

Tieline

The Society Leaders' Newsletter

STC Newsletter Collaboration Using *Google Docs*

By Joan Lasselle, Senior Member, Silicon Valley Chapter

Producing a regular STC chapter newsletter can be a challenge; it requires the collaborative effort of a dispersed team of volunteers who have little time and often shared responsibilities. One of the new set of hosted Web solutions (software accessible from within a Web browser) that can help newsletter teams overcome collaboration challenges is *Google Docs and Spreadsheets*, a free, online set of tools designed to help eliminate version control and other collaboration problems that result from sharing documents and spreadsheets via e-mail. You can try it out at docs.google.com. In this article I focus on *Google Docs*, although much of the information is also relevant to *Google Spreadsheets*.

Google Docs has many things going for it as a tool for volunteers. The first is



Figure 1. A screen capture of the image a user sees when creating a new document using *Google Docs*.

access. You can start using *Google Docs* in less than five minutes—no installation, no training, no fees. For any experienced tech writer, the interface is intuitive; you learn to use it while you are writing. (See Figure 1.) Contributors simply start writing in a Web-based WYSIWYG environment, using either *Firefox* or *Internet Explorer*. Alternatively they can write the first draft in *Microsoft Word* and upload it to *Google Docs*, where it will be automatically converted for online editing. Basic help information is available in the *Google Docs* online support center (docs.google.com/support).

One of the major benefits of *Google Docs* is that you can invite others to edit or view your document. (See Figure 2.) This simplifies and streamlines the editing and review process. In fact, multiple people can collaborate on the same document at the same time. A small on-screen note indicates that others are editing the document while you are working. *Google Docs* also tracks changes so you can easily see what each contributor has changed or added to the document. Revisions are easy to manage. You can even compare one set of revisions to another and revert to a previous version of the document if needed.

Google Docs supports multiple output formats—PDF, HTML, and RTF. Select the format from the “Save As” menu. You can also publish to a blog or other Web environment. *Google Docs* offers an excellent internal workspace, and, when all contributors have completed their input, the document can be published directly to the most popular Web publishing tools (including *Blogger*, *WordPress*, and *LiveJournal*). These options provide several alternative formats for the traditional e-mailed newsletter.

Google Docs makes it easy to insert images, links, comments, bookmarks, page breaks, and tables; however, as it stands today, the tool does have limitations. Short, text-only documents work best. Nested, bulleted lists can be problematic. In its current release, *Google Docs* is a tool for collaboration and not for precise page-layout control. However, there has been much speculation that Google’s aim is to continue improving the product so it can compete with traditional desktop-installed word processing and authoring tools. So, expect the tool to get better and additional features to be added over time.

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Editor

Cecily Farrar

Tieline is published for STC leaders. The purpose of *Tieline* is to improve communication and serve as a link between STC communities, volunteer leaders, and the Society office. Distribution to other community leaders is encouraged. Reprints from *Tieline* are permitted if credit is given and a copy sent to the editor. Electronic copy is available at the Web site noted below.

STC Office Staff

Executive Director

Susan Burton, CAE

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Eileen Lopez

Communication Director

Maurice P. Martin

Assistant Communication Director

Ed Rutkowski

Webmaster

Shafqatullah Syed

Director of Education

Lloyd Tucker

Society for Technical Communication

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904

Arlington, VA 22203-1822

(703) 522-4114 • (703) 522-2075 fax

stc@stc.org • www.stc.org

Send Tieline feedback to:

tieline@stc.org

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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

SIG Corner

Recruiting Volunteers? Get Real!



**By Jane L. Smith, Manager, Instructional Design and Learning
Special Interest Group**

STC is a large community of smaller communities such as geographical chapters, virtual special interest groups, and various committees. Each of these communities, regardless of type, is primarily managed and run by volunteers. That's a lot of volunteer effort going on! We should all recognize, regularly, the unpaid time and energy that innumerable people give to STC on a daily basis.

Yet, we hear a continual cry for help in recruiting and retaining volunteers. At this year's annual conference in Las Vegas, the leadership table session I hosted on this very topic was packed with people who were struggling to build or retain strong leadership teams to grease the wheels of their community activities.

In reality, recruitment is an ongoing effort, not only to fill key positions but also to acquire assistants for key people—with an eye toward succession planning. Perhaps if each community leader had an assistant, or the leadership tasks were spread out over more people, interested volunteers and leaders would not see team positions as overwhelming and involving a huge time commitment.

Regardless of the specific need, recruiting volunteers is a critical activity for the success of STC. To address this activity, I'll break it into three parts: finding the right people, approaching and recruiting those people, and retaining them.

Finding the Right People

Some of you may be thinking you can't afford to be selective when trying to find the right person for a particular job. You just need people. However, as with any job, if someone's skills and interests are not matched to the position, performance suffers. The first task, then, is to define the positions you need to fill, along with the individual skills and qualities needed to fill those positions.

After doing this, you can use a variety of resources to find people. The list below summarizes several ways SIG managers find volunteers.

- ❖ Tap into academe to develop the SIG leaders of tomorrow. Identify academics by watching for ".edu" at the end of their e-mail addresses. Keep in mind that teaching, research, and service are the three keys to the involvement of academics in the SIG.
- ❖ Use a spreadsheet to collect the information you gather as people introduce themselves. Capture anything that they mention they like doing or are good at. Later, when you are looking for a volunteer, you can refer to the spreadsheet for possible candidates.
- ❖ Use your e-mail discussion list to ask for volunteers. Send e-mail messages that go to all SIG members a few times each year. Highlight volunteer opportunities in these e-blasts.
- ❖ Use your one yearly opportunity to ask for volunteers face to face—the annual conference SIG business meeting. There are also other opportunities to snag volunteers throughout the conference.
- ❖ Never panic if there is a significant job that you can't fill. Eventually, as you begin to build a group of people who meet regularly and support each other, the help will come.

Volunteers, continued on page 8

Certification Evaluation Task Force Seeks Input

Editor's note: Material for this article comes from an article written by Bill Thomas, senior member of the Rocky Mountain Chapter STC, and e-mailed to the newsletter editors' mailing list for inclusion in chapter newsletters.

STC's revitalization and transformation initiative has renewed interest in certification for the technical communication profession. Jonathan Baker and Dan Wise are currently leading a task force to examine the issue of certification from all sides. At the July 2006 Board of Directors meeting, STC President Paula Berger discussed several of these angles, including certification's value to employers and members, financial impact, and feasibility of implementation—and, more importantly, the interest level of members.

Jon, Dan, and eighteen other STC members across the U.S. and Canada have been meeting via conference call to determine the starting point and progress of this study. The task force members are currently working to prepare the questions they will consider as part of their work. They will report to the Society in May 2007 with their findings.

Some of the questions that have been considered so far include the following.

- ❖ Is there a body of knowledge defining this profession?
- ❖ What would be the core competencies required?
- ❖ Would certification help or hurt the cause of the technical communicator in the field?

- ❖ How would employers react to certification?
- ❖ Would academia respond positively to a professional body of knowledge and teach standardized courses to develop certified students?
- ❖ Would STC provide postgraduate, continuing education courses?
- ❖ Should certification be based on knowledge, experience, or both?
- ❖ Would there be levels of certification (basic, advanced, master)?
- ❖ Are there financial concerns on the part of STC, academia, employers, or practitioners that need to be addressed?
- ❖ Are there international or cultural considerations that need to be addressed?
- ❖ How would certification be marketed to sell the value of such a program—and the profession in general—to practitioners, employers, and academics?
- ❖ Would professional certification enhance the group, or cause anyone to leave?

If you have comments or recommendations that the task force might consider, please send your information to STC_CTF@yahoo.com. If you would like to participate in the research the task force will be conducting, contact Jon Baker at jbaker2525@earthlink.net or Dan Wise at DWise@iccsafe.org. ♦

Use Mailing Lists to Connect with Other Community Leaders

STC mailing lists can be a vital resource for brainstorming ideas with other leaders and learning helpful tips from other communities to incorporate into your own chapter or SIG activities.

Mailing list options include:

- ❖ “stc_sigleaders” for SIG leaders (lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stc_sigleaders)
- ❖ “stcwebmaster-L” for community webmasters (lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stcwebmaster-L)
- ❖ “stc_pres” for chapter presidents (lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=stc_pres)
- ❖ “news-eds” for newsletter editors (lists.stc.org/cgi-bin/lyris.pl?enter=news-eds) ♦

Attention Newsletter Editors and Webmasters:

Photos Available of Conference Opening and Closing Session Speakers

Please visit the photo gallery at www.stc-cdx.org/gallery for photos of conference opening speaker Simon Singh and conference closing speaker Ze Frank. Singh is STC's 2007 Honorary Fellow and an author, journalist, and television producer. Frank is a high-tech humorist. ♦

Community Membership Drives

To attract new members during their membership drives, chapters can use the promotional items mailed to all membership managers and student chapter advisors in early November. These items include membership applications, flyers promoting STC's 54th Annual Conference, and copies of the *Discover the Benefits* brochure. *Discover the Benefits* contains information about STC and its services, publications, and special interest groups. Applications and brochures can also be downloaded from the Society Web site.

Below is a list of STC membership drive achievers. The communities listed are leading their respective categories in growth percentages from June 30 through November 30, 2006. Chapters are ranked in the size category they attained on June 30, 2006; the list also includes a category for SIGs. The numbers in parentheses denote the number of communities in each category as of June 30, 2006. As an inspiration to all STC communities, *Tieline* will publish an updated version of this list in every issue through March 2007.

Professional Chapters, Size Category 1

More than 600 members (2 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Silicon Valley	10.38
Boston	8.82

Professional Chapters, Size Category 2

301 to 600 members (9 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Toronto	14.78
Washington, D.C.	11.76
Puget Sound	10.97

Professional Chapters, Size Category 3

151 to 300 members (18 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Carolina	15.02
Eastern Ontario	14.74
Canada West Coast	11.93

Professional Chapters, Size Category 4

76 to 150 members (24 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
India	34.29
Indiana	15.12
Southwestern Ontario	13.43

Professional Chapters, Size Category 5

41 to 75 members (21 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
James River	24.59
Four Lakes	19.64
San Gabriel Valley	17.24

Professional Chapters, Size Category 6

Fewer than 41 members (30 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Susquehanna Valley	63.33
Rock Valley	36.36
Metrolina	25.00

Student Chapters, Size Category 1

20 or more members (7 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
James Madison U.	118.75
U. of Washington	19.44
U. of Minnesota	16.00

Student Chapters, Size Category 2

Fewer than 20 members (23 communities)

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
London Ontario	150.00
College Station	60.00
Northern Illinois U.	60.00

Special Interest Groups

(20 communities)

<i>SIG</i>	<i>Percentage of growth since June 30, 2006</i>
Quality and Process Improvement	99.80
Environmental, Safety, and Health	82.51
Lone Writer	73.85 ◆

October 2006 Board Report Posted to STC Site

The report from the Board of Directors meeting held in London on October 13, 2006, has been posted to the STC site. Please visit www.stc.org/PDF_Files/101306_BoardReport.pdf. ◆

Society Nomination Process

The preliminary slate of candidates for Society office for 2007 was released in mid-November. As described in Article VIII, Section 1E of the STC Bylaws, additional candidates may be nominated by petition for the following offices: Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Director, and Nominating Committee Member. (Please note that candidates may not be nominated by petition for the offices of President and First Vice President.)

All candidates must be senior members of the Society by the time the Board of Directors is inducted at the STC annual business meeting in May 2007, during STC's 54th Annual Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Petitions must be signed by 400 voting members or 4 percent of the voting members, whichever is lesser. The full name and address of each member must appear next to the member's signature. Electronic petitions may be conducted; please contact the Society office for details.

For a candidate to be nominated by petition, the STC office must receive the following forms by 4 PM Eastern Time on January 16, 2007:

- ❖ Candidate's signed statement of availability
- ❖ Petition containing the required number of signatures as described above
- ❖ Candidate's biographical information and statements
- ❖ Candidate's portrait photo

Copies of the statement of availability, instructions for writing the biography, and other materials regarding the election are available from the Society office. ◆

STC's 2007 Election

Preliminary Slate of Candidates for Society Office

Office	Candidate
President*	Linda L. Oestreich (<i>unopposed</i>)
First Vice President*	Mark H. Clifford (<i>unopposed</i>)
Second Vice President*	Cynthia C. Currie M. Katherine (Kit) Brown
Treasurer	William C. (W.C.) Wiese (<i>unopposed incumbent</i>)
Directors (<i>Three to be elected, each for a three-year term.</i>)	Jonathan W. Baker Mollye M. Barrett Nicoletta A. Bleiel Jackie A. Damrau Leah Guren Steven F. Jong Robert G. Young
Nominating Committee (<i>Two to be elected, each for a two-year term.</i>)**	Rachel A. Jordan Houghton Suzanna Laurent

* The *STC Bylaws* specify that the second vice president automatically becomes first vice president the following year and president the year after that. Thus, second vice president is the highest office to which a member is routinely elected.

** Members of this year's nominating committee are Victoria Koster-Lenhardt (manager), Vienna, Austria; Michelle A. Didier, Springfield, Virginia; Constance L. Kiernan, Bowie, Maryland; Betsy M. Maaks, Naperville, Illinois; and Martha K. Sippel, Lone Tree, Colorado. ◆

STC's 2007 Election

The annual STC election will be held in early 2007, and only members who have paid their dues in full will be eligible to vote. An option on the dues renewal forms and new membership applications for 2007 allows members to receive their election materials via e-mail. In March, members who selected this option will be e-mailed the election slate, candidate biographies, and voting instructions. Members who did not select this option will receive these materials by first-class mail.

Be sure to renew your membership as soon as you receive the renewal notice to have a say in STC's future! ◆

STC Campaign Guidelines

The preliminary slate of candidates for Society office appears on page 5. Candidates may actively campaign for office; appropriate activities include visiting communities, attending regional conferences, and publishing articles in Society and community publications or on community or personal Web sites. Upon request, communities must provide balanced coverage to all candidates. Following are some guidelines to help STC communities to determine which campaign practices are acceptable. *Please note that negative campaigning is strictly prohibited.*

Listservs

Candidates may contact members through community listservs. Communities may choose the means by which listserv members are notified of candidates' messages. For example, communities may post the candidate's message to the community Web site and provide a link to the message on the listserv. Communities may also allow candidates to post messages

directly on the listserv. Communities may limit the number of messages from candidates posted to their Web sites or listservs.

Newsletters

If a community newsletter publishes a campaign article by one candidate, it must grant his or her opponent's request to publish an article and must do so in a timely fashion. However, not receiving an article from a candidate's opponent is not a reason to avoid publishing the article of the candidate who contacted you first.

Web Sites

If a community site links to a candidate's Web site, it must, if requested, link to the opponent's Web site.

Community leaders who have questions about these guidelines are encouraged to contact the STC office at (703) 522-4114 for more information. ♦

Membership Categories for 2007

The following are descriptions of the membership categories offered to STC members for 2007. Please note that the cost of additional SIG membership is now \$10 per year. SIG and chapter memberships will now be given equal weight on application and renewal forms.

Classic Membership

Classic membership entitles members to the hardcopy versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* and access to their online versions, as well as full access to the online STC members-only knowledge base. Members in this category may choose one of the following community options for 2007: two chapters, one chapter and one SIG, or two SIGs. Members in this category may join additional SIGs at a cost of \$10 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter.

E-Membership

E-membership entitles members to the same benefits as classic membership, except that e-members do not receive hardcopies of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication*. Members in this category may choose one of the following community options for 2007: two chapters, one chapter and one SIGs, or two SIGs. E-members may join additional SIGs at a cost of \$10 per SIG and additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter.

Limited Membership

Limited membership includes subscriptions to the hardcopy versions of *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* and full access to the online STC members-only knowledge base. Limited membership does not include membership in chapters or SIGs.

Student Membership

Student members receive the same benefits as e-members, but have no voting rights. In addition, student members may join an unlimited number of SIGs and up to two chapters (one student and one professional). Students may join additional chapters at a cost of \$10 per chapter.

Retired Membership

Retired membership entitles members to the same benefits as classic membership, at a reduced rate. To qualify for retired membership, an individual must have been a member of STC for ten or more years, and must be either sixty years old or medically retired. ♦

What's New at the STC Conference

STC's annual conference has always been intended as your one-stop shop offering the latest information on communication techniques, publishing technologies, and business trends for professional communicators responsible for user assistance, intranet publishing, knowledge management, localization, user-centered design, and other branches of technical and product information.

Based on your feedback, STC has added a number of new components to the conference this year to strengthen its place as the primary source of professional development for technical communicators. The new components include certificate programs and conferences-within-a-conference (called Institutes), as well as new approaches to traditional conference components.

Certificate Programs—Providing You with In-Depth Explorations and Tangible Recognition

Five certificate programs let you explore a subject in depth over the course of the conference and, if you complete the program, receive a certificate of attendance. For a single price of \$1,295, a certificate program includes a two-day pre-conference workshop on one of five topics and a full conference registration.

During the three days of the conference, you would attend four designated conference sessions in the same subject area. This combination of seminars and sessions is intended to help you develop skills and expose you to the broad range of thinking in the given topic area. Completing all of the requirements provides you with a certificate of attendance.

The following certificates are being offered this year:

- ❖ Technical Communication 101
- ❖ Master Writers (for advanced professionals)
- ❖ Usability
- ❖ Content Management
- ❖ Team Management

Institutes

Institutes are conferences-within-a-conference that explore hot topics in depth. Each Institute runs concurrently with the other technical sessions of the conference, is designed by a well-known expert in the field, and features a program of invited speakers with extensive and unique experience. Participation in the Institutes is included with your conference registration fee.

The following Institutes are included in this year's conference:

- ❖ Content Management Institute, organized by Ann Rockley, STC Fellow and author of the best-selling *Managing Enterprise Content*

- ❖ Globalization, Localization and Translation Institute, organized by Nancy Locke, well-known speaker on these issues
- ❖ Sharing Corporate Knowledge Institute, organized by Michael Hughes, award-winning author on knowledge management
- ❖ Information Design and Architecture Institute, organized by Saul Carliner, an award-winning author on information design and Manager of STC Conferences
- ❖ Web 2.0 Institute, organized by Phylise Banner Klein, an e-learning expert and Program Manager of the conference with Saul Carliner

Returning Favorites

In addition to the new components, the conference includes long-time favorites:

Technical sessions, which are elective sessions in the key areas of interest to technical communicators. This year, we're offering a choice of seventy technical sessions in the following tracks (or topic areas): Designing and Assessing User Experiences; Developing and Delivering Content; Producing and Publishing Information; Managing People, Projects, and Business; Professional Development; and Applying Research and Theory to Practice.

Popular *evaluation workshops*, in which experienced professionals evaluate your manuals, online help, tutorials, and indexes.

Expo, the largest marketplace of products and services on technical communication. In addition to exhibitors, our exposition includes sponsored sessions, in which vendors demonstrate their products and describe case studies of their applications.

Keynote presentations by STC's Honorary Fellow for 2007—the internationally renowned science communicator, Simon Singh—and high-tech humorist Ze Frank.

Register Soon

Online registration for the Technical Communication Summit, STC's annual conference, will open in mid-December at www.stc.org/54thConf. Registration will also be available by fax and by mail.

When registration opens, make sure you take advantage of the STC conference Early Bird Rates, which offer the best value. Register by **February 28, 2007**, for significant savings:

- ❖ Member early bird rate: \$645—a savings of \$250 off the on-site rate

What's New, continued on page 13

Google Docs, continued from page 1

To use *Google Docs and Spreadsheets*, you must have a Google account. The license agreement states this tool is for “your personal, noncommercial use only.”

Google Docs offers an elegant solution for getting multiple authors to contribute to a chapter newsletter, and eliminates many of the tracking problems associated with multiple e-mail attachments. It encourages and supports collaboration, and promotes the development of new skills needed by technical communication professionals.

Joan Lasselle is cofounder and president of Lasselle-Ramsay, a professional services organization that works with clients to develop and deliver critical business information and learning solutions for new products, business initiatives, and regulatory requirements. Since 1982, Lasselle-Ramsay has provided services to leading companies in a variety of industries including Fireman’s Fund, Genentech, Cisco Systems, palmOne, McKesson, and Hewlett-Packard. Joan can be reached at Joan.Lasselle@lr.com. ♦

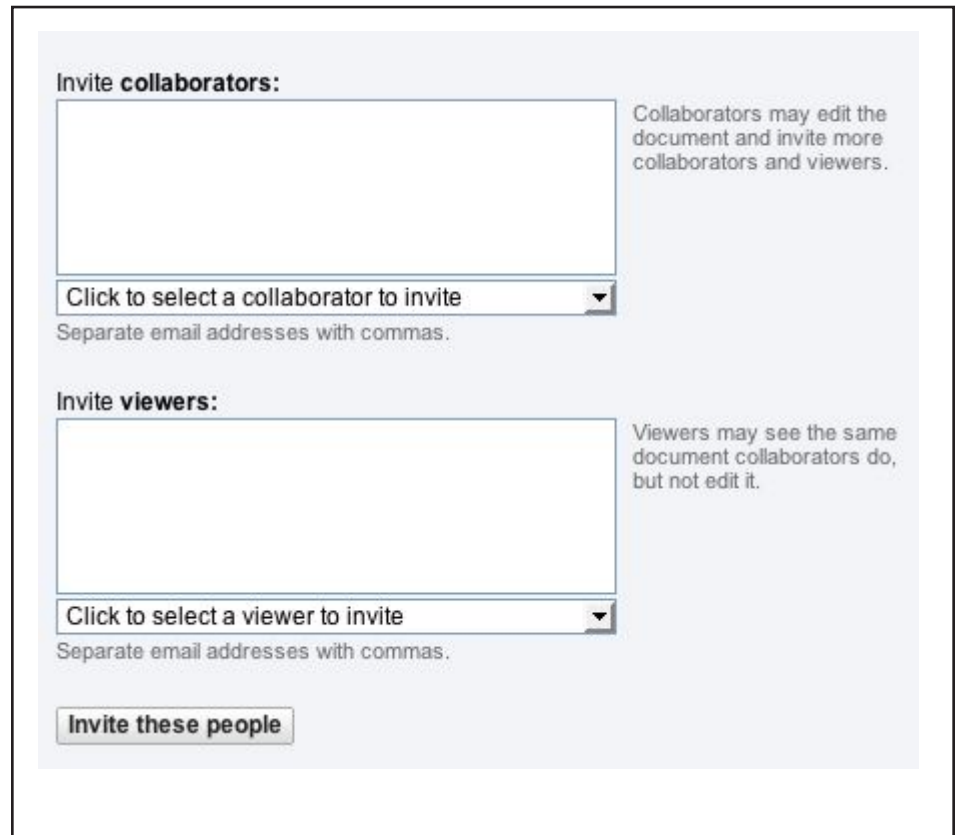


Figure 2. A screen capture of the options available under the *Google Docs collaborate* feature.

Volunteers, continued from page 2

- ❖ Gauge members’ interest and enthusiasm through your e-mail discussion list. Watch for people who respond to questions with knowledge. Try to connect with them, and ask them to join your team. Sometimes you may have to create a position to involve an enthusiastic person.

Approaching and Recruiting the Right Person

There are as many ways and styles to approach a potential volunteer as there are recruiters. Seeing recruitment not as a sales job or desperate plea for help, but as a chance to build a lasting relationship, shifts one’s approach considerably. Here’s how I generally go about approaching a potential leader.

When someone has responded to an e-blast about a position, my next step is

to e-mail the person to set up a telephone call in which we first get acquainted and then discuss the volunteer opportunity. If I’ve had more than one person respond to my e-mail, then I want to not only find the right fit for the specific position, but also explore each responder’s interests and skills—in light of the SIG’s goals and plans—to see how else he or she could contribute. Rule number one: Never turn anyone down. Always appreciate the offer, acknowledge the desire to contribute, and work toward a mutually beneficial way for each person to participate.

If I have noticed someone on the discussion list whom I want to recruit for a specific role, I e-mail that person and request an opportunity to talk with him or her by phone. This e-mail has several key components:

- ❖ A warm greeting
- ❖ An acknowledgement of a strength or interest that I’ve observed
- ❖ A statement of how that strength or interest could help the community
- ❖ An inquiry into whether the person has an interest in helping the community
- ❖ A description of the nature of the team members and how much fun we have as a group
- ❖ A request to set up a phone conference to get to know the person and discuss the opportunity for him or her to contribute to the community or a specific issue/task/cause

Often, when using this approach, I find that people are flattered to be noticed and

Volunteers, continued on page 12

Ask the Office: Can My Chapter Hold a Raffle?

Editor's note: The following information is intended to be helpful and should not serve as a substitute for legal or tax counsel.

Q: Our chapter is thinking about holding a raffle with door prizes and the proceeds being donated to a local charity. What are STC chapters legally allowed to do when holding raffles or lotteries?

A: The following information is provided by Jacqueline Henson, STC's legal counsel.

Holding a Raffle without Registration

The U.S. government and local and state jurisdictions are concerned about "games of chance" involving money (whether or not the money is used to benefit a charity). Under legal definitions, a lottery has three elements: a prize, the element of "chance" to win, and consideration. *Consideration* is the legal term for a fee to participate. Charging *any* amount, even a nominal fee like \$2 or \$3, is *not* OK and automatically turns a raffle into a lottery, thus making it fall under gaming rules and regulations.

However, a raffle is not a lottery if everyone can participate for free. Therefore, you could allow anyone who attends the chapter event to fill out a form—without purchasing a ticket—and put that into the raffle.

Registering Your Chapter's Lottery

Lotteries must be registered in the local jurisdiction where the event is to be held, where the tickets are sold, and where the prize will be given. Chapters that have members in multiple states should not sell tickets online, as this would require registration in each of the jurisdictions in question. Ideally, the tickets should be sold the same day and at the event where the raffle is being held, and the prize awarded during the event in question.

If an STC chapter wishes to move forward with the raffle as a lottery, it may wish to contact STC's attorney to help with registering the event. (Please contact the STC office for this information.) The chapter would then be liable for the legal fees involved since this would solely benefit that particular chapter and would not be applicable to other chapters.

Chapters should feel free to conduct these events, as long as they intend to register them with their local jurisdiction and follow the appropriate rules and regulations.

Chapters may also donate their proceeds from a registered raffle to charity. Note, however, that no funds should be funneled through the chapter bank account to the separate charity. Instead, they should be donated directly to the charity. The charity should be registered as a legitimate charity. ♦

Help STC Champion Growth in Target Areas

Are you looking for an opportunity to use your leadership skills and help STC grow? STC's growth strategy targets segments of the profession that have a high potential for attracting new members to the Society. Volunteers are needed to champion growth in specific segments.

These volunteers, called champions, will lead the segment marketing effort by:

- ❖ Advising Mary Kabza, STC's Director of Marketing and Membership, regarding realistic growth target numbers or percentage increases
- ❖ Recommending strategies for reaching potential members in the segment
- ❖ Providing support as requested to the Director of Marketing and Membership in implementing those strategies
- ❖ Monitoring annual progress toward the target growth numbers

Recommended target segments for 2007–2009:

- ❖ Locations with small communities in North America
- ❖ Europe

- ❖ India
- ❖ China
- ❖ Corporate
- ❖ Students
- ❖ Translation and localization
- ❖ Advanced career professionals
- ❖ Usability
- ❖ Renewal

How you can help:

- ❖ Volunteer to be the champion for one of the segments.
- ❖ Suggest a colleague as the champion for one of the segments.
- ❖ Suggest additional high-potential segments that you think the Society should target.

Please contact Mary Kabza at mary@stc.org to volunteer for this important new Society role. You may also e-mail Mary with any feedback and comments. ♦

Chapter Holiday Planning Ideas

Chapter leaders shared their plans for holiday events in recent posts to the STC presidents' mailing list. (See the article on page 3 for details on how to subscribe to the list if you are a chapter president and not already a mailing list member.) Below are several of their ideas, which you might consider using for your own chapter's holiday event—especially if you're concerned that your event may be seen as “just one more holiday party.”

From Larry Kunz, Carolina Chapter STC:

“We'd been holding a holiday social for years, with modest success. Last year we invited a rep from the Salvation Army. She made a ten-minute presentation and collected a backseat-load of donated coats from our members.

“This year we've invited the Salvation Army rep back. We're also planning a presentation about StoryBlogging, a historical-preservation project in which volunteers interview senior citizens and preserve the audio files as podcasts. (Check out storyblogging.org.)

“People seem to like mixing a social event with the chance to give something to the community.”

From Carrie Cooper, Southern Arizona Chapter STC:

“We changed our holiday party model in 2003 and now include a meeting on a light topic. This has been a good change for us. We have a speaker who talks for an hour (shorter than a normal meeting) and a silent auction to raise money for our chapter scholarship fund.

“This year's topic is ‘Stress Reduction Desk Exercises.’ Past topics include ‘Self-Promotion a Go-Go,’ ‘Happy Holidays—or Stressful Holidays: You Choose’ (review at www.stc-saz.org/borderline/05-01_BorderLine.pdf), and a writer sharing her personal experiences for tackling new and challenging writing jobs.”

From Deanne Levander, Twin Cities Chapter STC:

“Our chapter holds its December meeting as a luncheon meeting, and plans a lighter-than-usual interactive presentation (this year it's a well-known stand-up comedian who also runs a corporate training company; one of his topics is ‘Think on Your Feet’). Members always like the interactivity, as it breaks up the tedium of sitting all day.

“We have the awards banquet in January as our annual gala event.”

From Trish Spayer, Northeast Ohio Chapter STC:

“We have a holiday meeting that involves a charity. We hold it at a local restaurant, and have hors d'oeuvres. The

meeting price is a few cans of food or some money, which we give to the local food bank. It's basically a networking meeting/social gathering. Although the turnout usually isn't as large as our regular monthly meetings, we do get quite a few people there.”

From Tom Barnett, Phoenix Chapter STC:

“Phoenix has done a variety of things over the years. One year we had a comedian who pulled a number of people from the audience to participate (we found a really good Elvis impersonator in a former chapter president).

“Several years ago we did a jam with members who could perform—similar to the jam session at the annual conference—and it was very popular. This year we have a speaker who is a former director-sponsor but has a talent for cooking (been on TV) and will talk about culinary writing. We've also tied in a variety of charity organizations in the past—always popular.”

From Richard Mateosian, Berkeley Chapter STC:

“For the last few years we've held ours in January. We usually have some sort of recognition ceremony, and we use a nicer location than our usual meeting place. Attendance has been good, so people must like it.”

From e-mail to Tieline editor from Richard Truscott, U.K. Chapter STC:

“Each holiday season (Christmas) the STC's U.K. chapter holds a dinner to which we invite members and their families or friends. The venue is usually a restaurant in central London, because it's easy for a lot of our people to get there and many live or work in the London area. We choose a day in advance of the main holiday (this year it's December 1) so that there is less chance of clashes with family and work commitments.

“The idea is to have a good social event; we don't intend to make money from it. The dinner is informal with no speeches or ‘business,’ which does mean that members can talk and network together. We are holding the dinner so that members and their partners can come to London to shop or make a weekend stay for theater or other cultural events. There is no problem finding a midprice restaurant in central London if you book a few months before the date for the dinner. This year we're dining at a French restaurant called Chez Gerard in Covent Garden, which is run by a restaurant company that has several in London. We used another restaurant from the chain for the Region 2 conference dinner.” ♦

Society Events

December 6, 2006

WEBINAR

Maggie Haenel will present an STC Web-telephone seminar, "Creating Training that Sticks," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on how adults learn and what makes them remember information. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

January 17, 2007

WEBINAR

Neil Perlin will host an STC Web-telephone seminar, "The X Factor—From HTML to XHTML," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will address how and why XHTML has come to be so popular, and how it works at the code level. Participants will learn how XHTML differs from HTML and XML, what its code looks like, how to convert files from other formats to XHTML, and what tools can be used to do so. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

January 31, 2007

WEBINAR

Elaine Wisniewski and Steven Hall will present an STC Web-telephone seminar, "ANSI Z535.6—A New Standard for Safety Information in Product-accompanying Literature," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. Participants will learn about a new national standard for presenting safety messages in owners' manuals. The standard ANSI Z535.6, *Product Safety Information in Product Manuals, Instructions, and Other Collateral Materials*, is expected to be published by the end of 2006. It focuses on the design and placement of product safety messages (or warnings) in product-accompanying documents. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

February 7, 2007

WEBINAR

Heather Hedden will host an STC Web-telephone seminar, "Creating Indexes on Web Sites and Intranets," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on manually created A–Z site indexes as a solution for managers of Web or HTML content. The structure

of HTML indexes and a review of how such indexes compare with site maps, taxonomies, and search engines, as well as an overview of Web indexing tools, will be presented. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

February 10, 2007

CONFERENCE

The deadline for submitting presentations for the fourth annual technical communication conference of the **Manitoba Chapter STC** and Red River College is February 10. The conference will be held April 12–13, 2007, at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba. More information and a call for presentations can be found on the chapter Web site at stc-manitoba.org.

February 21, 2007

WEBINAR

Melanie Doulton and Makarand Pandit will host an STC Web-telephone seminar, "Working in Global Teams," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on ways to build successful working relationships in virtual environments. The speakers will also discuss the state of technical communication in India and share the experiences of Indian technical writers working in virtual teams. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

March 14, 2007

WEBINAR

Rahel Bailie will present an STC Web-telephone seminar, "Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Content Management, But Were Afraid to Ask," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. This seminar provides the groundwork for understanding what a content management system is and what it does, the differences between various types of CM systems, some circumstances under which CM can be beneficial, and techniques for determining system suitability. The seminar will also demystify the industry vocabulary, thereby eliminating some of the barriers that can slow down the investigative process. For more information or to register for the seminar, please visit stc.webex.com.

March 16–17, 2007

CONFERENCE

The **Philadelphia Metro Chapter STC** will host its annual conference in the Conference Center at Penn State Great Valley, in the Philadelphia suburbs near Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Featured speakers include Cheryl Lockett Zuback, Neil Perlin, Ed Marshall, Stephanie Morgan, and keynoter Robert Glushko. For more information, please contact: conference@stcpmc.org, www.stcpmc.org

March 28, 2007

WEBINAR

Austin Skaggs and Christine Granger will present an STC Web-telephone seminar, "Visible: The New Valuable," from 1 to 2:30 PM Eastern Time. The seminar will focus on how documentation departments can show their value by becoming more visible within their organizations. For more information or to register, please visit stc.webex.com.

April 12–13, 2007

CONFERENCE

The **Manitoba Chapter STC** and Red River College will hold their fourth annual technical communication conference, *Technology and Teamwork*, at Red River College Princess Street Campus. For more information, please contact: Leslie McKendry-Smith, lmckendry@skyweb.ca, stc-manitoba.org

May 13–16, 2007

CONFERENCE

STC's **54th Annual Conference** will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For more information, please visit www.stc.org/54thconf.

June 4, 2007

CONFERENCE

The Israel Chapter STC will hold its semi-annual convention, "The Proactive Technical Communicator: Multiple Disciplines, Multiple Perspectives," at the Daniel Hotel, Herzliya. For more information, please contact: convention@stc-israel.org.il, www.stc-israel.org.il

Send announcements of your community or regional events to tieline@stc.org. ♦

asked to be included. In fact, I've rarely been turned down when using this approach. Sometimes I need to modify the position that the person would best fit, based on interests or time, but generally people feel recognized and are therefore willing to pitch in.

Here are several other ideas from SIG managers:

- ❖ Set expectations and clearly state the responsibilities, time commitment, and project duration or position.
- ❖ Write a short job description of the tasks that you want to see achieved, and express these to the candidate. Chunk tasks so they don't seem quite so overwhelming.
- ❖ Everyone is motivated by something different. Help people get what they want to out of volunteering.

Retaining Leaders

Once you get leaders, how can you retain them without burning them out? Perhaps the most important aspect of working with volunteers is to be real.

- ❖ Be yourself—real and genuine—at

all times, with all team members. Be friendly, supportive, and encouraging. Display your sense of humor liberally and create a sense of fun in your team meetings.

- ❖ Continue to build relationships through frequent individual e-mails or phone calls that not only discuss community events but also express your interest in people as individuals and friends.
- ❖ Have a clear vision or mission for your community and communicate it with passion and enthusiasm, both directly and indirectly. Enthusiasm and commitment are contagious.
- ❖ Regularly recognize and appreciate the skills, characteristics, and contributions of the people on your team.
- ❖ Help others out when their work or personal lives make it difficult to perform their tasks. Do this yourself or by finding someone else to assist them.
- ❖ Have enough leaders that no one is overwhelmed by having to do it all.
- ❖ In every communication, thank each person for how much he or she is

doing for the community. While end-of-the-year recognition gifts and notes mean a great deal, if a volunteer doesn't feel recognized and acknowledged on a regular basis, the person can become discouraged.

Here are some other ideas from SIG managers:

- ❖ Consider developing a transition plan for new leaders, and make an announcement as soon as they come on board. Get their name out there and create some excitement in your community.
- ❖ Mention volunteers in newsletters, etc., and let folks know who is doing what.
- ❖ Stay in touch. Have regular, *fun* leadership team meetings every month or so to build relationships and increase buy-in to the team and community.

In short, when you treat your volunteers with appreciation, respect, and friendship, they'll stay around to be part of the community and share its vision and commitment to serving members. ♦

WUD Card Sort a Success

Approximately five hundred people around the world participated in the card sort exercise on World Usability Day 2006, held November 14, according to Rahel Bailie, co-chair of STC's World Usability Day Committee. Participants represented six of the seven continents; only Antarctica was not represented. Slightly more than half of the card sort participants were from the U.S., with strong participation from the U.K., Canada, the Netherlands, and Israel. Participants ranged from high school students to retirees, from minimal to heavy weekly Internet users. The only predominant commonality was the type of work—only about two dozen participants did something other than an indoor desk job.

Card sorting is a common analysis technique used to group objects in order to understand how users categorize information. Card sorting is often used by information architects and usability professionals to find latent structure among menu items, Web pages, and the like. Participants logged onto a Web site that was active on November 14, completed a brief survey, and then conducted the card sort, which focused on how different users categorize weather-related terms. Users were given lists of these terms and asked to create names for the categories under which they would group them.

The card sort was conducted in two languages, English and Farsi, and the

two sets of data amalgamated. Over the next few weeks, the results will be analyzed for similarities and differences in how participants categorized these weather-related terms. Bailie explained that weather was chosen for the sort because while it is universal, it is likely that different users will apply their personal experiences and connotations with weather-related terms, leading to a varied assortment of data.

Once these data are compiled, World Usability Day volunteers will be publicly sharing the results, so be on the lookout for more information.

To conduct a sample card sort of your own, visit websort.net. ♦

Membership Renewals Due January 1

Renewal invoices for the 2007 Society year were mailed in late November to all STC members who had not renewed their memberships online at www.stc.org. For membership dues, STC accepts checks in U.S. dollars or the Canadian equivalent, and payments made by American Express, MasterCard, or Visa. Dues payments must be received by January 1, 2007. Note that only members who have paid their dues by January 1 will be eligible to vote in the 2007 STC election.

The renewal invoices for 2007 allow members to choose one of the following individual membership categories: classic, e-membership, limited, student, and retired. The costs of these categories vary across the three tiers established by STC's localized dues structure. For costs and other information related to membership categories and localized dues, please see www.stc.org/membership/localTable01.asp.

Prorated Dues for New Members

New members who joined STC between February 1 and October 31, 2006, receive prorated credit on their first renewal. The amount of credit new members receive does not depend on the membership category they select when renewing for 2007.

A member's credit is based on 2006 dues and the month he or she joined the Society, as shown in Table 2 below. For example, new members who joined STC in September at the classic rate paid \$150 for a membership that extends until December 31, 2006. Each of these members would receive an 80 percent (\$120) credit toward 2007 dues.

These credits appear on new members' renewal invoices. New members who join the Society in November and December

2006 are considered paid in full for 2007 and do not receive a renewal notice in 2006.

Other Rates for 2007

Two groups of members do not receive a renewal invoice in November: members who join STC on or after November 1, 2006, and sustaining organizations. Sustaining organizations are billed separately in July.

Confused?

If you have any questions about membership renewal, please contact the membership department at membership@stc.org, Cara Gardner, Membership Assistant (cara@stc.org), or Ella Carlson, Membership Assistant (ella@stc.org). ♦

Table 1. Renewal Credits for New STC Members (in U.S. Dollars)

Month Joined (2006)	Credit Toward 2007 Dues (as a percentage of 2006 dues: Classic \$150, E-member \$140, Limited \$130, Student \$55)
January	0
February	10%
March	20%
April	30%
May	40%
June	50%
July	60%
August	70%
September	80%
October	90%
November	n/a
December	n/a

What's New, continued from page 7

- ❖ Nonmember early bird rate: \$875—a savings of \$245 off the on-site rate
- ❖ Student member early bird rate: \$175—a savings of \$75 off the on-site rate

Remember, to take advantage of these rates, you must act fast by registering by February 28.

Also, for the first time, STC is offering a group rate for professors and students. Groups of four students and one professor can register at a special rate of \$895.

For other rates, please see the conference Web site at www.stc.org/54thConf. ♦

Mailings from the STC Office

- In late November, acceptance letters were sent to all individuals whose session proposals were accepted for STC's 54th Annual Conference, May 13–16, 2007, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- In late November, the STC office mailed a reminder to sustaining organizations that have not renewed their memberships.
- In late November, the STC office mailed membership renewal invoices. Please see the article "Membership Renewals Due January 1" on page 13 of this issue.
- In December, author kits will be sent to presenters of papers, panel discussions, progressions, and workshops selected for STC's 54th Annual Conference.
- The *Preliminary Program* for STC's 54th Annual Conference will be mailed in February.

Community Leaders' Monthly Reminders

December

- The deadline for speakers to return their conference participation and session assignment forms to the STC office is **December 18, 2006**.
- STC membership renewals for 2007 are due on **January 1, 2007**. Please remind your community membership to pay dues in order to be eligible to vote in the STC election.
- If your community is participating in the newsletter competition and has already sent in the completed entry form and the first issue (due October 15, 2006), subsequent issues are due **January 10, 2007**.
- The deadline for your chapter to send entries to the international technical publications, technical art, and online communication competitions is **January 16, 2007**.
- The first 2007 meeting of STC's Board of Directors will be held on **February 2–3, 2007**, in Arlington, Virginia.
- Students must submit completed applications for STC scholarships offered in the 2006–2007 academic year by **February 15, 2007**.
- The deadline for your chapter to send entries to STC's public relations competition is **March 5, 2007**.
- The deadline for your chapter to send entries to STC's international student technical communication competition is **March 15, 2007**.
- The annual STC election will take place in **March and April 2007**. Ballots will be mailed in early March.

Membership at a Glance

As of December 1, 2006:

Total members:	15,741
Members residing in the U.S.:	13,324
Members residing in Canada:	1,430
Members residing elsewhere:	987
Total communities*:	154

*Includes 104 professional chapters, 30 student chapters, and 20 SIGs



Leadership Links

Leaders' Reference Guide: www.stc.org/PDF_Files/ChapterLeadersGuide_0607.pdf

Chapter Handbook: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chResources01.asp

Tieline Knowledge Base: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineKb01.asp

Chapter finances: www.stc.org/stcmembers/chFinances01.asp

Tieline archives: www.stc.org/stcmembers/tielineArchive01.asp