



About the Management SIG

- Have you been downsized, right-sized, reorganized, reclassified, out-placed, replaced -- or voluntarily become a contractor in a new field?
- Got a knotty management challenge you'd like some help addressing or some 'lessons learned' to share?
- Wondering what this year's STC Conference in Dallas offers managers of communication projects and people?
- Faced with surviving the increasingly chaotic world of technical publications management?

This year, technical communicators are handling more complex projects with fewer resources or have migrated into other communication fields – becoming curriculum developers, project managers, publicists, marketing collateral and web page designers, even information technology techies. Others are *reviving* previously used skills and talents to address challenges for new clients in new fields and industries. Others have migrated from managing departments to managing projects and their own careers and businesses. The Management SIG supports all members by providing tools for communication and networking including the SIG web site, listserv, related presentations, and publications.

MISSION OF THE STC MANAGEMENT SIG

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.

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AT THE CONFERENCE...

Management SIG Business Meeting	Sun. 5 – 6	Judith Herr, SIG Manager
Project Mgmt. Panel: The Realities	Tues. 4 – 5:30 (MG8K)	E. Bailey, Moderator
SIG Networking Luncheon	Tues.	Luncheon attendees
Managing Projects Progression	Wed. 10:30 – 12 (MG10E)	Donn LeVie, Moderator
Managing People Progression	Wed 2-3:30 (MG 11E)	J.McCauslin, Moderator
Mgmt. Stem -- 37 sessions	Throughout Conference	See Schedule

DISTINGUISHED SIG ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Each year, the STC Board of Directors recognizes exceptional contributions to Chapters and SIGs with STC Distinguished Achievement Awards. This year our nominee **Elizabeth Bailey**, Management SIG Web Site Weaver, received the Award. The citation reads, *"For your leadership as SIG Web Weaver toward improving our ability to share knowledge; and for enthusiastically nudging SIG members to contribute skills, talents, and experience at STC's Annual Conference, the listserv, and as the web site weaver."*

Management SIG Contacts

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For additional information and networking,
join the SIG listserv, by signing up at <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcmgmtpic-1>. Access our web site at <http://www.stcsig.org/mgt>.

SIG Managers' Messages

JUDITH HERR, SIG MANAGER

Years ago, when Tom Peters wrote about 'management by wandering around,' the idea intrigued me and I began getting out of my office. MBWA facilitated informal communication and a decrease in bureaucratic lines of communication. Well, Peters has come a long way in coaching managers and leaders. In *Fast Times*, Peters reflects on the turbulent years ahead (<http://pf.fastcompany.com/magazine/44/rules.html>) For the Management SIG, our volunteer leaders more often wander virtually, using technology to facilitate our networking and effective communication. We too anticipate potentially stormy weather for technical communication management leaders.

A successful volunteer organization requires active leaders that plunge ahead. This article provides insights from some of our SIG active volunteers. As Peters says, "Think of Martin Luther King Jr., Mohandas Gandhi, or Nelson Mandela. They were looking for more leaders in order to empower others to find and create their own destinies."

Please join us...

Joaquim Baptista is a Computer Science major from Portugal. He embraced technical writing in 1997 at Altitude Software. Joaquim moved from lone writer to manager of seven and now is a team leader of two.

Managing the Listserv: Joaquim Baptista

I have managed the technical aspects of the stcmgmtpic-l list since May 2002. My first responsibility was to keep the list running -- a simple job, because

- Judith Herr and Donn LeVie, among others, do excellent jobs as 'list moms,' (apologies to Donn) providing thoughtful initial answers to most questions.
- The courteous behavior of list members means that I am not forced to prevent anyone from posting.
- I receive less than one help request each month, typically requiring less than one hour to solve.

The second responsibility I assumed was to organize the non-existing archives for the list. The list software does maintain an archive, but was keeping messages for only three months. The messages are of low volume, but high quality. I reconfigured the software

to remove the limit, so we have now accumulated a year's worth of messages (over 500). In the future, I may investigate the use of better software for facilitating exploration of the archives.

To search the archives, browse to <http://lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcmgmtpic-l> login, and click 'Read messages.'

Donn LeVie, Jr. has 25+ years experience in technical/scientific communications and project management, including as a research geological oceanographer and oil and gas geologist/ geophysicist. Donn was an adjunct faculty member at the University of Houston, Information Development Project Manager for Motorola's Semiconductor Products Sector, Director of Information Development for an eCommerce startup, and is Technical Publications Project Manager for Intel's Personal Client Architecture Components Group in Austin, Texas.

Giving Back: Donn LeVie, Jr.

One of the things I enjoy most about my career in technical communication is being able to share the benefit of my experience with others in STC as a conference presenter, progression leader, or panel member. For the Austin STC chapter monthly meetings, I am always "on call" should a scheduled presenter cancel at the last minute. The Management SIG may have the best collection of technical communication intellectual capital in all of STC -- and members have access for only \$5 a year.

I see the Management SIG serving as a proving ground for the "next big thing(s)" for technical communicators. Technology allows us to do our jobs better, and levels the playing field for most tasks. However, the initiatives that will demonstrate quantitatively our 'value added' will come from the management arena. The Management SIG is our forum for discussing and debating how those initiatives can be implemented successfully. Single sourcing, valuation models, content management, and the trend toward a 'free agent nation' are hot topics for technical communication managers. Presenting at the annual STC conference—and publishing in *Intercom* or *Technical Communication*—facilitates discussion of current trends, paradigms, and issues for STC members to consider.

Brenda Huettner is the Management Stem Manager for the 50th Annual STC Conference, a member of the South Arizona Chapter, and an STC Associate Fellow.

Benefits of Involvement: Brenda Huettner

This year, I've had the honor of serving as Management Stem Manager for the STC Annual Conference. I've spent quite a few hours on conference-related tasks, but the benefits have been phenomenal.

First, I've learned a lot. When I began reviewing proposals, I got a sneak-peek at all the latest management tools, techniques, and trends in the industry. I read some fabulous proposals, works of art in their own right! And I've helped develop some ideas and concepts into sessions I'm sure will be informative and well-received.

I've improved my management skills. After all, I'm heading up a group of more than 80 people who together will present 37 sessions over the three days of the conference. That doesn't include the people who generously agreed to help review proposals, or check rooms during the conference. And we're doing it all remotely--email, snail-mail, and telephones are all part of the mix.

More importantly, though, I've met and worked with some terrific people. The STC office staff is great -- they always are able to answer all my questions, and are patient and understanding about the myriad changes and challenges of the past several months. The other stem managers are helpful and supportive. We've progressed from just a program committee to a real team -- and had some fun along the way!

Jill McCauslin is president of RADcom, Inc., Documentation and Training Professionals. She is moderating the SIG-sponsored progression on Managing People at the Conference.

Progressions – Proving Ground for Conference Speakers; Reward for Attendees: Jill McCauslin

At last year's STC Conference in Nashville, I agreed to moderate a Management SIG progression this year. It turned out that being the moderator involves, recruiting presenters, completing a proposal, communicating with the STC office, and moderating at the Conference.

Finding speakers was easy. All I had to do was send an email to the SIG listserve asking for volunteers. With the responses I received, I had enough good topics and experienced presenters to write the proposal in response to the STC Call for Papers. In November, I received notification that the progression was accepted. Since some progression proposals were sent directly to the Conference Program Committee, my progression was assigned more speakers than were in the original proposal. I contacted everyone, verified topics, and informed the STC office of the changes. Some speakers had to cancel and a few wanted to discuss potential modifications of their planned topics and discussions.

For STC members, leading a progression table discussion is an excellent way to jump in as a speaker at the annual conference. Progression speakers need the ability to engage participants at their table in meaningful discussion and to respond to questions and shift the discussion... The speakers enjoy all of the benefits of a conference presenter. The time necessary to prepare in advance may be shorter than for other session formats. Progression speakers have the opportunity to interact directly with participants and to gain new insights on the topic they present. For the progression moderator, the benefits really accrue when the conference begins. I will have the opportunity to meet with the presenters and to moderate the session. For the progression, I will introduce the topics and manage the timing – which calls for the skill of a choreographer and the instincts of a ringmaster.

The moderator serves in a coordinating role pre-conference, but does not actually host a progression table. Ask me after the conference if I recommend this role. So far, I would say it's a relatively easy way to contribute to the SIG.

About the SIG Newsletter Editor

Help has finally arrived for Colleen DeNardo, our Management SIG Managing Editor. Her new editorial assistant, Isabella, reported for work on March 31, weighing in at 6 lbs, 13 oz. at a lanky 19-1/4 inches. Editor and assistant are both doing fine.



JUST ASK A MANAGER

The “Ask the Manager” column is a new feature of the Management SIG newsletter. Each issue, a different SIG leader will address a question or issue raised by Management SIG members. This month’s guest columnist is Donn LeVie, Jr. of Intel Corporation.

Question: “Am I a manager if I no longer have anyone to manage?”

From time to time in organizations and corporations, technical communication resources are downsized or realigned. Sometimes the process results in the technical publications ‘team’ becoming one person responsible for supporting the entire engineering or development department. Often technical communicator retained was the team manager – and now the ‘lone manager.’

Like a captain without a ship, a manager without a team faces many challenges. This situation happened to me several times throughout my career. I call it ‘management purgatory,’ because it’s usually understood that you’re only to be stuck in this position temporarily (depending on your definition of ‘temporary’). I tell people that ‘I’m between tech pubs teams right now...’ Whether because of the overall economy, the industry business conditions, or company realignment, such resource adjustments are now a part of corporate life. The removal of subordinates from your control changes the *context* of who and how you manage in four ways.

1. You’ve still got work to do, so you’re probably involved with *managing projects*. You’re now more of what’s called ‘an individual contributor,’ supporting several internal clients or product lines, each with a documentation set that you must plan, coordinate, create, manage, and archive. If your workload is typical, these tasks alone can eat up a good portion of your available time.

2. Don’t overlook that if you support internal or external clients, you’re probably involved with *managing stakeholders*. These stakeholders can be managers or team leaders in engineering, development, quality assurance, marketing, or wherever your services are used. Being able to respond diplomatically to all the ‘urgent’ requests and everyone’s No. 1 priority requires strong management and communications skills.

3. You could be working with many stakeholders across different functional organizations, which means you’re busy with *managing expectations*. Not a job to be taken lightly because many pairs of eyes will be watching how well your work measures up to the expectations of others. This is the voice of experience speaking here, so when you find yourself in a situation where you don’t have a team anymore, believe me, others higher up in the management chain will be observing how well you handle your situation (be it temporary or otherwise).

4. Being an individual contributor means you’re balancing *project management, stakeholder management, and expectation management*. Such tasks require strategic planning and demand strong individual commitment and discipline to get the job done on schedule and within budget. So, when conditions allow, you’ll be the natural choice to again lead or build that documentation team.

Conclusion

There’s not enough space in this column to address all the issues, but one of the most important challenges you’ll face as a ‘lone manager’ is learning how to deal with loss of control and authority. If you’ve ever been ‘realigned’ from reporting to marketing or a centralized technical publications organization to reporting to a development or engineering organization, you’ve discovered what a paradigm shift is all about. The shifts you contend with are ...

- Changes in your job scope
- Changes in your job responsibilities
- Changes in your reporting structure
- Changes in your schedule
- Changes for your career path

One last point: you don’t have to have subordinates to be a manager. ‘Manager’ is less a title and more a point of view -- how you approach work challenges.

Donn LeVie, Jr. supports documentation projects for Intel’s Personal Client Architecture Components Group in Austin, Texas. He can be reached at donald.s.levie@intel.com

Got a question for the next issue? Send it to herr@attbi.com.