically, a response will include the following sections: executive summary, background information and relevant and comparable experience of the bidding company, team and project management structure, functional and technical details, and legal terms and conditions (reviewed by the company lawyer). Penny cautioned that although sections about the company’s background and relevant experience can highlight the company’s achievements, the proposal “is not the place for marketing language.”

In all respects, the response must match the requirements specified by the client in the tender. Failure to meet any of the requirements will result in outright rejection of the bid; consequently, though a boilerplate can be used, it must be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of the bid. Subject matter experts and management must review the proposal or bid to help ensure the accuracy of technical and project management information. In the final

stages of the process, extra caution will help avoid mistakes that can cost the company the whole project. Mistakes that commonly occur in the final stages include losing track of the document version, failing to keep copies of the final document, missing key sections, and failing to remove comments. Finally, the deadline must be met absolutely as specified. Being even one minute late will result in the proposal or bid being rejected.

Planning will help avoid last-minute mishaps, such as shortages of printing supplies, equipment failure, and delivery problems, that can jeopardize the proposal in the final stage. Writers need to ensure that enough time has been allowed to print and assemble the copies of the proposal, and to check for blank pages and pages printed across two sheets of paper.

After the proposal has been bundled off to the client, on time, the writer needs to organize and archive the documents to facilitate easy retrieval. The client may have follow-up questions that the writer needs to answer, or request a site visit or product demonstrations. Keeping accurate, organized documents from the bid process will save the writer and others in the company many steps.

Professional development courses

Knowledge Management Process Management and Analysis— Level 1	April 5– June 7, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E
Designing and Writing Manuals	June 19– August 21, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E
Values, Ethics and Issues in Technology & Society	June 19– August 21, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E
Facilitating Adult Learning	July 9–13, 2007	University of Manitoba Continuing Education	http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf
Project management	November 7–December 12, 2007	University of Manitoba Continuing Education	http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/con_ed/mpcp/calendar/request/ce_guide06-07.pdf
Basic Writing Skills	August 7– 28, 2007	Red River College Continuing Education	http://me.rrc.mb.ca/Catalogue/Default.aspx?Link=Courses.asp?DeliveryCode=E