



# Management

Newsletter of the Management Special Interest Group

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## Managing Your Own Transition: Shifting from Worker to Manager

by Rebecca Smith

So, now you are a manager. All of your long hours, effort, continuous learning, and communication savvy have paid off in a much-anticipated promotion. Although things are changing rapidly in today's information-driven business environment, most of us still have a belief (however subconscious) that management is the top of the career ladder.

But the good news is there is a light at the end of the tunnel — if you learn to let go of some of the things that led to your original success as a technical communicator.

When I was still a "lowly" technical writer, I had an almost missionary zeal for my projects. I actually liked developing my project plan, getting my sub-

research) to get my confidence back. What I ultimately learned was, management is not about being in control; it has a lot more to do with learning to live with what you cannot control.

I do not mean to go into all the finer points of leadership here or to write a curriculum for Management 101. There are plenty of good books and courses out there. What I would like to share is a short list of all the things you must give up, as you enter management.

*(continued on page 5)*

“...management is not about being in control; it has a lot more to do with learning to live with what you cannot control.”

You probably feel as though you have arrived at that mythic pinnacle, that inner society of "big shots," the "cream of the crop." Savor that feeling, as you run out to update your "business-casual" wardrobe. It is fairly short-lived. Soon you will grow overwhelmed by all the challenges that come with the territory.

ject-matter experts lined up, endlessly experimenting with product prototypes ("What happens if I plug the cable in this way?"), and continually refining every sentence to make it as lean, compact, and chock-full of importance as possible.

Then in 1996, I was promoted to management. I went from feeling totally competent and in control of my results to almost the opposite. It took me about a full year (and a lot of training seminars and

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# Professional Growth as Managers

By De Murr, SIG Manager

This week has been hectic. My company's fiscal year began on Monday, but our budgets haven't been approved. We do performance evaluations on all our employees this month. And I have three new contractors starting. But your lives are very much the same. That's what we do as managers - we keep as many balls in the air as we can. The more we can keep in the air the better we perceive ourselves and our directors think we are great.

Each of us develop career development plans for our staff and budget time and monies for them to attend various classes, seminars, or conferences. But what do we do for ourselves? Often little or nothing. The one thing I have always held out for myself is STC Annual Conference. Some years I have even paid for it myself.

But last month I found something better. I attended the Best Practices Conference sponsored by the Center for Information Development Management (CIDM). CIDM is a non-profit organization developed by JoAnn Hackos to address the needs of those of us faced with the day-to-day and year-to-year challenges of planning, developing, and running technical communication groups.

Out of the 100+ attendees, I knew less than 25% — a great opportunity to meet new people with new ideas. I would suspect that the average attendee had been in the

business over 10 years. This is well above the average attendee of Annual Conference.

Topics at the conference included staffing issues, metrics, trends, and strategies for the future. I came away refreshed and stimulated. At Annual Conference, I am always presenting or helping with something. (I know, I should learn to say NO.) It was very enjoyable to sit, listen, and learn.

And this brings me to my challenge to you. What can you do to develop a personal plan for growth as a manager? Can this SIG provide some stimulant, some piece of core information? I know that the listserv provides ready answers and input from a variety of sources. This newsletter does the same. But what else can we do to help you grow?

I'd like for each of you to reflect for a few minutes and consider areas that you would like to explore, topics you want to know more about, and problems for which you would like to hear potential solutions. Then take a minute and send me your suggestion by email, snail mail, or telephone.

I am not promising that we can be all things to all people, but it will give the leadership of this SIG areas where we know you have interest to explore and share with you. I look forward to hearing from you.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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*Editor's Note: This new column will review books relevant to technical communication managers. Our first review is of a classic in the field, JoAnn Hackos's "Managing Your Documentation Projects". If you know of books you'd like to see reviewed, or would like to write a review yourself, please contact our new Book Review Editor, Roberta Bonsall at robertabonsall@usa.net. This review is reprinted with permission from Technical Communication, STC's quarterly journal.*

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### Managing Your Documentation Projects.

JoAnn T. Hackos. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Wiley Technical Communication Library, 1994.

*Managing Your Documentation Projects* is not, on the face of it, a "how-to" book. In fact, Hackos says in her preface that it describes "the concepts and methodology of publications project management," which gives it a much broader scope than a traditional how-to book.

Nevertheless, *Managing Your Documentation Projects* offers a step-by-step approach to life cycle planning (the life cycle is the period between the first glimmer in a developer's eye and the postmortem after the product has been delivered). Following the introductory Part 1, in which Hac-

kos explains why publications departments need to add project management skills to their intellectual arsenals, the book is divided into the five standard life cycle phases:

- In Phase 1, "Starting the Project- The Information Planning Phase," Hackos describes such planning tools as needs analysis, information plans, and project plans. She also points out that the members of the publications group must stick to planning during the planning phase, as frustrating as this may be to people who are used to jumping right in and starting to write or illustrate.

the writing team happy and humming along. (At various points in the book, Hackos warns that, because people are being asked to change their heretofore successful work habits and expectations, dissension will come from inside the publications department as well as from the outside.)

- Phase 4, "Managing the Production Phase," includes a chapter on managing the printings, binding, and packaging processes; a chapter on indexing; a chapter on copyediting; and a useful, but too short, chapter on managing the translation and localization process.

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"I appreciated the phase-by-phase approach, but I also found an additional benefit that is directly attributable to the author's depth and breadth of experience."

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- Phase 2, "Establishing the Specifics - The Content-Specification Phase," describes the content specification. A content specification contains a detailed outline (common enough), as well as information about the documentation's goals and objectives, page and artwork estimates, scheduling activities, tracking systems, and style guidelines.
- Phase 3, "Keeping the Project Running - The Implementation Phase," contains information about hitting agreed-on milestones, developing design prototypes, writing drafts, doing usability testing on the drafts, and, most importantly, keeping

It's impossible to do a good translation on time unless you plan for it. If you have been asked to look into localization, I'd recommend skipping ahead to this chapter after reading the chapters in Phase 1.

- Phase 5, "Ending the Project - The Evaluation Phase," describes that most often neglected part of the process. The wrap-up report, Hackos says, helps you learn from your mistakes and successes and helps you estimate future projects more realistically and accurately. Included are chapters on evaluating both the project and the process, plus chapters on evaluating the pub-

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lications team and preparing for document maintenance.

I appreciated the phase-by-phase approach, but I also found an additional benefit that is directly attributable to the author's depth and breadth of experience. Hackos answers many thorny questions by simply widening the context. For example, what would seem to be a straightforward question about the correct ratio of writers to engineers or programmers may actually be a question about getting information on time. Develop an internal information network, Hackos suggests, so that

needed was a picture of the board to verify that they had the right piece of hardware. They wanted lists of the jumper and cable connections and pinouts. They also admitted that, to conform with legal requirements, the text should include a warning about wearing a wrist strap for protection against electrical shock. All the users' needs could be addressed on a single sheet of paper (page 104)."

As if that weren't bad enough, they wanted the instructions

changing rather than worrying about changing everyone else.... In a chaotic environment, planning is your only protection. Use it effectively (page 74)."

*Reviewed by Susan Fowler  
Senior Member, New York Chapter  
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TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION, the  
journal of the Society for Technical  
Communication, Arlington, VA U.S.A."*

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## HELP WANTED

As a manager, you know what the hot topics are in your field. Share your knowledge with fellow SIG members by submitting articles for inclusion in the next issue of "Management". You'll get your own byline and a great sample for your portfolio.

Submitting an article is easy - just send it by email to the editor at [bphuettner@aol.com](mailto:bphuettner@aol.com). If you send an article as an attachment, make sure that you include your name and chapter with the text of your article. Its amazing how things can get separated accidentally.

If you are interested in helping with our new book review column, contact Roberta Bonsall at [robertabonsall@usa.net](mailto:robertabonsall@usa.net).

Our quarterly deadlines are September 15th, December 15th, March 15th, and June 15th.

To volunteer to help write articles, or suggest topics, contact the Managing Editor, Brenda Huettner, at [bphuettner@aol.com](mailto:bphuettner@aol.com).

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**"In short, no matter what your question,  
*Managing Your Documentation Projects* can  
help you find an answer."**

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you know what's in the pipeline before you get the official request. Then you can begin to plan proactively rather than reactively.

A question about writer productivity - how many pages can a writer turn out in a day?- can become a question about audience analysis. Hackos tells a wonderful story about a publications group that decided to reduce their 100-page installation manuals to 20 pages, then showed the results to the installation technicians:

"[The technicians] carefully corrected the errors in the existing text. [Then] they inquired why anyone in their group needed 20 pages of text to install the hardware.... The technicians explained that all they

printed on cheap paper so they could throw them away without feeling guilty.

In short, no matter what your question, *Managing Your Documentation Projects* can help you find an answer. Finally, here is a quote that might ring some bells for you:

"What happens in a publications organization that is trying to institute a process when the larger organization does not itself believe in planning? What happens when the company is bought, sold, or reorganized and all the managers are eliminated? The tenets of quality management remind you to change what you are capable of

# Transition

(continued from page 1)

You must let go of:

1. Being the one doing the work. You may have done it in the past, and you may have done it darn well. But now your job is to ensure others can perform their tasks with as little intervention from you as possible. The sooner you let go of the heavy projects, the more effective you will be.
2. Deriving your sense of productivity from how many projects you complete. As a technical writer or illustrator, you may have had dozens of finished publications under your belt, anything from brochures to web pages to 500-page user manuals. Now you will be lucky if you get to finish a memo before you are called away to handle some small crisis. Understand that, just because you are no longer the king/queen of volumes, it does not mean you are not being productive.
3. Having a deep technical understanding of the tools, processes, and products used in your group. You will never be able to grasp things quite as well as the people who use them every day to accomplish their tasks. So trust your employees, and do not think that being a manager means you have to be as much as of an authority on everything your group does.
4. Having long blocks of uninterrupted time to work on something. You will be interrupted constantly by people who need

your input, your signature, your attentive ear, or your buy-in. Interruptions may kill your productivity, so you may have to learn how to minimize the disruption. But learn to be tolerant of interruptions. Otherwise, someone might not talk to you freely when they really should.

5. Being able to just let off some steam by freely venting your opinions about a co-worker or a situation. Let us just be honest a second: the relationship between a manager and his/her team members is not an equal one. There is the unspoken understanding that, when there is a conflict, you are always the cooler head, like it or not. Keeping your cool so makes it sooo much easier to look legitimate if things ever wind up behind the doors of Human Resources. So learn to be Mr./Ms. Cool.
6. Having downtime. In the past, when you were working on one or several writing projects, there was usually a cyclical pattern where you had a period of high intensity followed by one of lesser intensity, when a deadline had passed, the crunch was over, and so on. As a manager, you may not have this kind of cycle but rather a constant trickle of activities.
7. Being oblivious to the tedious stuff, such as money matters. You may have previously thought of yourself as trustworthy, as far as the company's money was concerned, but you probably did not read financial

reports as if your life depended on it. Failing to be really cognizant of how well your group contributes to the bottom line or how responsibly you use the resources you are given will land you in deep, hot water faster than you can say, "But I never even saw the invoice!" Learn to care, and always watch where the money goes.

The main thing to keep in the front of your mind is, now that you are a manager, people are your first concern. Maybe some of you out there are such workaholics or masterful time managers that you can do the work you have always done and also handle the people issues, but after three years in management, I am skeptical. In my experience, learning to let go of actually doing the work and instead being available to my team has helped me to become more effective and productive.

*Rebecca Smith, Member  
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## **Management Deadlines**

Fall Issue:

**September 15th**

Winter Issue:

**December 15th**

Spring Issue:

**March 15th**

Summer Issue:

**June 15th**

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# New Listserv, New Features

## Listserv News

by Joseph Van Oss

STC recently switched from Majordomo to Lyris. After months of frustration for SIG members and myself, we finally have the ability to manage subscriptions. I am now addressing a backlog of requests from members who want to be added or removed. I'd like to thank everyone for their patience and extend my apologies for the technical delay. It is terrific to have this hurdle cleared away and finally be able to do my job as list moderator!

The Lyris software gives us some new options, including new instructions for how to subscribe or unsubscribe from the list. Now members can manage their subscriptions through the web, specify how often to receive messages, even view messages on the web.

*Joseph Van Oss  
Twin Cities Chapter  
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## Using Lyris for the First Time

by Raelene Gorlinsky

With the switch to Lyris, there are a few steps you need to take in order to manage your settings. These steps only apply if you were a member of the listserv BEFORE the transition.

1. Go to the site for your email list. The address may be in the stuff at the end of each list email message. Basically, it's <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcmgmtpic-l> for the management list.
2. Ignore the unloadable graphics on the page.
3. Ignore the message that says you can leave the password field blank. Try it, and you'll just get a message that your password is invalid.
4. If you happen to be on one of the pages that has a HOME button, ignore it. It usually will only tell you that "Home" is an undefined page. (And don't go

to the "Main Page" — another dead end.)

5. Scroll down the page to the "Forget Your Password?" question. [Now, don't get fixated on the fact that you never had a password before, so certainly couldn't "forget" it.]
6. Enter your email address and click the button. You will be sent an email containing your password.  
IMPORTANT NOTE: Your password is DIFFERENT for each STC list you are on.

Once you get the email with your password, go back to the site, enter your email address and password, and you'll actually be able to get to the options page. Here you can switch to digest format or index format or go nomail when you need to. It is great to have these options, I just wish it had been a little easier to get to them.

*Raelene Gorlinsky  
Senior Member  
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To subscribe to the Management SIG listserv, go to the listserv website at:

**<http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcmgmtpic-l>**

Enter your email address and password.

To remove your name from the Management SIG listserv, send a blank email to

**[leave-stcmgmtpic-l-15156J@lists.stc.org](mailto:leave-stcmgmtpic-l-15156J@lists.stc.org)**

Note that the character after the second hyphen is a lower-case L.

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# SIG News

by Brenda Huettner, Management Editor

At the start of our calendar year, I'm proud to report that our SIG continues to grow stronger and busier ever. We have over 1,200 members at last count, and provide one of the most active and focused listservs I've had the privilege of reading.

## Conference 2000

As we have for the past four years, the Management SIG plans to sponsor many sessions, including progressions. The 47th Annual Conference will be held May 21st through 24th, 2000. The conference theme is "Renaissance Communicators - A Vision of Our Future", and the location will be sunny Orlando Florida.

Although the deadline for submitting proposals has passed, we are still accepting volunteers to help with the SIG-sponsored progressions.

A progression consists of many round-table type discussions in a single room. Each speaker conducts his or her topic three times within the session, for approximately 25 minutes each time. The attendees then move on to another table for another topic. Its like getting in three sessions in a single time-block!

Since the tables tend to be more intimate than other session types, this is also a great way to break in as a speaker.

We hope to have three sessions this year, covering "Managing People," "Managing Projects,"

and "Managing Departments." If you'd like to apply to be a speaker at one of these progressions, please contact either Sherri Smith (sherri.smith@compaq.com) or Judith Herr (herr@home.com).

And, as always, we will hold our annual SIG business meeting at

transition to a new service provider, for which I'm sure we are all grateful.

Melissa Lowery is our new membership coordinator. This position involves sending out welcome packets to new SIG members, and maintaining our membership lists.

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Although the deadline for submitting proposals has passed, we are still accepting volunteers to help with the SIG-sponsored progressions.

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the Conference. Please attend if you can - member input is what makes our SIG as useful as it is.

## Leadership team

We've got lots of new volunteers this year, and even though past Manager Charlie Breuninger introduced most of us in his last column, here is a quick run-down of who does what within the SIG.

De Murr, our new SIG Manager, is a long-time STC member who has held numerous leadership positions at the local, regional, and Society level. We're fortunate to have such an experienced, insightful, and personable manager assume leadership of the SIG. De took over management responsibility at the SIG business meeting at the 46th Annual Conference in Cincinnati.

Joseph Van Oss has taken over as Listserv manager (and even found time to write an article for this newsletter - see page 6.) Joseph has done an excellent job of seeing us through the difficult

Melissa Guthrie, the new Managing Editor for our web site, has added lots of information to the site, including several back issues of *Management*. If you haven't stopped by recently, check it out at <http://www.stc.org/pics/mgmt>.

We have one new position, just added this year, of Book Review Editor for the newsletter. Roberta Bonsall has thoughtfully volunteered to coordinate this effort, so if you have comments, questions, ideas, or reviews, drop Roberta a note.

And, for those of you who may not know me, I'm Brenda Huettner. I'm entering into my second year editing this newsletter. As always, contact me with any suggestions you may have, or if you want to volunteer for any position in the SIG.

It's going to be a great year!

*Brenda Huettner, Senior Member  
Southern Arizona Chapter*

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## OTHER UPCOMING CONFERENCES

### Region 1

11th Annual InterChange Conference. (Oct 19-20th, 1999, Boxborough, MA, USA).

For registration information, contact Lorraine Lupien, [lorraine\\_lupien@uml.edu](mailto:lorraine_lupien@uml.edu) or call 978-934-2405

### Region 5

"Hot Trends for Communicators" — 1999 Region 5 Conference, (October 14-16, 1999, Phoenix, AZ, USA).

For more information, see the Phoenix Chapter website at <http://www.stc-phoenix.com>.

### Region 6

Portals of Communication - 9th Annual STC Region 6 Conference (October 3-5, 1999, Sheraton Winnipeg Hotel, Manitoba, Canada)

For information, see the Region 6 web site at <http://www.stc.org/region6/index.htm>.

### Region 7

Still Writing After All These Years (October 14-16, 1999, Doubletree Hotel, Bellevue, WA, USA), Redefining the Core Competencies of Technical Communication.

For more information about the Region 7 conference, see <http://www.stc-psc.org/region7/index.html>

### Region 8

Driving Forces in Technical Communication (November 11-14, 1999, Long Beach Hilton Hotel, Long Beach, California, USA).

For more information, contact Christine Stevens, Conference Chair, at [cnl@iname.com](mailto:cnl@iname.com).



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The staff of Management welcomes any news and information that would be of interest to members of the SIG. Please contact the Managing Editor for information about submitting articles.

Visit the Management SIG web site at <http://www.stc.org/pics/mgmt/>