Management SIG

Keeping you informed of the latest trends in technical communication management!

Directives

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

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

May 2007
Volume 11, Issue 2

Inside this Issue

1 A Q&A with Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director

4 FEATURE ARTICLE: A Simple Recipe to Help Build a Goal-Oriented Training Program for Your Department

9 ARTICLE: Creating a Low-Cost Video Web Seminar

11 Employment Opportunities
Educational News
Letters to the Editor
About this Newsletter

12 Events Calendar

Newsletter Deadlines	
Issue	Deadline
February	January 31
May	April 30
August	July 30
November	October 30

A Q&A Session with Susan Burton, STC's Executive Director

By Jan Lowry, Managing Newsletter Editor

According to the STC Web site, the Management SIG "informs publication managers of trends and issues related to managing publications projects, educates them in practices that will result in high-quality technical materials, and provides a forum for the exchange of management information relevant to technical communication."

Management SIG activities include publishing this newsletter, offering information to the society's current and aspiring publication managers, and presenting conference sessions on management issues at society, regional, and chapter levels.

The following Q&A with STC's executive director Susan Burton reveals her thoughts on some management-related issues.

JL: What do you think should be the main goal of the Management SIG?

SB: To be a place to share concerns, examine best practices, develop program ideas for STC and be a support group for each other.

JL: What is the best thing employees can do to prepare themselves to move into a management position?

SB: First, employees should think about why they want to move into management. Is it to make more money? Influence people? Make a difference to the bottom line? The motivation is important. I have no problem with wanting more money but to me management is a serious responsibility that should be about making an organization stronger and better and motivating other employees to do their best work in a spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm.

Second, employees should belong to their professional association and participate in any group within that association that helps prepare them. STC and the Management SIG are perfect for this.

JL: How do employees know if and when they are ready for a manager role?

SB: Different people "know" differently. If others tell you you are great in motivating others and helping them coordinate work, listen and believe them. Don't think they are just being nice. Or, in some cases, you watch your boss consistently mishandle people and projects and you think, "I may not be all that terrific, but gosh, I could do a better job than that." Odds are you can!

JL: What goals should managers set for themselves and how often should they set the goals?

SB: Managers should set a goal to make sure that they know what higher management's vision and goals are: what are the issues that keep the C-level executives "up at night." If you are able to find this out, you can find out ways to solve their problems for them.

Another goal is to learn the "secret" power relationships and who "Harry" is. "Harry" is the person who you better have on your side or in a meeting or he/she can stop a project from ever moving forward. Often, "Harry" is someone down in the totem pole but for whatever reason, has a real circle of friends or allies.

A manager should also have several personal professional goals, such as: attending the STC Technical Summit or other advanced learning opportunity or mastering a new skill, such as learning to speak well in front of others by joining Toastmasters. And, there should be a goal on how to improve your ability to motivate and mentor others, which might mean learning to be kinder to yourself first.

How often depends on how big the goals are!

JL: What is a manager's biggest responsibility to his or her staff?

SB: Be honest. Always. If the work isn't good you need to let them know. Kindly. But never lie. Never try to "save" them. Never make excuses for them. They are grownups and the more you treat them as grownups, they will respond with initiative, creativity and dynamic new ideas that will delight you.

JL: What should you do if you find yourself in a manager role and realize you don't like it?

SB: Be honest with yourself. Figure out why you don't like it. It may be that you are reporting to the biggest horse's behind in the world and this is the problem. It may be that you find yourself drained by managing others.

But before you throw in the towel, I would encourage you to go see an executive coach. It may turn out you haven't really mastered the role yet. If, after all of this, you realize that you like doing the "fun" stuff and for you the "fun" stuff is the writing, conceptualizing, designing, etc., be honest with yourself. One of the most brilliant men I know recognized he could not manage people and is now a consultant. If you get there, go to your boss and talk about options.

JL: What are some things managers can do to help develop the management skills of their employees?

SB: Encourage them to attend professional development courses and volunteer outside the office as an STC chapter or SIG officer.

Find someone you think has potential and appoint them as being "in charge" of getting a certain project done and assign other staff members to work with that person. Give them tips as they go along. And, don't jump in if they are making mistakes.

One of my favorite stories goes something like this: a VP in IBM was put in charge of a large project ($1.5million or more) and the project went down the drain. Tom Watson called him into the big office. The VP thought he was going to be fired. Instead, after a long time grilling him about what had happened, Watson patted him on the back, told him not to be disheartened and promoted him. The guy was stunned. Watson said that he viewed that IBM had just invested $1.5 million in this guy's education and he'd never make those mistakes again!

In short, you have be tolerant of a certain degree of failure. (BTW: this doesn't mean you should let shoddy work pass by, but you do need to let people work through the issues.)

JL: How often should managers make themselves available to their staff members?

SB: There is no magic number. It depends on the project, the deadlines and the personalities. If you have cultivated self-starters, you may not need to see them for a week. Sometimes you need to see someone every hour.

JL: What qualities should a manager look for in a potential employee?

SB: It depends on the position. For routine work, I want someone who likes routine work, thrives on predictability, stability, doing the same thing over and over again, and is concerned about accuracy. For someone who is being asked to change or start something from scratch, I want a self-starter who loves taking risks and is stimulated by new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Overall, however, I look for people who are emotionally healthy, have a good sense of humor, are smart, kind, can work well with others – and who can work with me. Some people thrive working with me; others just don't "get" me. That's okay. It is just better if we can find this out sooner than later and there's no blame attached.

JL: What do you think are the most significant issues managers will have to deal with in five years?

SB: The continual demand to do more with less, the demographics when the baby boomers start retiring and there are not enough workers to take their places, the bottom-line facing industry, and the ethical issues of doing the job with integrity.

JL: What's the best way for an employee to convince a manager that he's ready for more responsibility – and possibility a raise – to accompany the additional workload?

SB: Don't start with the raise. If your boss comes in early, come in early. If your boss stays late, stay late. Find out what issues he or she might be wrestling with and come up with several solutions. Never bring problems to your boss: bring the issue and three, four, possible solutions. And, ask for more. If a juicy project (or a really boring, horrible one) is coming down the pike, make sure your boss knows you'd like to tackle it – in a new way that will be added value (whatever that is). The more proactive you are, the better (unless you work for one of those dwebs who is threatened by competence. If so, get yourself outta there now!).

JL: Do you have any favorite management books and/or Web sites that you can recommend to an existing or future manager?

SB: I love all of Peter Drecker's work. *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* is provocative.

JL: What is your most significant accomplishment as a manager, either now or in the past?

SB: I took an association that had been totally volunteer run and built it into a $7 million association with a top performing staff who were fun to work with. We were able to influence the National Institute of Health to direct $45 million a year into research on eyes. And, the association became the most influential one in the world in the field.

JL: What do you like best about being in a management role? What don't you like?

SB: I love seeing a group of people, whether staff or volunteers, brainstorm, get excited, come up with new ideas and then execute those ideas. That is so great!

What I don't like is when I run into people who are stuck in their ways, want to do things the way they have always been done in the past and who put up subtle or not so subtle road blocks to change. This drives me wild. And, I struggle with myself how best to communicate with that person.

JL: Do you prefer to manage a process or people? Why?

SB: People. I can "do" process but I get things done through people.

JL: What do you want your legacy to STC to be?

SB: I want the officers, members and staff to look at STC programs and services and know that these are wonderful, relevant and make a difference. I want technical communication to be recognized as a highly valued profession that adds value to the bottom line and has an ethical underpinning to the good of society. I want STC to be an emotionally healthy place where everyone can share ideas in an atmosphere of trust and enthusiasm and focus on what's best for the common good. And, paraphrasing something from Lao Tze or one of the Taoist masters, I don't want people to point to me and say how great I was; I want the people to say, "we did it ourselves!"

Susan Burton, CAE, has 30 years of experience managing trade and professional associations. She has experience with every major functional area in association management, including chapter relations, membership, marketing, meeting planning, finances, education, certification, publications, advocacy, awards, and competitions. Susan has a B.SB in American history and education and an M.SB in Chinese history. She earned the highest score in the nation when she became a Certified Association Executive (CAE) in 1984.

FEATURE ARTICLE

A Simple Recipe to Help Build a Goal-Oriented Training Program for Your Department

By Saurabh Kudesia

Addressing a department's learning requirements is a tough call because of the different levels of complexities and challenges involved. With learning requirements poorly understood and sometimes even out of sync with department goals, a majority of training programs fail to achieve any major business objectives. What you need is the right approach to develop, monitor and standardize a cost-effective, people and result-oriented training program that works magic for you and your department.

If the biggest part of your day is spent dealing with customer complaints, struggling to maintain quality and productivity of your deliverables, worrying about increasing costs of your services, low motivation levels, poor team coordination, growing inefficiencies of your employees at different levels, including high attrition rate, it is high time that you seriously evaluate the training and learning requirements of your department.

While training may not be the only solution to put an end to all the performance-related problems of your team, it is more cost-effective than recruiting and hiring. Training not only helps you stay focused on your priorities and develop team work, but can also help your staff share best practices and provide them with an opportunity to keep their professional edge intact while addressing changing business requirements. Training is perceived as an ongoing activity to promote a learning culture resulting in raising the standards of services, customer satisfaction, and even attracting new businesses.

A few good reasons to invest in training

Training programs oriented towards business and individual requirements are more successful and deliver better results. While the importance of an excellent and comprehensive training program is known to every manager, the majority of programs fail to deliver expected results because of the lack of knowledge of critical issues, wrong delivery mechanisms, poor understanding of the training requirements, inexperienced trainers, poorly designed course or delivery methodologies, lack of a participant's interest, and sometimes lack of support from management. Unarguably, designing and implementing a process-oriented and result-oriented training program that can address a variety of training requirements for your department requires a holistic approach.

Establishing Priorities

Having a clear vision of the strategic objectives of your department is certainly the best way to formulate the short-term and long-term learning objectives. If you haven't started yet, or are struggling to understand the learning requirements of your department, start with ascertaining the areas where your department needs improvement and focus. Look beyond the obvious reasons of training deficiencies and do a thorough analysis of the contributing factors before prioritizing the short- and long-term objectives of your training program.

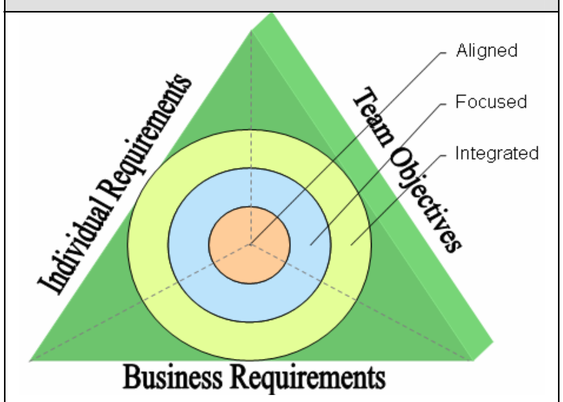
Identify learning gaps

Performance appraisal discussions and records can be a good place to begin. Assess the skills of your team members; carefully take a look at the differences between the groups that need training and their current job positions and understand their precise learning requirements. Determine what skills and competencies the individuals already possess and what is needed in direct relation to the job they perform. Understand what kind of training motivates your team members or fuels their ambition.

Customer feedback is an important source of information to understand how closely your teams are matching customer expectations and locating the bottlenecks in delivering the results. Conduct a simple gap analysis to map the current knowledge level of your team members with what is required for them to remain competitive in the market. Prepare a list of common problem areas, then categorize, and prioritize them according to their impact on business and market requirements.

Balance team and individual learning requirements

Planning a training program requires a holistic approach



Teams, like individuals, have strengths and weaknesses that can seriously mar their performance, productivity, efficiency, and finally, the quality of deliverables. Team psychology also has its own role to play in deciding individual performance. Sometimes individuals have different learning requirements, ignoring those which can directly or indirectly affect team performance.

Separating team performance issues and individual learning goals is therefore vital to address core performance issues in a more results-oriented way. Why is the motivation level of team X higher than team Y? Or, why does a particular team have a better record of on-time delivery with higher customer satisfaction ratings, while the other is struggling to prioritize tasks and manage dependencies? Match the individual efforts with the team requirements and address group learning objectives at par with individual learning objectives. Don't sacrifice individual learning requirements for the sake of the group, although sometimes individual learning priorities can be forced to take a back seat for the benefit of the team.

Evaluate existing programs

Critically analyze from the individual, team and business objectives perspective to measure the success factor of existing training programs. Learning requirements change with shifting business priorities and therefore it is necessary to identify the adjustments required in the content to match the learning requirements of your teams. If you are lucky, sometimes the best results can be obtained through re-use and sharing the available content. Even though generic, out-of-the-box training is quick to deliver, sometimes it may fall short of addressing specific problem areas. Therefore, talk to the course developers and help them understand the specific areas the existing training programs failed to cover or any other customization requirements you may have.

Benchmark the training requirements with industry standards

Monitoring industry trends and practices is one of the best cost-effective ways to learn from the experience of other organizations and avoiding pitfalls in your training practices. If there are any available industry benchmarks that you can follow, use them. It is important for you to know how closely your training practices are matching the industry standards and how much ROI (return on investment) you can expect from the training. Your team members will also feel more confident if they know that their learning requirements are being addressed according to the industry standards.

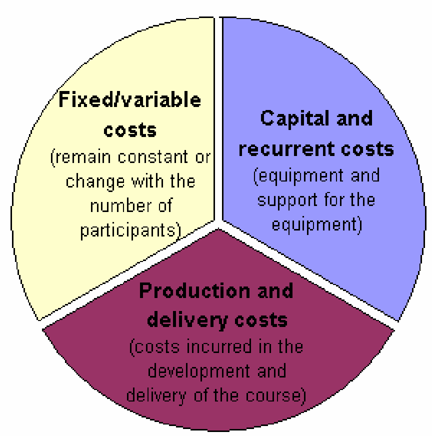
Choose the best delivery mode

Determine the most effective learning delivery mode for your team based on their learning habits, learning requirements, and budgeting parameters. While some learning areas require extensive instructor assistance (Web-based or classroom), for others self-study can be sufficient. Use the delivery model that works best for a particular group. Leverage the true potential of the technology to organize training delivery with minimal disruption to the work and the productivity losses. Apart from adding variety and giving an extra edge to the program, the delivery mode should be flexible to address the changing workload requirements of your team.

Keep a close watch on money matters

Economic and time benefits achieved from training are essential in the current environment. In addition to examining the value-added components for learning, consider the associated training costs, and how justified the costs are. Determining the cost of training is an essential component in deciding whether the new techniques are appropriate to the need of your department.

Determining training costs could be a tricky matter



Instead of simply focusing on cost factor, consider evaluating the ROI. Translated in simple terms, ROI is the direct or indirect benefits your team will receive in return for the money invested in the program. ROI can be used as a key performance indicator for training and help you avoid programs that do not add any substantial value to your team members. To evaluate the cost effectiveness versus impact of the program, consider issues such as:

- Is the program flexible enough to train more people, more frequently?
- Is the payment according to the lecture/duration or number of participants?
- Are sessions shorter and easier to coordinate and schedule?
- Does the program have any traveling requirements? How frequently?
- Does the program require your employees to be away from their responsibilities for an extended period of time?
- Can the training requirement be met in-house or should external trainers be invited? Is external training more cost-effective than the similar in-house training?
- Is complete or selective outsourcing more cost-effective to develop, administer and deliver content?
- Does training require some additional infrastructure, lab environment, or equipment set up? What is the cost of implementation and usage of such a set up?
- Are there any similar programs available in the market? What are the pros and cons of such programs and which one is more cost-effective?
- Are training materials included as part of the training or have additional costs associated with them?
- Are there any hidden costs associated with the program?

Create a timeline for achieving each training goal with success criteria

Gather input from different groups and assess how important each goal is to them. Prioritize needs and goals to make sure the program addresses the most urgent issues first. A unified understanding of goals is necessary to develop a framework for tracking progress and determining success of the training. Discuss the program details with your team members and help them understand its background, such as why it is needed, what they can expect to achieve from training, how to maximize the learning experience, etc. Establish clear specifications and guidelines on how people will know that their training needs have been achieved and then help them achieve their learning targets.

Monitoring the progress and effectiveness of your training program

Continuous monitoring ensures that appropriate knowledge translates into implementation and productivity gains for all participants. While ensuring necessary corrective measures can be taken at right time, regular assessment of competency, the training process and the training system help you improve the competitive advantage of your teams. Only by measuring the training's success factor and its contribution to the performance and profitability of the organization can you can expect to get continued support from higher management.

Establish benchmarks and guidelines

Developing standards and evaluations can be an overwhelming task, but in the long run it will help you deliver quality and get better returns. While eliminating duplication of efforts, benchmarking increases the ability to ramp up content development.

Systematically decide performance indicators for individuals and the team and establish a performance measurement system to track the progress. Consider indicators such as:

- What checks or controls are required to regulate the program? Who will take ownership of this?
- What standards are required to be established to check the progress of the trainees? How often will these standards be evaluated?
- How and when should you check the results of the training against the goals or objectives?
- How and when should you develop data on trainee performance? Should it be developed before, during, or after the training?
- How should you preserve the records on the progress of each trainee? How can you utilize the gathered data?
- How will you test the trainees on the knowledge and skills acquired? Should there be a separate test or should the instructor be allowed to rate each trainee during and after the course?
- What measures are needed to evaluate the trainers and training program? How will you gather training feedback from participants and how will you evaluate and rate the performance of the trainer?
- How will you follow-up to determine the long-range effects of the training? Who will be responsible for the follow-up and how to regulate the follow-up?

Performance Pays

Devote a small share of employee performance appraisal to the marks obtained in the after-training assessment of the participants. After-training assessment can be a small test given to the participants at the end of each module or a complete test to evaluate and understand how much knowledge participants have gained during the training. You can take this one step further and link the assessment in training directly to the performance bonus at the end of the year. This type of arrangement will provide you with multiple benefits such as:

- Participants will take training seriously as they can understand the difference between attending the training and taking the lessons back to their workplace.
- Since the individual performance in training is directly linked to the performance bonus, participants will understand that the efforts invested in learning or the grades obtained in testing are truly rewarding, making "Learn if you want to Earn" their mantra. Practices that are rewarded often have good chances of being repeated, so a significant improvement in the working habits can contribute towards making training more productive and results-oriented.
- Integrating learning achieved directly with the performance delivered gives you a complete view of your team's strengths and weaknesses and enables you to make necessary adjustments to the training plan, course and content – depending on the performance results.

Feedback Counts

Feedback has significant importance to evaluate how far the program was able to meet its learning objectives. Collect necessary information from participants to understand their overall impression about the structure, content, and delivery of the training.

If you are using the services of an outside agency, you need to evaluate whether the services are matching your expectations and giving you a good return for your money. Compare the program to the original requirements to know if the program is correctly focused and is addressing the concerns for which it was designed. Review course evaluations to locate the areas where the standards of acceptable performance were compromised and to make feedback more meaningful and data-driven.

Evaluation criteria for training

Criteria	Evaluation
Time	Did the speaker use the allocated time properly to cover the subject? Are different segments given sufficient attention in relation to their importance in the overall subject? Is the topic stretched too much or compressed? Did the trainer provide enough opportunities to practice new skills?
Purpose	Did the trainer clarify the purpose of the training to the participants before the session? Did the training satisfy the purpose for which it was intended?
Presentation	Was the presentation interesting and able to maintain the participants' interest? Was the presentation sufficiently clear irrespective of the subject complexity? Was the right combination of audio-visual tools used to explain the subject? Were the graphs, charts and images appropriately used according to the subject requirement?
Content	Was the content up-to-date and accurate? Was the content sufficiently rich and appropriate to meet the learning requirements? Was there any missing topic that could have made this training more useful? Was the content balanced enough to cover both basic and advanced topics? Was the content well-structured and easy to navigate? Was the content too-much or too-little?
Language	Does the speaker demonstrate a good command of language? Was the training too full of jargon? Did the speaker use too many complex words during the presentation? Did the speaker pronounce words correctly and clearly? Were there any grammatical errors in the presentation slides? Was the language of the presentation, content and supplemental items proper and free from ambiguities?
Delivery	Did the trainer provide enough practice time and constructive feedback during training? Did the trainer allow free thinking while discussing the topic? Were the participants comfortable with the pace of course delivery?
Supplemental items	Did the trainer provide any teaching materials and practice items during or after the training? Does the delivered material include activities, exercises, and demonstrations? What other supplemental items are required to add more value to the training?

Other issues	Did the trainer test the participants after the course delivery? What was the average mark obtained by participants during the test? Did the trainer provide constructive feedback to poor performers?

Go Figure

Define success metrics and compare the costs involved in training the personnel with the real improvement of profits. The key value drivers may include the percentage of errors that can be eliminated via training. For example, the effectiveness of the English language program can be determined by a considerable drop in the writing errors or by the amount of time saved by the English editors to edit the document. Critical mistake analysis also gives you an understanding in setting priorities in a data-driven way. Participants can also assess their skill level before and after taking the course, or the trainer can arrange pre- and post-skill assessments to determine the effectiveness of the training.

Despite extensive initial and ongoing training, sometimes the individual performance problems still remain. You must be aware of the other contributing factors of performance failures that are beyond your control. Maybe the performance problem is not at all a "training issue" and therefore, a better root cause analysis is necessary to understand the performance challenges. The challenging issue is to explain to your management why repeat training is the appropriate corrective action even when it is not delivering the results.

Based in China, Saurabh Kudesia is Deputy Director, Technical Communication Department, UTStarcom Telecom Pvt. Ltd. He is also the Co-founder and Editor-in-chief of KnowGenesis International Journal for Technical Communication (IJTC) – India's first online journal for technical communication.

ARTICLE

Creating a Low-Cost Video Web Seminar

By Guy Ball

(This article originally appeared in the Orange County, California chapter newsletter)

While text is still best for presenting many types of reference and procedural information, video can be very effective when illustrating product features, clarifying system configurations, and supplementing complex written procedures. The trick is to merge the two so they complement each other and deliver a dynamic documentation package as an online or CD-based Web seminar.

Although the multimedia concept has been around for some time, creating a seminar like this traditionally requires a good-sized team of writers, videographers, graphic artists, subject matter experts (SMEs), and a manager to keep the team working smoothly. If you already have a large staff or access to graphic professionals, congratulations!

Our staffing situation is the opposite: we have to make do with a single writer and a few SMEs. The plus of this situation is that it allows us to deliver the final product faster and less expensively – both important considerations for our cost-conscious management.

We take advantage of our low-cost (but high-quality) video camera and simplified video-editing software to deliver additional "visual documentation" to our service support team and customers. For us, the trick is to look clean and professional while not getting caught producing a Hollywood extravaganza that would demand extra staff time and weeks of extra work with little extra benefit. Instead of "fancy," we make sure our content and delivery is effective both from communications and cost perspectives.

Our final output (Web or CD) includes a combination of video, Adobe PDF, and HTML files. Our worldwide service team members all have laptops, so if they can't access the Internet from their work facilities, they can use the CD.

The first step in creating a project efficiently is to understand and plan well – no secret there. We ask what our purpose is:

- Fix a problem?
- Document a new process or tool?
- Highlight some feature of the product or its servicing?

More specific concerns are:

- What will the project look like?
- Is it important to include a video?
- Will a single video be enough?
- Will the video show live-action (with a person or the system)?
- Will we use a screen capture program to demonstrate how the software behaves?
- Are written procedures and reference drawings included?

Usually, we decide on some sort of video and add some text-based procedures in PDF or online Help. By adding video, we've improved the comprehension of the written procedures so that the service staff can use the text portion for reference and detailed information.

In my case, the "actors" are more knowledgeable engineers or first-tier support engineers. (Oddly enough, some of the quiet ones do quite well when you turn the camera on them.) We meet and roughly plan what the content will be and how we will break it up into manageable chunks.

I try to stick to 4–6 minutes for each video. (Although it doesn't always work, that's the goal.) Any longer and most viewers get antsy and click away.

Long discussions are often divided into shorter "chapters." This also forces us to develop our content more efficiently and not include more than we need to. It's a good bargaining chip with the SMEs, who too often want to explain every nuance of a system while on video. (I offer to let them speak in depth on other video segments, thus keeping my main one short.)

In most cases, we use live-action video. Our SMEs usually have a good idea of what they want to say, and I just videotape them while they're performing the procedure they're discussing.

This is all "live" and often handheld – I use a tripod when I can, but often I just try to be steady as I move along with the expert. I also later shoot some secondary close-up footage ("B-roll," in the jargon) so I can edit it into the main footage during cuts, narration flubs, or when I don't follow with the camera well enough.

I've gotten good at doing the video with one or two takes. The better experts don't need to memorize their lines if they just speak to the subject matter, and a couple of minor flubs will not hurt you. In fact, I suspect the help our experts become more "human" to the audience – and our service team members like to see what the engineer back in Irvine looks like.

And when experts drone on, I use my video editing tools to crop or cut during the final edit. (This is where the B-roll footage becomes important: to cover abrupt changes.)

So, when we have the video shot and "in the can" (I love that Hollywood talk), I'll edit the video. You can use the higher-priced video-editing software packages if you're familiar with them, but if you aren't, I recommend you stick with something simpler and easier to learn, unless your company will pay for training or you have a coworker who can help.

I was a user of Adobe's Premiere Pro, but our department budget allowed only for Premiere Elements, which I've been happy with. I export the final edited video to a high-quality WMV (Windows Media Video) format, which is easily displayed by our Windows-based laptops.

I also use Techsmith Camtasia to record the installation, configuration, and use of software. It's a wonderfully simple program that captures every on-screen move, and you can narrate while recording or dub in narration later. This is great for getting programmers involved. (Also, you can edit it to shorten pauses or correct errors.) Adobe Captivate is a similar program.

Let's skip ahead to where you have collected the finished videos, PDFs of a procedure or two, and maybe some drawings for reference.

Rather than release a disk just with a couple of files on it, I want to offer a more sophisticated media piece. It's not really difficult. I use a Web-page program such as FrontPage to create a simple HTML home page and have it automatically start when the disk is inserted into the user's drive.

On that first page, I have a menu of links to the videos or other selections. I'll add some photos as clickable links and select fonts that are resident on their computers. (Clickable icons can be created in Photoshop.) I make it look pleasing (mimicking other pages I have in my idea file), and I'm done.

On some feature-packed Web seminars, I've included several layers of Web pages that offer something more like a full Web site. I'll add technical bulletins, original manufacturer manuals, and troubleshooting aids. I also offer links to external sites and contact e-mails to encourage the user to keep coming back to this CD as a resource.

If I had more space, I would continue about field testing your work, developing a collection of Web site seminar examples to provide ideas for the graphically challenged (like me), dealing with tough SMEs (and tougher managers) who want a larger and costlier seminar, and how to sneak in your first multimedia project when no one wants to give you the opportunity. But that gives me reasons to write more articles.

To sum up, we've developed a solid formula that delivers quality video-based seminars fast and inexpensively. We get rave reviews from our service staff and customers for their clarity and ease of use. Our major customers love it because they can see the quality of the training and that it's uniformly delivered. My management likes it because we're delivering effective service instruction without hurting our financial bottom line. And if they're happy, I'm happy (and gainfully employed).

Guy D. Ball is a senior technical writer for EADS-North America Defense Test and Services in Irvine, CA. He has helped develop more than 80 multimedia presentations. His latest book, Early Santa Ana, *was published this summer. He lives in Tustin, CA, and can be contacted at guyball@pacbell.net.*

Employment Opportunities

Occasionally, this newsletter will highlight management-level job positions. Other resources include the following:

STC Career Center

You can visit the STC Technical Communication Career Center at http://jobs.stc.org for employment opportunities in your geographic area.

SIG Employment Postings

The Management SIG's discussion listserv occasionally includes job postings. To locate these postings, join the listserv by visiting http://www.stcsig.org/mgt/HotTopics.htm.

Educational News

Tell us about a great degree or certificate program, a non-STC-related seminar that you've attended, or other educationally-related events that may appeal to technical communicators.

Letters to the Editor

We always welcome letters to the editor. Also, if you're interested in writing an article, a series of articles, or a book review, please contact the editor. Thanks for your feedback!

About this Newsletter

Management SIG *Directives* is a quarterly publication of the STC Management Special Interest Group published February, May, August, and November.

Manager: Mike Markley (mike_markley@yahoo.com)

Managing Newsletter Editor: Jan Lowry (jllowry@aol.com)

Associate Manager: *need volunteer*

Graphics: Mel Cox

Layout and Design: *need volunteer*

Copy Editors: Karla Busch, Jean Femia, Sharon Harner, Jackie Damrau

Publication Policy: We encourage letters, articles, book reviews, and other items for publication. Picture formats: JPGs or GIFs; Text format: Word, RTF, or ASCII. Submit items to Jan Lowry at jllowry@aol.com.

Advertising Policy: We encourage advertising if it follows the STC guidelines and promotes services to the Management SIG members. Ad sizes and rates are:

Half page (7.5x4.5): $75 (1 issue); $225 (4 issues)

Business Card (3.5x2): $25 (1 issue); $100 (4 issues)

Send electronic copy only in .TIF, .GIF, or .PNG format to Jan Lowry at jllowry@aol.com. Checks should be made payable to *Society for Technical Communication* and sent to Jan Lowry, 2115 Springfield Center Road, Akron, OH, 44312.

Copyright Statement: This newsletter invites writers to submit articles that they want to be considered for publication. By submitting an article, you implicitly grant a license to this newsletter to print the article or post it online, and for other STC publications to reprint it without permission. Copyright is held by the writer. In your cover letter, please let the editor know if this article has run elsewhere, and if it has been submitted for consideration to other publications.

SIG Web Site: www.stcsig.org/mgt

SIG Newsletter: www.stcsig.org/mgt/newsletter.htm

SIG E-mail List: Open to all STC members. Join by visiting www.stcsig.org/mgt/mdomo.htm

SIG Mission Statement: To facilitate exchange of information and accumulated expertise related to the challenges and trends faced by technical communication management professionals; to support members who manage communication projects, people, and/or departments; to provide resources for member interaction including forums and networking opportunities; to mentor and support new or aspiring technical communication managers or those interested in acquiring and applying management skills to their work.

Reprints: Reprints are allowed if permission is obtained from the original author, credit is given to the author and the newsletter, and a copy of the reprint is sent to the newsletter editor.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Society for Technical Communication, 901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904, Arlington, Virginia, USA, 22203-1822 or use the online form at www.stc.org/formAddressChange.asp.

Events Calendar

STC Telephone Seminars

Time 1 pm-2:20 pm EST
Cost $99

May 2, 2007
Choosing the Right Usability Technique
Presenter: Whitney Quesenbery
Level: Intermediate

STC and Non-STC Events

For more conference listings, visit:
http://stc.org/edu/relatedEvents01.asp

June 3-6, 2007
ASTD International Conference & Exposition
Atlanta, Georgia
http://astd2007.astd.org/

October 04, 2007
DITA East 2007 Conference
Raleigh, North Carolina
http://www.travelthepath.com/dita2007/ditalocationeast.shtml

October 12, 2007
STC Region 4 Conference
Cleveland, Ohio
http://www.neostc.org/conf/

October 22, 2007
FrameMaker 2007 Chautauqua
Raleigh, North Carolina
http://www.travelthepath.com/conf/chautindex.html