

Ragged Left

The newsletter for the
Berkeley Chapter of the
Society for Technical
Communication

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Volume 22, Number 1
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"The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug."

—Mark Twain

December 3, 2008 Meeting Notes

Technical Communicators Urged to Embrace the Value of Crafted Words

by Patrick Lufkin

Technical communication has been moving in the wrong direction and needs once again to embrace the value of *crafted* words, user assistance guru Joe Welinske recently told a meeting of the Berkeley STC.

Welinske's remarks came during a visit to the Bay Area in which he made two different presentations to the Berkeley and East Bay Chapters on consecutive nights, December 3 and 4, 2008.

The problem, Welinske explained, is that the emphasis being placed on a plethora of new delivery technologies and content management systems—XML, DITA, XHTML, RoboHelp, Author-it and more—has led many to view information as just "content." When this happens we lose sight of the importance of efficient communication, which only comes through craft.

Joe Welinske is president of WritersUA (formerly WinWriters), which provides training and information for user assistance professionals through its popular annual conference and its website. Joe is the co-author of *Developing Online Help for Windows*, and has taught online help courses at the University of Washington, UC Santa Cruz, and Bellevue Community College. Joe is President of the STC Puget Sound Chapter.



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TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION is the bridge between those who create ideas and those who use them. Conveying scientific and technical information clearly, precisely, and accurately is an essential occupation in all sectors of business and government.

THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION (STC) has members worldwide. Its members include writers and editors, artists and illustrators, photographers and audiovisual specialists, managers and supervisors, educators and students, employees and consultants.

STC strives to:

- Advance the theory and practice of technical communication
- Promote awareness of trends and technology in technical communication
- Aid the educational and professional development of its members

MEMBERSHIP Membership is open to everyone. Classic membership is \$145/year with an additional \$15 enrollment fee. STC also offers Limited, E-Membership, and Student Membership options. To receive additional information and an application form, via mail or email.

- Send email to membership@stc-berkeley.org
-

INSURANCE Members of STC can apply for health, disability, and other insurance at STC group rates. For more information, contact STC office at stc@stc.org or (703) 522-4114.

WORLDWIDE ACTIVITIES STC's annual conference brings together more than 2,000 technical communicators from around the world for educational programs, seminars, and workshops conducted by experts in the field. Upcoming annual conference: Minneapolis, May 13-16, 2007. In addition the STC sponsors many regional conferences, which feature the same sorts of programs, seminars, and workshops on a more intimate scale. STC sponsors international and regional competitions in all aspects of technical communication. STC Special Interest Groups (SIGs) bring together members with common experiences and interests to share their skills and knowledge. STC SIGs include:

- Academic
- AccessAbility
- Canadian Issues
- Consulting and Independent Contracting
- Emerging Technologies
- Environmental, Safety, and Health Communication
- Illustrators and Visual Designers
- Information Design and Architecture
- Instructional Design & Learning
- International Technical Communication
- Lone Writer
- Management
- Marketing Communication
- Online
- Policies and Procedures
- Quality and Process Improvement
- Scientific Communication
- Single Sourcing
- Technical Editing
- Usability & User Experience

STC sponsors research grants and scholarships in technical communication. STC publishes the quarterly journal *Technical Communication*, the newsletter *Intercom*, and other periodicals, reference materials, manuals, anthologies, standards, and booklets.

Formed in 1953, STC has today become the largest professional society in the world dedicated to advancing the theory and practice of technical communication.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES The six northern California chapters of STC conduct a variety of individual and joint activities. See page 4 for contacts for these chapters. See page 11 for a list of other local organizations in which STC members may be interested.

SUBSCRIPTIONS This newsletter is free to members of the Berkeley chapter.

ADVERTISING RATES The *Ragged Left* is not accepting advertising at this time.

SUBMISSIONS *Ragged Left* publishes original articles and illustrations. We edit them to meet our needs. You retain copyright but grant every STC publication royalty-free permission to reproduce the article or illustration in print or any other medium. Please talk with the editor for details of how to submit articles and illustrations.

The deadline for unsolicited submissions is the last Friday of odd-numbered months.

Other STC publications are hereby granted permission to reprint articles from *Ragged Left*, provided such reprints credit the author and the specific *Ragged Left* issue, and a copy of any publication containing such a reprint is sent to the *Ragged Left* editor.



Welinske said that his role in WritersUA allows him to talk to lots of people and to get a good perspective on what is going on in the industry. While there is a lot of creative energy out there, he said, we may be going in the wrong direction. He feels that something fundamental must change in how technical communicators approach their work, especially in the software industry.

Thinking of information as just content, he says, moves us away from how we present information, and the quality of the information we present – how we craft actual words and phrases – which is what communication and writing is really about.

Writing, he said, is more than putting together a collection of words; it's identifying the best way to put words together, then going over it, crafting it, reworking it, trying to find the best combination that really gets the point across. We need to start thinking again about how to present our information in a more crafted way.

Welinske said that much of the resistance to expending time and effort on crafting communication stems from two popular misconceptions: 1) help systems are useless (or shouldn't be needed), and 2) people don't read (so why bother).

Welinske said the bad rap on help systems stems from experience with poorly crafted systems; poor help systems train people not to use them. Part of what we face, he said, is the lack of professionalism of those who have gone before us. Many help systems have been put together by people who weren't professionals and who did a poor job. But that doesn't mean that well crafted help systems won't get used.

A related, often-heard refrain says that applications or equipment should be so simple that people shouldn't need help. While there is no substitute for good design, he said, people that make this argument usually point to examples that don't actually do very much. Complex applications will always require user assistance, he said, but, he adds, that doesn't mean that you must document every feature, even those that are obvious.

The "people don't read" shibboleth, he said,

ultimately comes from a misreading of a famous article by usability researcher Jakob Nielsen. But, Welinske pointed out, Nielsen never said people don't read; what he said was that people rarely read online material in its entirety. Instead they scan, picking out individual words and sentences, looking for the information they need. People will read attentively when it helps them solve their problems and get their work done.

Welinske said that Nielsen's research is actually a strong argument for using more craft in user assistance, not less. You should give lots of thought to carefully crafting material to make it easy to scan. This can be done through the use of highlighted key words, meaningful subheadings, and bulleted lists. You should also use one idea per paragraph, and use an inverted paragraph style, starting with the conclusion or key idea.

Ironically, all this work, he said, may actually mean writing fewer words. One of the things that Nielsen found is that taking out extraneous words markedly improved people's comprehension. Based on this, Welinske has come up with a maxim of his own: "User Assistance will become most effective when we spend twice as much time writing half as many words."

But for that to happen, technical writers will have to reclaim their rightful place in the industry.

Welinske said that usability people and user experience people have grabbed onto an area that really belongs to writers. "Any word or phrase that appears on any piece of software anywhere in the world should be owned by the people in this room," he told his STC audience, "the people who call technical words and phrases their province."

We will also need to quit viewing writing as a commodity, an attitude that tends to value quantity over quality. While developing information, we get too consumed with volume and the amount of information that we have to generate, rather than crafting the information.

The words-as-commodity viewpoint often expresses itself in a felt need to document every feature. Instead, Welinske said, we



should ask ourselves: Is what I am about to write relevant to satisfying most users' needs? In most organizations, he said, most of the problems are caused by just a few things; those are the pain points we should concentrate on. We should skip the obvious stuff and instead identify the top five issues, and solve the heck out of them.

In the long run, doing so helps the user and the company's profitability.

When we design the essential content better and cut words, he explained, we save further work all along the line. We have less to edit, to format, to markup, to test, to convert into other file formats, to translate and localize, and to update with revisions. Every word we add to our documentation set gets expanded tremendously.

In the long run, expending the effort to carefully craft what we produce, is really to most efficient way to go.

Patrick Lufkin is a senior member of STC and Chair of the Kenneth M. Gordon Memorial Scholarship for Technical Communication. He is also co-manager of the 2008 Northern California Technical Communication Competition.

Note that our monthly meeting program schedule has changed to begin 15 minutes earlier. See *Meeting Agenda* on page 8.

President's Notes

by Richard Mateosian

We are in a serious economic downturn, and whether or not you are gainfully employed, now is the time to strengthen your network and your skills. I hope you see STC as a valuable part of this effort. It's renewal time, and we need a strong chapter to help us help you. So go online and renew if you haven't done so already. The sooner you do, the sooner the chapter gets the corresponding funding.

Whether you are an STC member or not, our meeting prices are low, our topics are relevant, and the networking opportunities are excellent. Come out of the shadows, and come to meetings. If you've never been to one of our meetings, or if it's been years since

we last saw you, take advantage of our first-timer policy. Send email to treasurer@stc-berkeley.org to say that you're planning to attend, and the meeting and dinner are free.

Recently I heard a presentation by Andrew Davis about what's next for our profession. Andrew is gloomy about the prospects for the technical communication profession as we know it. He thinks that what many of us do is destined to become a blue collar commodity job, but he has a lot of good ideas about how to use our skills in other ways. What Andrew and many others have been saying for years is that we must understand the businesses that pay our way and establish goals for ourselves that align with those of management.

While this trend has been growing over the last decade, the current downturn has aggravated its bad effects. Compensation is down, and jobs have become less pleasant.

Andrew's advice is to find an underserved audience in a prosperous industry with good long-term prospects. Then repackage and reposition yourself to provide that industry with a unique product or service with a value proposition that is easy for potential customers to understand. This oversimplifies Andrew's views, so seek him out and engage him on this subject. You can find his slides at www.synergistech.com/presentations.shtml.

Whatever your path forward, I want STC to be a resource for you. Contact me or any of the other chapter volunteers to let us know what we can do to help.

Other STC chapters in Northern California

East Bay: www.ebstc.org

North Bay: www.stc-northbay.org

Sacramento: www.stcsacramento.org

San Francisco: www.stc-sf.org

Silicon Valley: www.stc-siliconvalley.org

Chapter Holds Awards Dinner

by Patrick Lufkin

January was a time for celebration as the Berkeley STC chapter hosted the 2008-2009 Northern California Technical Communication Competition Awards Dinner, and also recognized competition judges and chapter volunteers.

Some 60 celebrants attended to receive awards, view winning entries, and share the moment with friends, colleagues, and other STC members.

The Awards Dinner was held at the chapter's usual meeting venue, the beautiful Highlands county club in the Hiller Highlands area in the Berkeley hills. It was catered by the chapter's own Jean Lundquist, who, with a team of helpers, prepared a sumptuous buffet-style meal in the facility's kitchen.

During the pre-meal networking, attendees pored over the winning entries. Following the Awards Dinner, Distinguished winners were sent on to compete in the International STC Technical Communication Competition, which will announce winners at the STC Annual Summit in Atlanta, Georgia, in early May. Winning entries also became part of a traveling road show to be displayed at other STC chapter meetings.

Receiving an award in an STC competition can bring recognition from professional peers and increased visibility with employers and clients. As the co-chair of the competition, I had the pleasure of presenting certificates to the award winners. This year 42 entries received awards, and certificates were distributed to close to one hundred authors, some of whom contributed to multiple projects.

Of course, the competition would not have been possible without the help of the judges who put in many hours evaluating the entries. This year the judge training was conducted by Anne Wilson, who did a

terrific job. In recognition of their efforts, the judges received certificates, and were entered in a drawing to receive an annual STC membership. The drawing was won by Nathaniel Lim.

The Berkeley Chapter also used the Awards Dinner to recognize the many volunteers who worked during the year to keep the chapter rolling. Chapter President Richard Mateosian handed out certificates. All of the volunteers are warmly thanked.

Patrick Lufkin is a senior member of STC and Chair of the Kenneth M. Gordon Memorial Scholarship for Technical Communication. He is also co-manager of the 2008-2009 Northern California Technical Communication Competition.

Web usability column

Why are web software projects so difficult?

by Eric Hughes, Managing Director, Simplexity, LLC

In our previous columns, we concentrated specifically on web usability: criteria, benchmarks, good examples, and bad examples. Good usability practices start at the very beginning of projects and last through the entire life cycle of a software product. Successful software projects encompass more than just good usability practices, though. There are thousands of failed web projects scattered across the Internet landscape. Typically, you will see "unrealistic deadlines," "difficulty matching milestones and dates," "budget," and perhaps "lack of change management" as the primary reasons for those failures. But I argue that those are symptoms, not causes. Here are the failure causes:

Defining success and managing expectations

As with anything in life, all roads lead to failure if you haven't negotiated success criteria first. What do your customers or



managers define as a successful project? Will it be ROI (return on investment), press mentions, links to your site, awards, simplicity, ease of maintenance, ongoing cost, new customers, increased search engine rankings? Get specific: how many new customers and over what time period? Don't allow the people who control your career make you guess at this. Every team member makes important decisions about tasks and directions during software projects, and the more each of them knows about how success is measured, the better chance there will be that those decisions will be smart ones.

Properly proxying for your audience

This one gets my vote for the most likely reason your web software project will fail. You are creating an environment where your audience can be successful in the tasks you want them to do. But they are there to do the tasks they want to do, and in a timeframe that you might think is unreasonable. Your audience is in charge, and your development team needs to be in synch with that.

Identifying high-level project champions

Even though a web presence has become a requirement for doing business, it is still invisible to those who have other things to worry about. Find the people who care, and make sure they see what you are doing. Put together user groups if you run an intranet; make sure analysis tools are used on the web and properly explained. If key champions don't ask questions, take their direct reports to lunch.

Identifying potential obstacles

Do some research to find out why other projects have failed in your organization. There can be political, organizational, budgetary, interpersonal, and competitive obstacles. Figure out what they are and head them off

at the pass. Involve people in your project at levels that make sense. Sometimes hallway conversations are enough; sometimes you need something more formal. Republicans didn't feel involved in the creation of the current stimulus plan — big mistake.

Bowing down to process

Communications drives process. What you put on the web is communications. What you say, the way you say it, and the way you ask visitors to accomplish tasks, must be supported by efficient processes within your organization. Some companies totally get process, some don't. Some don't want to, because there is a perception that it stands in the way of creativity. No matter which of these fits your firm, you can't get away from the fact that communications drives process. If you ignore that, it is at your own long-term peril.

Figuring out a way to make those from Venus get along with those from Mars

There are few projects that require more multi- and cross-disciplinary input than something that ends up on the web. Marketing, Communications, IT, HR, Business Strategy, Application Development, Support, Operations — am I forgetting anyone? People in these groups have very different goals and priorities, and getting them all in one place and agreeing to a single direction is a major undertaking. Your audience analysis is very important here, because it gets people to agree on something that isn't generally within their corporate purview.

Managing the "automatic camera" syndrome

When the tools mask production complexity, it is easy to think you are accomplishing something by just producing any result. But if the result isn't carefully managed, it will be a snapshot instead of a masterpiece.



Identifying integration challenges

Rarely are software projects stand-alone. The days of “brochure-ware” sites are past and gone. There is always data somewhere that needs to be integrated. Identify those issues early and get the right people involved.

Managing behavior change

Related to process, this one will get you every time. Above, I mentioned that communications drives process; well, process drives behavior. One can argue all night long about whether managing process or managing behavior is harder or more important, but they are so inter-related that I don't think it matters. To run a successful software project, evaluate every decision that is made in terms of what someone will have to do to make it work.

Separating design from function, culture from business

Lumping all web software development into the label ‘design’ does design a disservice. Design is about culture – it is feeling, touch, style, and image. It is emotional and visceral. Function is intellectual, experiential, and cathartic. Treat them both with respect and try to consider them separately in terms of their impact on a project's success.

Realizing the complexity of labeling

What you call some piece of your application is as important as how well that piece works. Labels are the doors into productivity and sales. Quality information architecture will help lead you to the appropriate labels to use.

Accounting for usability from the very beginning

When a project starts, are your team members or managers talking about what the site will do or how it will look? You may get an award for how it looks, but you will drive business by how it works.

Eric Hughes has been an STC member since 2004, and has been architecting, deploying, supporting, and making excuses for web applications since 1994. You can reach him at eric@simplexity.net

Meetings

Our chapter holds a dinner meeting the second Wednesday of each month. See *Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions* on page 9.

Upcoming Meetings

Learning Game Design

by Clark Quinn

Wednesday, February 11, 2009, 6-9:30pm

Highlands Country Club

110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

Games help add an emotional component that makes learning more effective by bringing in motivation – but is developing these types of interactions an art, or is there a systematic design process that lets us reliably design learning experiences that deliver the outcomes we need?

In this session, the author of *Engaging Learning: Designing e-Learning Simulation Games* shows us why simulation games are effective practice environments and demonstrates a process for designing compelling scenarios. The process is grounded in theory and honed in practice to create meaningful learning experiences.

Speaker

Clark Quinn, Ph.D., is an internationally known consultant, author, and speaker. He delivers eLearning solutions including games, mobile learning, performance



support, and organizational strategy through Quinnovation, and blogs at <http://learnlets.com>.

Using Word Templates Effectively and in the Shared Environment

by Steve Zegas

Wednesday, March 11, 2009, 6-9:30pm

Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

Program

While a single author who knows how to use Word styles and templates can easily manage documents, when multiple “non-writer” authors are involved, Word files often take on a life of their own. This presentation demonstrates several custom templates and teaches how to create and use templates for single or multiple-user environments, where consistent and clean formatting is desired.

Come see the mysteries of Word styles revealed, learn innovative techniques, see how to quickly conquer massive formatting mess-ups, and how to standardize templates for many documents (without attaching a template file such as “normal.dot”.) (Presented in Word 2003, applicable to Word 2007; does not cover XML or ODF.)

Speaker

Steven Zegas is a technical communications consultant who has worked for 15 years with leading Bay Area companies in telecommunications, medical devices, health care, security, networking and other verticals. He frequently develops custom Word templates for both technical publications teams and general business use. Using novel approaches and common sense, he combines recorded macros, custom toolbars, and best practices to address design and usability, with the goal of de-mystifying Word and drawing on its strengths. He has been active with the Berkeley and Silicon Valley STC since 1995, and has been a judge in five Touchstone competitions

Meeting/Dinner Prices

Special Recession Pricing

Reserve in advance

First timers:

Meeting only or dinner free

STC members and students:

Meeting only free, dinner \$5.00

Non-members:

Meeting only \$10.00, dinner \$18.00.

No advance reservation

STC members and students:

Meeting only \$5.00

Dinner (if available) \$10.00

Non-members:

Meeting only \$15.00

Dinner (if available) \$21.00

Special cost notes:

- Nonmembers are always welcome to STC meetings at the non-member rates.
- All members of the San Francisco Chapter of the IABC are welcome to register for Berkeley STC General Meetings at the member price by midnight on the day before the meeting.

Meeting Agenda

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- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 6-7pm | Check-in, networking, conversation, and dinner. |
| 7:00 - 7:15pm | Chapter business, announcements, and introductions. Anyone can announce jobs that they know about.* |
| 7:15 - 8:30pm | Formal program. Usually we have a speaker or panel of speakers on a topic related to the business or technology of technical communication. |
| 8:30 - 9pm | Conversation, offline questions for the speaker, follow-up on job announcements |
| 9:00 | Clear the room. Move conversations to the sidewalk. |
-

* **Attendees**, please announce open positions, and bring job listings for distribution.

Recruiters are welcome to attend meetings, place literature on a designated table, and talk with attendees one-on-one during the informal parts of the meeting. We ask them not to announce specific jobs during the formal announcement period, but they are free to stand up and identify themselves.



Similarly, we ask anyone else with commercial announcements to confine themselves to calling attention to the availability of literature on the designated table.

Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions

Highlands Country Club
110 Hiller Drive
Oakland, California

Information at <http://www.stc-berkeley.org/MonthlyMeeting/directions.shtml>

View from the Highlands Country Club



Photo courtesy of Rhonda Bracey

By Car

From San Francisco

Cross the Bay Bridge to I-580 Eastbound. Remain in the right lane, until Highway 24 Eastbound (toward Berkeley and Walnut Creek). Continue eastbound until the Tunnel Road off-ramp. Exit will loop around to the west, crossing back over Highway 24. Turn left at the stop sign. Follow Tunnel Road/Caldecott Lane to traffic signal. Veer to the right, and follow Hiller Drive halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

From Walnut Creek

Take Highway 24 Westbound through the Caldecott Tunnel. Stay in the right-hand lane, taking the first exit after the tunnel ends, the Tunnel Road exit, going towards Berkeley. Follow Tunnel Road to the complex intersection and stop light, at Tunnel Drive, Hiller Drive, and Highway 13. Veer to the right, and continue halfway up the hill on Hiller Drive. Highlands Country

Club is on the right-hand side of the street.

From I-80 and Berkeley

Take Ashby Avenue to the Highway 13 exit. Ashby becomes Tunnel Road at the Claremont Hotel. Continue on Tunnel Road (through the split-level section) to the stoplight just before the Highway 24 overcrossing. Remain in the left lane and make a sharp left U-turn around the Firestorm Memorial Garden, on to Hiller Drive. Continue halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

From Hayward

Take I-580 Westbound to Highway 13 north. Continue on Highway 13 past the overcrossing of Highway 24. At the stoplight, turn right, then left, onto Hiller Drive. Continue halfway up the hill. Highlands Country Club will be on the right-hand side of the street.

Parking

Please park on the street. The club's parking lot is for members only.

Public Transit

Prefer to take BART? The Rockridge station is closest. Send email to president@stc-berkeley.org to ask about transportation from BART to the meeting.

AC Transit bus E from SF via MacArthur then Rockridge takes you as far as Tunnel Road & Roble Road, with a half mile walk uphill on Hiller Drive to the Hillside Country Club.

STC News

Chapter News

Leadership Positions Available

We are looking to fill several leadership positions! Contact Richard Mateosian if you are interested. See <http://www.stc-berkeley.org/VolunteerOpportunities/volunteer.shtml> for a list of open positions.



Continuing Education

UC Berkeley Extension Open House

UC Berkeley Extension will offer an open house and information session about the technical communication program on Thursday, May 28. Prospective students, program alumni, and instructors will be there to discuss the program. The technical communication program at UC Berkeley Extension has served the field since 1998.

There is no charge, but registration is appreciated.

<http://www.unex.berkeley.edu/cat/course2008.html>

Date: Thursday, May 28

Time: 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

UC Berkeley Extension Downtown Center
425 Market Street (at Fremont), Room 805
San Francisco

Patricia Egan, MS <pje875@gmail.com>
Instructor, Technical Communication
UC Berkeley Extension

Book reviews and beyond

Our chapter president, Richard Mateosian, has a blog of the past 14 years of his articles for IEEE here:

<http://xrmcontent.blogspot.com/>

Networking Opportunities

On the Same Page

The February 2009 *Get on the Same Page* newsletter topic is "Building Virtual Teams." See http://www.writeonthepage.com/newsletter/Newsletter02_09.pdf.

Michael Lujan's outreach in the business community and in academia includes a long-

standing association with, and Board Member of, the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC) (<http://www.slostc.org>), Guest Lecturer and Student Liaison/Mentor for the Technical Communications Certification Program at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA, and past Technical Communications Program Advisory Board Member at De Anza College, Cupertino, CA.

If you are interested in collaborating with Michael at On The Same Page Technical Writing Services, call (805) 627-1495 or email mlujan@ix.netcom.com.

Awards & Conferences

APEX 2009 Now Open for Entries

The 21st Annual APEX Awards for Publication Excellence is now accepting entries for APEX 2009 (Entry deadline: March 17, 2009). The APEX awards recognize excellence in graphic design, editorial content and overall communications effectiveness. Communicators can choose from 122 different categories (many new) under 11 headings, including:

- Newsletters
- Magazines and journals
- Magapapers and newspapers
- Annual reports
- Brochures, manuals and reports
- Electronic and video publications
- Web and intranet sites
- Campaigns, programs and plans
- Writing
- Design and illustration
- One-of-a-Kind publications

For a list of new and revised categories, see <http://www.ApexAwards.com/apex2009awardscategories.htm>.

The APEX entry deadline (postmark) is March 17, 2009.

Entry fees are \$69 per entry for Writing That Works subscribers; \$89 per entry for non-subscribers.



APEX is sponsored by the editors of Writing That Works, a newsletter for writing, editing and communications professionals. The contest is open to corporate, nonprofit, freelance and agency communicators. Entrants do not have to be Writing That Works subscribers.

Call for Entries information, brochure and entry form are posted at <http://www.ApexAwards.com/apexawards.htm>.

To download the APEX Call for Entries brochure, go to: http://www.ApexAwards.com/apex_broch.pdf.

Just need the APEX Entry Form? Go to: http://www.ApexAwards.com/apex_entry_form.pdf.

You can fill out the PDF Easy Entry Form right on your computer screen. (No need to find a typewriter or fill out the form by hand.) Then just mail it with your entries and payment.

Also see the APEX FAQ page for tips and advice on entering, at

<http://www.ApexAwards.com/apex2009faqs.htm>.

Other Organizations

American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) of Northern California. Meets periodically at various Bay Area locations. www.amwancal.org

American Society for Training and Development, Mount Diablo Chapter. Meets monthly in Danville. <http://mtdiabloastd.org/>.

American Society of Indexers, Golden Gate Chapter. www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden

Association for Women in Computing, San Francisco Bay Area chapter — www.awc-sf.org/

International Association of Business Communicators, San Francisco chapter. A network of professionals committed to improving the effectiveness of organizations through strategic interactive and integrated business communication management — <http://sf.iabc.com/>

National Writers Union (UAW). A labor union for freelance writers of all genres. — www.nwu.org

Northern California Science Writers' Association. Quarterly meetings & other events. www.ncswa.org

Tips & Tidbits

Website 1 - 2 - 3

from Jane K. Cleland

Whatever type of site you're creating, you should follow certain steps, Jane K. Cleland says.

1. Write one sentence stating your objectives from the readers' point of view. Ask yourself, "What do I want my readers to do as a result of visiting my Web site?" Cleland's author site targets multiple audiences, so she went through the process for each segment.
2. Think about structure and the units of content to fit the need of each segment. If the same content appeals to more than one segment, establish links to it from several places.

Consider the kind of relationship you want to have with your readers. That determines the mood, image, vocabulary and response copy you write. Cleland emphasizes the importance of writing to elicit a response (such as to click on an appearance schedule), even though you don't write an unvarnished call to action.

3. Make notes on the kinds of content and links. Remember that "Click here" doesn't help your rank on Google. Use key words in your links.

Decide whether to use the imperative or narrative, and choose specific words.

You're ready to write a draft. And then you revise.

Jane K. Cleland, corporate trainer, keynoter and author; <http://www.janecleland.com>. Her books include *Business Writing for Results* (McGraw-Hill, 2003, 212 pp., \$14.95 plus s&h) and *Consigned to Death* (St. Martin's, 2006, \$23.95 plus s&h). Read an excerpt at <http://www.janecleland.net/html/books/excerpt.htm>.

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