

TechniScribe

Orange County STC Newsletter

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SOCIETY FOR
TECHNICAL
COMMUNICATION

Contents

- 1 Transformation and Rechartering, Part I
- 2 Publication Policies
- 2 President's Message
- 3 Next Meeting
- 3 Editor's Desk
- 6 Chapter Contacts
- 6 Words of Wisdom
- 7 Edit Your Editing
- 8 June Meeting Review
- 8 Chris the Creative Tech Writer, Part I
- 9 FrameMaker Tips
- 10 Society Information
- 10 OCSTC Employment Information
- 11 Orange Juice: Membership News
- 12 Calendar of Events
- 12 July Meeting Topic

Transformation and Rechartering, Part I

By Steve Blossom, Senior OCSTC Member

During the past year, you've probably become aware of the Society for Technical Communication's Transformation Initiative. STC has been publicizing the transformation through articles in *Intercom* magazine and information on the STC Transformation Web site (www.stc.org/transformation). Our chapter leadership has also been trying to keep you informed by discussing various aspects of it in our *TechniScribe* newsletter.

The transformation at the society level is well underway, although there is still much left to do. Some transformation must also be planned and implemented by each chapter or special interest group (SIG). This level of transformation is called rechartering. I'll discuss rechartering in Part II of this article in the September *TechniScribe*. In this issue, I'll summarize the Society's Transformation Initiative, based on information from their Web site.

Why STC Needed to Transform

When the high-tech economy was booming, so was STC. Membership reached an all-time high and the annual conferences were well attended and profitable. Many employers reimbursed membership dues and paid for the expense of conferences and other work-related training. But when the Internet bubble burst in 2001, STC began experiencing a dramatic decline in membership and conference attendance, resulting in a significant decline in revenue. Cost-cutting measures alone did not solve the financial problems, so more radical changes were needed.

STC responded by creating a transformation team and hiring a management consultant, which led to a methodology that includes

- A "readiness assessment" to understand the willingness of an organization to embrace change, and to gauge its ability to adapt to proposed changes without damaging critical structures
- Clear principles to guide the transformation effort
- A thorough analysis of where STC is now
- A clearly defined "perfect world" vision
- Documented "organizational requirements" to guide the development of the structures and processes that support that idealized vision

continued on page 4 >

Publication Policies

The *TechniScribe* is published 11 times a year as a benefit to the members of the Orange County Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. The goal of the publication is to reflect the interests, needs, and objectives of OCSTC members. The *TechniScribe* strives to be an advocate for, and an inspiration to, technical communicators by keeping them connected to each other and to opportunities for professional growth.

Articles published in this newsletter may be reprinted in other STC publications if credit is properly given and one copy of the reprint is sent to the *TechniScribe* managing editor.

Submission Information

The editorial team retains and exercises the right to edit submitted and requested material for clarity, length, and appropriateness.

When submitting material, please remember to

- Include a 25-word biography about yourself.
- Send articles in Word format, RTF (Rich-Text Format), ASCII, or in the body of an e-mail message.
- Send material to the managing editor (suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com) five weeks prior to the date it will be published.

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President's Message

By Jeff Randolph, OCSTC Chapter President



As we work through our rechartering process, one of the components we need is a mission statement. Mission statements have recently returned to the public eye, but they have been around for many years.

Recent works by

Stephen Covey (*Putting First Things First*), Jack Welch (*Winning*, co-written with Suzy Welch), and others talking about individual and corporate leadership have drawn attention to the importance of mission statements in business as well as in our personal lives. Self-help advocates such as Robert Schuller and psychiatrists like Victor Frankl have long preached and written that our number-one fear is that what we're doing has no meaning or purpose.

An effective mission statement gives us a basis to evaluate what we have done and want to do, and to initiate new or different activities. A mission statement provides a basis of integrity and is the basis for a statement of purpose. In her book, *The Path*, Laurie Beth Jones lists three characteristics of a good mission statement:

- No longer than one sentence
- Easily understood by anyone
- Can be recited at gunpoint

In the May 2005 issue, I offered a preliminary mission statement:

Influencing technical communication worldwide and providing services supporting the technical communication profession from our geographic base here in Orange County.

Upon further reflection, the statement might be improved to capture what we want to do in the near or distant future and to display integrity, one of our core values. Here's a new version.

Educating, influencing, supporting, mentoring, and expanding the technical communication profession from our geographic base in Orange County.

Once we define our mission, then it is up to us to live it. If we don't represent the values and aspirations in that simple statement, we must either redefine our mission, or look to our practices and adjust as needed.

As you read Steve Blossom's article on "Transformation and Rechartering," give some thought to what you think our mission statement should be, then e-mail me your ideas at erandolp@ix.netcom.com. ♦TS♦

Next Meeting

Topic: Common Pitfalls in Policies and Procedures and How to Avoid Them

Speaker: Ken Brod

When: Tuesday, July 19, 2005, 6:00–9:00 P.M.

Where: Doubletree Club Hotel
7 Hutton Centre Drive
Santa Ana, CA 92702
714.751.2400

Cost: Members with reservations **\$21**
Students with reservations **\$16**
Nonmembers with reservations **\$23**
Walk-ins or those registering after the deadline **\$31**
No-shows billed **\$21**

Reservations:
Reservations are due by 12:00 A.M., Sunday, July 17, 2005.

Registration:
Register online at www.ocstc.org/dinres.asp.

Directions to Doubletree Club Hotel From the North 405

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right. Continue on MacArthur Blvd., passing over the 405 Freeway, and later passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the South 405

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right. Continue on MacArthur Blvd., passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the North 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn left, passing under the 55 Freeway. At the second traffic light beyond the underpass, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance.

From the South 55

Exit at MacArthur Blvd. and turn right and then move quickly into the left lane. At the first traffic light, turn left onto Hutton Centre Drive. At the traffic light (for Sandpointe Ave.), turn left into the hotel entrance. ♦TS♦

Editor's Desk

By Suzanne Madison, *TechniScribe* Managing Editor



As we begin another OCSTC year, we have some new leaders on our administrative council and some who are serving again. It takes time to serve in a leadership capacity; you may want to thank these volunteers for the time they give to ensure value for your STC membership dues. In addition, we have a new managing editor for the *TechniScribe*—me!

Carrie Damschroder has managed the *TechniScribe* for the past two years and both years received an award of excellence in the STC newsletter competition. She has left behind some big shoes to fill. **Thank you, Carrie, for all your hard work.** Luckily, we still have the same editing team: Steve Blossom, Rosemary Hulce, Anne Stratford, and Barbara Young. Without their efforts, having an award-winning newsletter would not be possible.

Although Carrie introduced me in the May issue, some of you may be wondering how I came to take on this position. Over the years, wherever I worked or volunteered, the newsletter always seemed to end up being my responsibility. In 1998, I was finally hired by a company just to create their in-house newsletters. About the time my department took over documentation, I was ready to learn something new, so I inquired about technical writing classes. Because I showed an interest in technical writing, my manager offered me a job writing policies and procedures. First I became a technical writer; then I enrolled in the certificate program at Cal State Fullerton and began learning how to do the job!

A few years ago, I became involved in the OCSTC Contractors and Independent Consultants special interest group. I liked what I heard there, and thought that some day, when I grew up, I would become a contractor. Last June, that day finally came. I grew up, left my full-time job, and started my own business, Madison Avenue Publications.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to be managing editor of the *TechniScribe*. My goal is to make this a newsletter you look forward to receiving and reading, one that adds value to your STC membership. But to accomplish this goal, I will need your participation. Let's see your name in a byline! E-mail me your articles and/or suggestions about the type of information that you'd like to see in future issues of the *TechniScribe*. I look forward to hearing from you at suzanne@madisonavenuepublications.com. ♦TS♦

- A gap analysis that describes in detail the difference between the current state and the ideal organization
- A road map of specific initiatives that closes the gaps, moving the organization step by step closer to the ideal state
- An identification of problems that can come up and how to address them

Goals and Principles of the Transformation

As part of the readiness assessment, "seventeen prominent leaders of STC" were interviewed. They determined that the primary goals of the transformation effort should be to

- Increase the value of our services to members
- Create financial stability for the organization
- Promote membership growth
- Be a leader and advocate for our profession

The readiness assessment predicted that the transformation effort would require at least three years, and it established the following transformation principles:

- Do no harm
- Respect our existing communities
- Build on the organization's strengths
- Support the development of communities of practice
- Diversify our membership
- Offer more and varied choices
- Promote the value of technical communication

Business Landscape Analysis

The consultant developed a "business landscape analysis" of the current state of STC, which noted that

- STC's best opportunity for growth is to lead its members and the industry into the future by focusing on emerging disciplines and growing opportunities within the profession, while also meeting the needs of its core writer/editor base.
- STC would better serve the membership by leveraging new technologies to build this benefit.
- STC would be a better industry leader if we had more leaders in industry and academia.
- STC could provide better exposure to its value if more corporate managers were members.
- STC's greatest benefit to its members is the forum for the exchange of information and ideas.
- STC would better serve its membership if it had a formal structure to its education/training program.
- STC should celebrate volunteerism and provide better "cultural support" for its volunteers.
- STC membership interaction is a key benefit enriched by creating opportunities for involvement and commitment for members early in their society experience.

- STC will better represent the membership if the board is structured to represent practice-based communities as well as geographical communities.
- STC will benefit financially by rethinking how services can be delivered in new and different ways.

Vision Model

A preliminary vision model was developed to describe what STC should be after implementing the transformation initiative. This preliminary vision model was organized into three major areas: scope and structure, culture and content, and finances.

Scope and Structure

- As a global "community of communities," STC will welcome all professionals concerned with communicating technical information and with the technology used to communicate. It will establish a broad umbrella that covers new disciplines, groups, or organizations. It will embrace and enable international membership.
- STC governance and the board of directors will represent the major constituencies (including virtual, special interest, and geographic groups) and strategic interests (including industry and academia) of the organization.
- STC will support its communities, which will support their members as well as the larger organization. The Society will provide tools, services, success models, and support to enable the member communities to flourish. The Society and the communities will work together to encourage member involvement and engagement, especially among new members.

Culture and Content

- STC will look forward. Education, knowledge sharing, and tools development will be the vehicles of leadership. Communities will develop educational curricula, modules, and resources. Communities will contribute to shared knowledge bases and speakers' bureaus. Communities and individual members should be recognized and rewarded for contributions of lasting value.
- STC will promote the value provided by the fields of technical communication.
- STC and its communities will draw vision, guidance, and strength from its strong connections to industry and academia.

continued on page 5>

Finances

- The board will maintain a multiyear, strategic plan and use it to ensure board focus on long term goals.
- STC will be financially stable, with sound business planning and fiscal management processes. STC will have clear cost visibility, metrics, and benchmarks for financial success. STC will actively cultivate additional revenue streams.
- STC resources will flow to the communities and activities supported by members through selection and participation. Members will have choices in the composition of their membership.
- STC will pursue membership growth and leverage its size to provide greater value for its members. It will reach out to diverse but related professions and other related organizations.

Organizational Structure

Although STC is a nonprofit organization (rather than a traditional money-making business), it still needs an organizational structure. The proposed organizational structure is that of a holding company, where STC will “go to market” as a combination of the STC brand and the community (chapter or SIG) model. STC will exist to grow and nurture its successful communities because it will provide the overarching mission and strategy, provide shared services, facilitate knowledge sharing, and define the expectations and rules of engagement for our communities.

Given this organizational structure, the vision model was revised somewhat and committees were established to address the following key areas:

- Communities
- Finances
- Education
- Technology
- Governance
- Communications (about the transformation initiative)
- Membership

What STC Learned

The Transformation Initiative confirmed that

- Our industry and our members are incredibly diverse, with interests ranging from usability to editing, with skills and experience ranging from entry-level to senior, working in industries from the financial to the scientific.
- Our strength is in our “communities” (traditionally called “chapters” and “SIGs”). The Society does not provide direct value to members in these areas; instead, it provides infrastructure,

mentoring, financial and administrative support, policies for those communities to exist and flourish. (Chapters are STC’s strongest communities of practice. They are the foundation of STC and the examples that other communities of practice will follow. Chapters are where members make face-to-face connections.)

- Former members were not renewing their STC membership (especially if their employer was no longer paying) because they did not believe the benefits were worth the cost.

The bottom line is that members want value, and value means something different to each of us. For the Society to rebuild (and increase) its membership ranks, it must provide

- Consistent, equitably supported and represented communities from which members will derive a professional development value
- A flexible membership model, enabling members to opt in and out of various services and community memberships to customize their professional development experience
- Rich content (including education, knowledge base, research, and intellectual property of all types) that provides depth of practice in member-identified areas that can be readily accessed
- Richer opportunities to network, within and beyond geographic communities

In the September issue of the *TechniScribe*, I will discuss how the transformation and rechartering will affect our chapter.

Steve Blossom serves OCSTC as a member of the Nominating Committee and as a proofreader for the TechniScribe. E-mail him at steveblossom@juno.com.

◆TS◆

Colophon

The *TechniScribe* was produced using Adobe PageMaker 7.0 for PC. Arial and Palatino were used for text and heading fonts.

The PDF on the OCSTC Web site was distilled from an EPS using Adobe Acrobat Distiller 5.0.5.

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"Words" of Wisdom

By Vivian Carroll, OCSTC Member

Hints on the Use of Word's Find Feature

You probably already know the basics, but do you know *all* of the tips below?

Edit | Find and **Ctrl+F** both open the Find and Replace dialog box with the Find tab selected—but did you know that you can also open the Find and Replace dialog box by clicking the binoculars in the Select Browse Object pop-up? (Select Browse Object is the dot between the arrows on the vertical scroll bar.) You can also add Find and Find Next buttons to a toolbar.

On the Find tab, type the word you want to find in the Find What box. Then click **Find Next**. Continue to click **Find Next** to go to each occurrence of the word in the document. You can close the dialog box or keep it open while you edit the document. You can also close the dialog box and at any time before creating a new search, either click the double-down arrows on the vertical scroll bar or press **Shift+F4** to find the next occurrence of the word you last searched for. (The double-up arrows will find the previous occurrence of the word.) *Note: If you use any other feature available from Select Browse Object after your search, the double-down arrows and Shift+F4 will repeat that action, not your search.*

In Word 2002 and 2003, if you prefer to highlight all occurrences of a word, on the Find tab, check **Highlight all items found in** and select either **Main Document** or **Headers and Footers**. The number of matching items will appear above the **Find All** button.

Click the **More** button in the dialog box to get five search options, such as "Match case," and the choice of whether to search Up, Down, or All of the document.

Click the **Format** button to select formatting to search for. For example, to find paragraphs that contain a left tab stop at 2", leave the **Find What** box blank (or enter a word if you want to search for the word and the formatting), click **Format**, select **Tabs**, type "2" in the **Tab Stop Position** field, and click **OK**. The formatting that you selected appears under the Find What box. Click **Find Next**. *Important: If you don't want to search for formatting in your next search, click the **No Formatting** button in the dialog box before starting that search.*

Click the **Special** button to select nonprinting characters and other unique items to search for, such as nonbreaking spaces and em dashes.

Searching for symbols and using the Replace tab will be covered in future articles.

Vivian is a Certified Microsoft Office Specialist, Master. STC members are welcome to contact Vivian at vcvc@aol.com or 714.996.1409. ♦TS♦

Edit Your Editing

By Dave Fonseca, OCSTC Member

Editing. It can be a chore, a refreshing break from writing, tedious, fun, or any combination of these. For those of us who are full-time editors, it's all in a day's work. Sometimes it's a good idea to review your editing strategies to see if perhaps *they* need editing.

Common Editing Mistakes

One common mistake is not reading through the entire document first before starting your edit. Put aside that red pen (or mouse), sit on your hands, and settle in for a good, thorough reading of the document. This should be the first step. (You owe that much to the writer.) You can make notes, but don't do the actual work until you have a clear picture of the document's purpose and content.

In your zeal to polish up someone else's writing, be careful to avoid taking out the writer's original meaning. Use your editing skills to clean it up, but make sure the document still sounds like the writer's voice—not *yours*.

Another common mistake is making a single change in one particular sentence without seeing if more are needed. Sometimes a problem sentence can have more than just one problem.

We all know that the active voice is best. Yet we sometimes forget that this sacred rule of technical communication *does* have its exceptions. Sometimes it's a mistake to remove the passive where it is appropriate or even necessary. Telling the reader/user what is going to happen in the future after performing a certain step often *requires* the passive voice.

Some editors like to remove as many unnecessary words as possible. Too often, though, this translates into removing all definite and indefinite articles. These articles serve an important purpose. They should be used, not only for clarity, but also because of the natural flow they add to sentences. Removing articles can sometimes make someone's writing sound as if a robot dictated it. "Click Modify Record button. Enter change in Text fields. Click Submit button. Verify changes in Edit Summary screen." Unless you're editing a screenplay for a science-fiction film, try to avoid this type of robotic-sounding dialog if you can.

Remember also that you're not just looking for incorrect comma usage or poor word choice. No matter what level of editing you perform, your role is much more than that of human spell checker.

Don't forget formatting and spacing. Check for header consistency. Add white space where needed and look for those extra spaces. Check for consistent use of italics versus quotation marks. Don't be afraid to do a little fact checking if something sounds suspect. If the writer gives a Fahrenheit equivalent to a Celsius temperature, make sure it's correct.

Editing Your Own Work

When editing your own writing, pass it off to someone else before you finalize it. Even if you're the sole writer at your workplace, have someone else read it. Another set of eyes that hasn't seen your masterpiece is often needed to ensure readability. Sometimes you're the only one available at work to edit your own writing. However, if at all possible, ask one of your other writing friends or associates to do a quick edit for you.

Workplace Attitudes and Politics

We've all been there. You're the sole writer at work so you're the one they go to if they've written something. Sometimes it's hard to tiptoe around egos. Especially when you're editing the writing of a coworker who considers himself or herself a good writer. Although politically you might on occasion have to bite the bullet and let a few things go, don't be afraid to perform a major slash-and-burn edit if the work really requires it. Remember, you're doing the co-worker a favor by making his or her writing look good.

If you are the sole editor at work, don't use the occasion to reprimand someone about his or her writing. Praise their work. Use the sandwich technique if the person wants feedback or if you think feedback is necessary: praise their work, then point out the things you changed (focus only on major issues; don't mention the minor ones); then finish off your feedback with *more* praise.

Be the kind of editor people like to give their writing to. Don't become the feared Grammar Police or Writing Tyrant of the company. Be the Grammar Guru and Helpful Editor instead. Being a great writer is *your* responsibility—not theirs.

Editing Resources

If you're a seasoned writer but don't have a lot of experience with editing, check out some of these Web sites and books.

Technical Editing: The Practical Guide for Editors and Writers by Judith Tarutz is a great editing book that's used in a lot of technical writing college and university editing courses. *Technical Editing* by Carolyn Rude is also a good book for technical editors.

continued on page 9>

June Meeting Review

By Jim Lowerre, OCSTC Senior Member

"On a warm summer's evenin'
A hotel in Santa Ana
We gathered for a meetin'
At the end of a long day..."

The speaker for the June meeting was Renato Beninatto of Common Sense Advisory, a consulting firm helping clients succeed in the international marketplace by focusing on globalization, localization, and internationalization issues. The title of the presentation was "Design Practices for Global Gateways," which described how Web site gateways should be designed to help customers in the international marketplace "beat a path to your door." Global gateways are entry points to multi-lingual Web sites.

To succeed internationally, a business must find and appeal to a particular audience—the audience who needs and wants to buy a particular service or product. In today's world, most providers of goods and services use the Web as one sales tool. Their challenge is developing a true global gateway that is not only inviting to their audience but also user-friendly and usable by potential international clients.

A potential customer from China needs to be able to find information in Chinese on the first page of a Web site. Mr. Beninatto offered several practical tips related to the use of foreign languages on Web sites. An icon of a globe with a drop down menu can help customers find pages in their language. Not only must the page content be in the customer's language, but ads and navigation tools as well. One hint: most international users look to the top, right hand section of a Web page to find information about their language.

Another consideration in reaching the right audience is setting up international URLs. In the USA, most URLs end with dot com (.com). However, in Germany it is dot de (.de), in England dot co dot uk (.co.uk). Familiarize yourself with the URL formats of the countries in which you plan to sell.

One more tip: take care to adjust image content and meta data. As with most technical communication, knowing your audience and its needs can contribute significantly to your success in the global marketplace.

This writer found the presentation very interesting and insightful, even though he currently does not do any Web site work. Presentation slides will be available on the meeting archives page of the OCSTC Web site or at commonsenseadvisory.com. ♦TS♦

Chris, the Creative Tech Writer, Part I

By Bill Darnall, OCSTC Senior Member

Four Rules for Successful Brainstorming

Another meeting. The room was too warm, again. "Today," I told myself, "I will not doze off." I tried to imagine a pleasant experience. Really cool visions of spoon-soft ice cream began to form in my mind.

Then it happened.

"Chris. You're the resident tech writer. Will you take notes for our brainstorming session?" Consciousness returned. I realized the new engineering manager was talking to me.

"Oh, sure, I can do that," I replied. Finally! I had something to do in this stuffy project meeting. Fully alert, but still thinking about ice cream, I hurried from my seat near the door to the front of the room.

The manager suggested I record information on the large whiteboard. I agreed the whiteboard would be easy to read. But, I pointed out, we would risk losing information if we ran out of space and had to erase something. I suggested using the dusty flip chart in the corner, to preserve the ideas. There was general agreement and I felt we were off to a good start.

From an STC class in creativity training, I knew I could use an icebreaker to get thinking started. I asked for a show of hands of everyone who was familiar with Alex Osborne and his rules of brainstorming. There was a low murmur. The engineers suspected it was a trick question; no hands went up. I then asked what year they thought brainstorming was invented. As expected, I was asked to explain who Alex Osborne was. I said I would tell them about Osborne if they would try and guess the year brainstorming was recognized.

That question produced a variety of answers from the ten engineers in the room. Each one guessed a different year. So far so good, I thought to myself, as I wrote each answer on the flip chart. The guesses ranged from 1066 to 1776. Interesting! I then revealed the correct answer: sometime between 1939 and 1941. Cries of disbelief were heard. To keep it going, I asked for more guesses about Osborne's professional discipline. Again, I wrote the responses. The guesses ranged from university professor to engineer. The majority believed Osborne must have been an engineer. When I finally told them Alex was an advertising executive, they were amazed.

continued on page 11 >

FrameMaker Tips

By Mary Ann Howell, OCSTC Senior Member

Definition of Templates

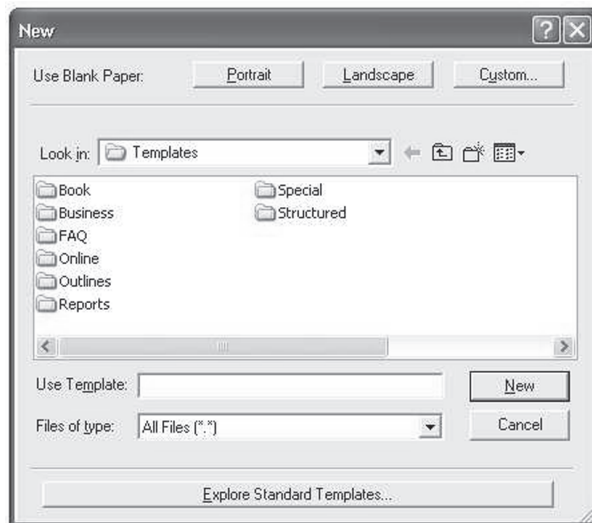
What is a FrameMaker template? (Our spiky-haired intern needs to know.) FrameMaker templates are standard FrameMaker files that are declared sanctified. That is, a FrameMaker template does not have a special file extension, nor does it look, feel, or taste any different from a regular document file. A document becomes a template when you proclaim it is a template. A template has formatting, hopefully, optimized for the document you need to produce (for example: page layout, paragraph, and character tags—all the formats you see when you select **File | Import | Formats...**).

Accessing Templates

When you start a new document from scratch in FrameMaker by selecting: **File | New | Document**, the New dialog box displays folders full of FrameMaker templates to choose from (but not necessarily very useful ones).

Where to Find Templates

If you select the drop-down menu in the top text box (labeled **Look in:**), you'll see where the template folders are stashed. You can add your own templates to these folders.



Sharing Templates with Your Team

There are two major challenges when using templates in a team environment:

1. Finding the sanctified template
2. Keeping the sanctity of the sanctified template

"But wait—how do I design a template in the first place?" our spiky-haired intern wants to know. That topic is a class or a book in itself. My advice? Buy *FrameMaker 7: The Complete Reference* (by Sarah O'Keefe and Sheila Loring) and read Chapter 26. Then we'll talk.

Meanwhile, my columns in the next three issues of the *TechniScribe* will show how to deal with these tasks:

- The September column covers how to lock and stow templates in the template folder on your local computer.
- The October column explains dangerous and heady stuff: editing the maker.ini file.
- Once we know how to deal with maker.ini files, we are set up for the last column in the series in November—how to link to a template folder on a network drive so your whole team can link to the same set of locked templates.

Mary Ann Howell is an Adobe Certified Expert in FrameMaker 7 and Acrobat 6. You can e-mail her at maryann@hikaripub.com or find more tips on her Web site at www.hikaripub.com. ♦TS♦

<Edit Your Editing from page 7

Of course, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* is always a great choice for the editor, as is the trusted *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Luckily, there's also a wealth of information online. The Editing and Grammar Resources at <http://www.stcsig.org/te/resources.asp> are great, as are the resources found on the Technical Editors' Eyrie at <http://www.jeanweber.com>. Our neighbors to the north have a great list of editing resources on the Bay Area Editor's Forum at <http://www.editorsforum.org/resources.html>. Closer to home, you might want to check out the San Diego Professional Editors Network at <http://www.sdpen.com>. Or just type in a search for "editing" or "editing resources" and you'll have no problem finding a great new set of bookmarks to help you with your editing.

In a nutshell, make sure that in your actual editing and feedback, you're organized, efficient, and informed, and remain an approachable editor.

Dave Fonseca is a technical writer at IndyMac Bank Home Lending. He formerly worked as a technical writer at Oracle Corporation and as a content manager/editor for Intraware. He can be reached at dave_fonseca52@hotmail.com. ♦TS♦



STC Mission Statement

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

Positioning Statement

STC helps you design effective communication for a technical world through information sharing and industry leadership.

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's largest organization for technical communicators. Its more than 15,000 members include writers, editors, illustrators, printers, publishers, photographers, educators, and students.

Dues are \$125–140 per year. Membership is open to anyone engaged in some phase of technical communication, interested in the arts and sciences of technical communication, and in allied arts and sciences.

Society for Technical Communication

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If you have an inquiry or a job to post, e-mail Jeff Randolph at erandolp@ix.netcom.com.

A limited number of printed copies of the OCSTC Web site listings are available at monthly chapter meetings.

Society-Level Job Listings

STC maintains job listings on the Internet. You can download the listings from the STC Web site at www.stc.org/jobsdatabase.asp. ♦TS♦

Orange Juice: Membership News

By Pamela Armstead, OCSTC 2nd VP Membership

OCSTC Members: 280

STC Members: 15,463

Well members, as this is my last column as membership chair, I want to thank you for a great year! I have equally enjoyed speaking with our senior members and recruiting new ones. If our new membership chair, Betsy Malone, puts half of the energy into membership that she has during her tenure as programs director, our membership will increase significantly next year!

Ironically, my last member profile reminds me of my first. In that column back in April of last year I wrote, "If you've been around OCSTC people at all, you already know we've got some pretty fascinating senior members in our midst." Well, that is especially true of Jay Gold, a transfer member from many chapters with various incarnations in the STC. He shared some of his experience at STC's 50th anniversary review, and at the OC "Old-Timers" night in 2003. In telling his story, he provides us with a little STC history lesson!

A native of the Bronx in New York City, Mr. Gold, a technical writing veteran of 40 years, is currently retired, but "misses the business." After returning from the Air Force, Mr. Gold enrolled at UCLA but ran out of money just prior to the passage of the GI Bill in 1944. He discovered technical writing while working at Hughes Aircraft as a messenger in 1957. Reading the *Hughes News*, he saw an ad indicating a need for engineers who could write clear manuals and instructions. "I thought it would be a great job once I got my engineering degree." A few years later, he saw a job listing at Gilfillan Bros. calling for engineers to write manuals. However, it was the military, not college that had given him an education in electronics. Although he did not yet have an official engineering degree, Mr. Gold had the chutzpah to apply for the job anyway. "I had worked on some Gilfillan equipment in the Air Force." He got the job and never looked back. That was 1961.

In his second job at Houston Fearless in Compton, he knew several members of STC (then called the Society for Technical Writers and Publishers) so he decided to join the LA chapter. This was in 1964; just two years after OCSTC had formed. When he moved to Orange County in 1969, he considered transferring, but because he was the LA chapter's 1st Vice Chairman (and later Programs director and President), he felt it too awkward to transfer at that time. Nor did he

transfer in 1977 while working for Hughes Aircraft in Orange County. Why? He was the Vice General Chairman for the 1979 STC Conference (then called the International Technical Communications Competition), hosted by the LA Chapter! After a job change, Mr. Gold transferred his membership to the newly organized San Gabriel Valley Chapter, knowing they needed more people to win their charter. Finally, after leaving that job, with encouragement from the late Sel Handler, he transferred to the Orange County chapter. Whew! We are happy to have Mr. Gold's experience and expertise amongst us.

It has been my pleasure serving our chapter as membership chair. Thank you for the opportunity to serve, and have a great STC year! ♦TS♦

<Chris, the Creative Tech Writer, Part I from page 8

Now that I had everyone's attention, I used the whiteboard to list Alex Osborne's original four rules for brainstorming:

- No criticism of ideas
- Go for large quantities of ideas
- Build on each other's ideas
- Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas

I asked the engineering manager to discuss the four rules. In particular, I asked him to give his opinion as to why each rule would be useful and appropriate for our project brainstorming session. Then, I asked him to identify three problems for the group to brainstorm. These problems were added to the whiteboard. We had management buy-in to the approach and management identification of the problems.

The final warm-up exercise solicited ideas about what we might accomplish by brainstorming. The response was highly positive. I wrote fifteen possible outcomes on the whiteboard. I asked the most energetic participant to come up front and lead the brainstorming exercise. It was her job to recognize each participant and to restate clearly each idea. It was my job to record each idea on the flip chart.

Everyone had participated in the warm-up exercises. Everyone could see the rules and possible outcomes on the whiteboard. An anxious air of anticipation filled the room as we began to brainstorm. *(To be continued.)*

Bill Darnall is a professional freelance writer, trainer, and author or co-author of five published books and many published technical articles. You can e-mail him at darnall@sbcglobal.net. ♦TS♦

Calendar of Events

July 5 OCSTC Administrative Council Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Airport Executive Suites, Irvine

July 14 through September 8 Creating Readable Documents, Dr. Adrienne Escoe,
R2012 offered through UCLA Extension

July 16 Los Angeles STC Chapter Planning Meeting, 10:00 A.M to 6:00 P.M.

July 19 OCSTC Chapter Meeting, 6:00 P.M., Doubletree Club Hotel, Santa Ana

July 21 Inland Empire STC Chapter Meeting, 6:30 P.M., Carrows, Rancho Cucamonga

OCSTC July Meeting Topic:

Common Pitfalls in Policies and Procedures and How to Avoid Them

You probably know a mediocre policy or procedure when you read it, but do you know the differences between a fair or good procedural document and an excellent one? More importantly, do you know how to avoid making the mistakes commonly found in many policies and procedures? If you answered "no" to either of these questions, this topic is for you. Ken Brod will discuss some of the most common pitfalls he has identified and his suggestions for avoiding them.

Mr. Brod is a senior information designer and formerly an independent technical writer/information designer and managed-care consultant. Over the course of his career, Mr. Brod developed expertise in claims and customer service operations, documentation development, technical writing, oral presentations, and training. His projects have involved software conversions, analysis and streamlining of claims operations, and various writing assignments. From 2000 to 2002, Mr. Brod was an instructor at UC Riverside Extension campus where he taught *Developing Policies and Procedures*. ♦TS♦

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