

This month marks Intercom's first Community Spotlight article. This new feature will highlight STC chapters or SIGs that have been involved in exciting and innovative activities.

Networking, Creativity Abound at Chicago Chapter STC

What can an STC community do when its members are geographically dispersed yet still want to have chapter meetings at consistent intervals? Starting a networking event with rotating locations and a casual atmosphere is the solution that the Chicago Chapter STC put into motion earlier this year. "I wanted to get to know people on a more personal level in a casual setting," said Mary Sojoodi Whalen, who served as the initial organizer for the Thursdays at STC Chicago program. "As we fleshed out the idea, which was originally developed with help from [senior member] Malcolm Culbertson and [Associate Fellow] Russell Friend, we decided we wanted the networking events to have a consistent quality even though they were casual."

The Thursdays at STC Chicago events are held at a variety of Chicago-area locations on the first Thursday of every month. The meetings have no set agenda; attendees can discuss workplace issues or learn about new tools and techniques. Location details are posted on the chapter Web site and included in *At-a-Glance*, the chapter's monthly e-newsletter. Attendees, whose only costs are the food and drinks they purchase, are invited to organize future events. The gatherings have included coffee, lunch, dinner, and after-work drinks.

"When interaction between chapter members is stimulated, and in a greater variety of meeting locations than previously, the program is successful,"

Culbertson noted. The chapter hopes that the events will draw nonmembers interested in learning more about STC.

The Alliance

The Chicago chapter also recently became part of The Alliance, which the chapter Web site defines as "a consortium of human capital organizations that have formed a partnership to support the professional contributions of their members and promote the value of those contributions in the Chicago marketplace." The chapter's September meeting featured an evening of speaker progressions and networking with other groups in The Alliance, which include the Chicago chapters of the International Society for Performance Improvement, the American Society for Training and Development, and the Society of Human Resource Professionals.

Chapter President Linda Jansak explained that the chapter's affiliation with The Alliance allows members to "see the power and value of networking."

Newsletter Honored

The Chicago chapter's newsletter team has also been hard at work. In addition to an award of Excellence in STC's Newsletter Competition, Newsletter Editor Thomas Lunde and Advertising Manager and Chapter Vice President Francis Bao received an APEX award of Excellence for an issue of the chapter's

newsletter, *Byline*. The APEX publications competition recognizes excellence in graphic design, editorial content, and overall effectiveness of communication.

Distributing *Byline* by mail as well as including each issue's PDF file on the chapter's Web site enables the chapter to reach as many members as possible with important community news. "Printing and mailing the newsletter is certainly the more expensive option, but it seems to be the most effective way to reach every one of our chapter members on a regular basis," Lunde said.

"A Personal Experience"

The Chicago chapter has a number of other projects underway, including academic outreach with nearby colleges. Sojoodi Whalen is organizing a speakers' bureau of members who have volunteered to speak about the profession at local institutions. "Professional members gain a network of academic contacts, and students gain access to practitioners and learn about the current conditions in the field," Jansak said. She is also pleased with the tools and technologies the chapter has used to build community. The chapter's blog (www.stc-chicago.blogspot.com) incorporates Web 2.0 principles, and members and leaders have been using *Google Docs* and *Flickr.com* (www.flickr.com/groups/stc-chicago) to collaborate.

Jansak noted the common theme shared by the Chicago Chapter STC's initiatives. "We're trying to make STC a personal experience," she said. "STC Chicago is people."

For more information about the Chicago Chapter STC, visit www.stc-chicago.org.

If you would like to nominate your community—or another STC community—for consideration for Community Spotlight, please send information about community activities to Cecily Walters, Assistant Editor, at cecily.walters@stc.org. ❶

From left: Tom Lunde, Linda Jansak, and Carla Martinek at the Chicago chapter's community celebration and member appreciation night, held in August 2007 to recognize the chapter's 2007 Community of Distinction Award.

