

# Ragged Left

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

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**Volume 22, Number 3  
May/June 2009**

May 13, 2009 Meeting Notes

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## Ergonomic Mythology

Presentation by Erik Anderson of Remedy Interactive, Tim Brent,  
Ergonomic Consultant, and Tonie Flores of OSISOft  
Notes by Doug O'Neill

The topic was "Myth Busters: I'm Working So Hard It Hurts!" Tim Brent, a certified ergonomic evaluation specialist, presented a set of widely held myths along with the truth about what works best to avoid discomfort and injury in office settings. Erik Anderson, Vice President at Remedy Interactive, presented an overview of his company's RSIGuard software, which you can use to help prevent repetitive motion injuries.

Repetitive motion injuries, the 9th most common injury that leads to six or more lost work days, cost the country \$2 billion per year according a Liberty Mutual study. Working in an office environment tends to result in tight muscles, held in unnatural positions for long periods of time. For example, office workers tend to have shoulders that roll forward rather than falling naturally over our spine. To be comfortable while working requires good posture, proper equipment, and good self-care practices.

While well-intentioned, many of us hold some misconceptions about what is ergonomically correct:

### **Myth: The best position is one with a perfectly straight spine.**

Fact: The best position is a natural position, one that maintains the natural curves of your lumbar and cervical spines. In addition, you want your arms in a natural position, generally two to five inches above your legs with your elbows at our side. To achieve this position, you might need a keyboard tray or may need to raise your chair so that your palms are at the proper height. You might consider getting a floor rest for your feet.

### **Myth: It is best to rest your wrists on the keyboard rest.**

Fact: The carpal tunnel is located in your wrists. Therefore, resting your wrists can compress the carpal tunnel, which is what you *don't* want to do. Instead, you should refer to the rest as a "palm rest" and use it to rest your palms, a less fragile part of your anatomy. It's important to position your wrists so that you don't see a crease, which indicates compression.

### **Myth: It is best to rest your wrists on a gel mouse pad.**

Fact: It is better to distribute the work among muscle groups and move your whole arm when using the mouse rather than simply moving your wrists, which tends to happen when using a mouse pad.

### **Myth: Large ergonomic keyboards are always best.**

Fact: Ideally your mouse and all keys fall within the natural fan zone created by pivoting your forearm about your elbow anchored at your side. While ergonomic keyboards are designed to allow the hand to fall into a natural cup position, their large size is not ideal for all people.

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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 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. Annual conference: Dallas, Texas, May 2-5, 2010. 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 3 for contacts for these chapters. See page 9 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.



**Myth: Good ergonomic chairs cost at least \$1000.**

Fact: Good chairs are available for less. Key features to look for include a seat-pan slider, adjustable back support, back rests that move up and down and that tilt, and arm rests that move up and down.

**Myth: It is best to position yourself in the middle of two monitors.**

Fact: It is preferable to center the monitor that you use dominantly. Consider getting a monitor arm that lets you rotate monitors when your dominant monitor shifts.

**Myth: Only one notebook/laptop position is optimal.**

Fact: Several notebook configurations can result in good ergonomic positions. All require use of an external mouse, however.

**Form Good Habits**

Even with proper posture and equipment, you must develop good habits to reduce the repetition that leads to repetitive motion injury. RSIGuard software can help you develop good habits and decrease the risk of injury and prevent the discomfort that cuts productivity. The software monitors your activity, including your typing and mouse activity along with your natural rests. At configurable times, the software suggests taking a break along with stretches you might try. Some people even configure the software to present affirmations. For those prone to ignore suggestions, you can configure the software to force a break by locking your keyboard. The software includes additional features that you can enable, such as auto-click, which clicks the mouse when you stop moving the mouse, and configurable hot keys. Thus, you can use RSIGuard to enforce a doctor's orders, such as no more than 10,000 clicks per day, and your health care provider can use the collected data as a diagnostic tool.

**Sitting an Example**

The presentation concluded with Tonie Flores discussing a repetitive motion injury she sustained, forcing her to make a worker's

compensation claim and seek physical therapy. She used RSIGuard to help combat her injury and noticed that not taking the recommended breaks aggravated the injury. She highly recommended the product.

Doug O'Neill first called himself a technical writer in 1997 and has been designing, writing, and editing documents for big and small companies ever since. He admits that maintaining good posture at a keyboard remains a challenge.

**Other STC chapters in Northern California**

East Bay: [www.ebstc.org](http://www.ebstc.org)

North Bay: [www.stc-northbay.org](http://www.stc-northbay.org)

Sacramento: [www.stcsacramento.org](http://www.stcsacramento.org)

San Francisco: [www.stc-sf.org](http://www.stc-sf.org)

Silicon Valley: [www.stc-siliconvalley.org](http://www.stc-siliconvalley.org)

**President's Notes**

by Richard Mateosian

Here at the chapter level, we often look at the STC headquarters operation as something distant and out of touch. The truth, however, is that STC and its US chapters are one big organization. This fact became really important recently when headquarters gave us a report on our finances. Over the next 18 months, we face a large budget deficit and a severe cash flow problem. Without immediate action, the organization could cease to exist.

STC has made big cuts. We have moved to a much less expensive office, cut staff, and reduced other expenses. If we get through the next 18 months, we will probably be OK, but for now, we need to take drastic action. Fortunately, there is a remedy.

For many years we have run our chapter efficiently. Until we adopted recession pricing late last year, our meetings paid for themselves, as did other activities. Each year we

*Continued on next page*



receive funding from headquarters based on the number of members we have, and each year we spend only about half of it.

Our chapter has substantial funds over and above what we need for the next couple of years. Many other chapters have similar or even larger reserves. These funds should be enough to get us over the hump.

All chapters will determine how much money they need to cover their expenses through the end of 2010. They will subtract that amount from their current bank balances and remit the remaining funds to STC headquarters before September.

As noted, these are STC funds. The Berkeley Chapter does not exist as an independent organization. Still, we are proud of the way we have tended and cared for the money in our account. We like to think of it as our own, even though it's not. Leaders of other chapters feel the same way, so there has been a lot of grumbling. You may have heard some of it, especially if you monitor #stcorg on Twitter. It's natural to be angry and to point fingers, but the truth is that the STC management who got us into this mess are long gone, and the current crop are working really hard to put out the fire. Using the excess funds from our chapter bank account will have little effect on our meetings and activities. We weren't using those funds to support our activities, so we won't see much difference. Unfortunately, however, there's more.

One cause of STC's financial problems is that we do not fund our activities entirely out of dues. We rely on a substantial surplus from the annual conference to make up the difference, but that surplus did not materialize this year and probably won't be there next year either. STC will ask us for contributions (tax deductible) and will raise dues. Naturally, that will make many of us ask ourselves if STC membership is still a wise investment.

Personally, I have no trouble answering that question. I'm active in four chapters and some SIGs. Most of my income over the last 18 years has come through contacts I made in STC. I value the Society's efforts to gain respect for our profession and to support our

arguments for fair compensation. I have learned a great deal about technical communication by attending STC meetings and conferences and by participating in STC competitions. I will contribute what I can, and the higher dues will not deter me.

I know that the calculation is different for many of you -- especially those of you who are suffering in the financial downturn. Some of you will drop your STC memberships, but we won't be dropping you. We'll still send you the announcements and hope that you show up at meetings. You can still subscribe to the job list and participate in other activities and networking opportunities. We'll be hoping that you join again when things change. And we'll be working hard to make sure that STC can continue its mission of advancing our profession.

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## March 11, 2009 Meeting Notes (redux)

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**Note: An article was published about this presentation in the March/April 2009 *Ragged Left*, but unfortunately included some misguidance. Please read this article instead!**

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## Word Whisperer ~ Taming the Myths

Presentation and notes by Steve Zegas

### **Mission:**

Smart template design to enable easy and consistent application of formatting standards across groups of users.

### **My Word!**

Many companies rely on Microsoft Word as the tool of choice to meet heavy business and technical documentation needs, especially because it is so widely used. However, Word often has a reputation for being difficult to use in production environments -- particularly when it's important to maintain consistent formatting across documents. Even with

*Continued on next page*



the best attempt to apply templates and formatting standards, the result is often, literally, a mess to deal with.

Many technical writers can use Word easily enough to format documents, but struggle with the mysteries of using Word templates effectively. Frequently, technical writers need to design templates for business users who barely know how to work with Word. Further complicating the picture, technical writers often have to work with large groups of authors and reviewers who do not know how to work efficiently and correctly with Word. Again, the result is often a mess to deal with.

The difficulties do not come from a limitation in Word's features, because the application is well-suited to meet the needs of technical and non-technical users in publishing and general business settings. The issue is skills-related. Despite its reputation, Word can easily be tamed. Innovative template design and succinct instructions allow users of all stripes to effortlessly apply consistent formatting across documents.

## Creating Templates for Non-Technical User Groups

How can Word be used by technical writers, as well as non-technical user groups, to easily apply and maintain formatting standards?

At first blush, the answer seems to be training, especially for using styles and templates. However, with tight budgets and economic times, providing training to groups is a distant vision for most organizations.

With careful consideration for designing templates and some very succinct instructions, technical writers can bring non-technical users to proficiency without investments in training. For the technical writer, careful template design will also make your work to maintain formatting standards easier and more proficient.

## Best Practices for Template Design

There are four cornerstones to developing and using templates that support the goals outlined above.

### **Use your working document for template styles, not "Normal.dot."**

Generally, users do not think about where the styles in a document come from. There are many styles built into Word, which are found in the normal.dot template.

Normal.dot is integral to Word; by default, it or another specified .dot file is attached to every document.

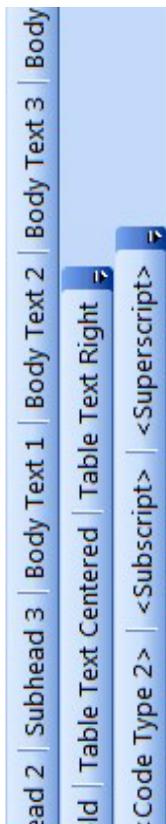
(To understand which styles are built into Normal.dot, create a new document and use the Styles and Formatting task pane option to *Show: All Styles* to see a list of all built-in styles.)

New styles that you create are stored in the working document (but can be saved in the .dot file as well.) Do not rely on, or use styles in Normal.dot or any other .dot files for your template. The goal is to create all new styles in your working document.

### **Create all new, unique styles in your template / working document.**

Create a set of custom styles for your template. Be sure that no styles are *based on* the Normal style, which is a default style also built into Word. As far as possible, do not use any of Word's default (built-in) styles.

Depending on your template, you will likely need to use at least Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc., and a few other styles that are integral to Word. Create new styles with unique names that are different than Word's built-in styles. Save all styles in your document, not in Normal.dot. After you create all the styles you need, re-use your working document – or a stripped down version with boilerplate content – as a template for new documents.



## Create custom toolbars with most commonly used styles.

Toolbars allow easy application of styles. For example, (the styles in) the toolbars below can be used to format practically 100% of any standard business or technical document. It includes Body-text, Table-text, and Character styles. Character styles are <bracketed> and the standard Formatting toolbar has the equivalent buttons (**B**, *I* U, etc) removed, to encourage the use of the toolbars – and to discourage the practice of using the Formatting toolbar for ad-hoc formatting.

See image in the left margin.

## Train users to use the template correctly.

To enable fast, easy and efficient formatting that is consistent across documents, instruct users to apply styles presented in the toolbars to every paragraph, including all content in tables. For users with most basic skills, the toolbars provide almost total control over formatting. For technical writers and users with more advanced skills, use the Styles and Formatting task pane for more options.

An easy way to train users is to “float” a text box on the first page of a template with instructions. Give non-technical users very succinct instruction, such as the example at the end of this article.

## Advanced Template Design

The suggestions above are cornerstones for building an overall template strategy. Of course there are many options for developing your template. Here are a few ideas:

### Use Macros

Record a macro to perform multi-step formatting procedures and place the macro in a toolbar button. For example, record a “Format Table” macro to do the following steps: find the next table, select the whole table, apply a Table style (Word includes paragraph, character and table styles), apply Table Text to the entire table, select just the

top row, apply Table Heading style, and finally, apply Heading Rows Repeat.

## Use AutoOpen and AutoClose Macros

When you include macros with these names in a document, they run automatically when you open and close the document (research these macros on the Web). You can include many tweaks such as (using recorded actions to) open a document in Print Layout, to open or close custom toolbars, and to select configuration preferences in Tools > Options.

## Use Formatting Restrictions

Word includes a feature that allows you to literally strip out any ad-hoc formatting (any formatting that is not strictly an applied style, i.e., any formatting that is an applied style *plus* manually added formatting attributes.) Research the *Protect Document > Formatting Restrictions*. This feature disables ad-hoc formatting. Use this to strictly control formatting and allow only selected styles to be used.

## Back to Basics

The intent of using this strategy for template design is to simplify the management of styles and to “train” users in correct formatting techniques. A good template design includes all styles that any given document needs, and an easy way to apply these styles. Word can be very simple to use, once users understand that the objective is to apply pre-existing styles only, and to avoid ad-hoc formatting.

## Example of Instructions

Place instructions in a floating text box on the first page of your template.

See image on next page.

Steven Zegas has a background in graphic design and 15+ years experience in the technical writing arena, Zegas has been making award-winning Microsoft Word templates for years. By creating templates with defined character and paragraph styles, Zegas automates the process of creating consistent documents quickly and easily. His expertise is helping technical writers structure even the most unorganized content into aesthetically pleasing, readable documents.

## Example tooltip instructions



This template provides an easy, fast and intuitive method to format documents. Follow these instructions to use the custom toolbars and buttons provided in this template.

- **Use custom Formatting Toolbars to format all text.** There are enough options to format just about any standard document.

There are three toolbars:

- **Body Text** – Select whole “body-text” paragraphs and click the appropriate formatting button.
- **Table Text** – Select whole “table-text” paragraphs and click the appropriate formatting button.
- **Character Text** – Use the Character Text toolbar for selected words, only. Character Text styles are identified by < brackets >.

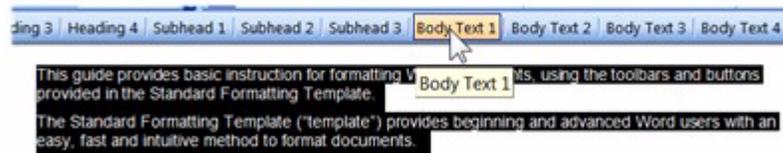


- **Do NOT apply ad-hoc formatting.** Do not use the “manual” formatting toolbar or formatting options in menus. Manual formatting – i.e., using the formatting toolbar or menus that allow you to manually apply formatting attributes such as format font, point size, bold, italic, paragraph spacing – is inconsistent, and can make formatting very slow and difficult. If you must use this toolbar, use it very sparingly.

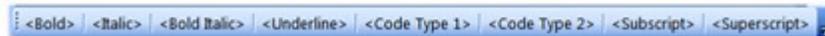


- To format paragraphs, select (highlight) the entire paragraph(s) to format, then **click the button of the Style to apply.**

This step applies to any type of paragraph – including headings, body text, bullets, numbered lists, and similar types of paragraphs in tables.



- To format words, such as with **bold**, *italics*, ***bold italic***, or underline, use the Character Formatting toolbar.



- To format a table, select the entire table (command: Table > Select > Table). Click << **Table Grid** >> style. This applies consistent formatting to all tables. Next, apply the correct Table Text style to each paragraph in the table.
- **Mix and Match Styles** – Review formatting samples to see many options for how you can apply styles. Mix and match styles creatively to obtain the results you need.



## Top 10 Usability Quirks for 2009 So Far

by Eric Hughes, Managing Director, Simplexity, LLC

As a celebration of making it through half of 2009, here is my top-ten list of usability irritants for 2009:

### Twitter

I've recently opened up three Twitter accounts — one for my bluegrass band, one for my usability consulting business, and one for a high school newsletter that I help produce. One of the problems with that idea is that it is impossible to tell which of these three accounts I am in on most of the Twitter pages. There is also no indicator on Twitter showing which secondary navigational section you are in (and there are around 20 different pages on Twitter). Sometimes I do things on one account I meant to do on another.

### POS

I know this is a difficult problem to solve in a market-driven economy, but the different versions of credit/debit point-of-sale machines drive me crazy. If I go to Walgreens, Trader Joe's, and ACE Hardware, I am presented not only with three different interfaces, but three different processes for approval.

### Debit or Credit

And what's with these bank credit cards that debit my account the day I use them, even when I don't enter a PIN? Isn't that a 'debit'?

### IVR

My first usability project, about 20 years ago, was to help design the voice hierarchy for a voice response system. Over the years, they have gotten better, but why is it that they rarely have a choice that matches the problem I am trying to solve? Are my issues that unique or are everybody's?

### BART Navigation

There are lots of complaints about the signage and mapping of the BART system. It should be easier to navigate for first-time users and visitors. But my complaint about BART is with the stations. I can never figure out, at the larger stations, which exit to use to efficiently get to where I need to go. Of course, that makes telling anyone else how to do it nearly impossible.

### Car Locks

My kids laugh at me because I never turn the driver or the passenger key the correct way to unlock my Volkswagen. But wait! On one side I need to turn it to the left to unlock, and on the other side I turn it to the right! Is that how all car locks work?

### Gift Cards

Occasionally I'll get an American Express or other generic gift card as a present or a thank-you gift. They work pretty well in stores, but have you ever tried to use one in a restaurant? It must be rocket science, because they either don't work, or you need to know the exact amount left on it to use it.

### Umpire Strikes

I umpire little league baseball on the weekends in the spring. If you've ever been to a little league baseball game, and you are paying attention, you will hear the plate umpire say the balls and strikes count backwards at least once during the game. Here is the problem: the indicator that umpires use to track balls and strikes shows the strikes on



the left and the balls on the right, but the verbal call is balls first then strikes. Now you know.

## Doors

Push/pull doors - you know, those doors that go both ways, but say PUSH on one side and PULL on the other.

## Oil Change

And finally, putting oil in a car engine without spilling any of it. There has to be a better design for bottles of oil so you don't have to use paper funnels that are usually nowhere to be found.

You can follow my usability rants at <http://twitter.com/hughese>

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Eric Hughes has been an STC member since 2004. Things that don't work the way they should drive him crazy. You can reach him at [hugheseathur@gmail.com](mailto:hugheseathur@gmail.com); or on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and delicious at /hughese

## Other Organizations

**American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) of Northern California.** Meets periodically at various Bay Area locations. [www.amwancal.org](http://www.amwancal.org)

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

**American Society of Indexers, Golden Gate Chapter.** [www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden](http://www.asindexing.org/site/chapters.shtml#golden)

**Association for Women in Computing, San Francisco Bay Area chapter** — [www.awc-sf.org/](http://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](http://www.nwu.org)

**Northern California Science Writers' Association.** Quarterly meetings & other events. [www.ncswa.org](http://www.ncswa.org)

## Workshop

### Strategic Planning for Your Life

by Judy Glick-Smith

*Sunday, August 23, 2009, 1-5pm*

Highlands Country Club

110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

### Workshop Fees

\* STC Members and students: \$25

\* Others: \$35

### Program

For details of the workshop and available supplementary materials, visit the following website:

[http://www.mentorfactorinc.com/Strategic\\_Planning\\_for\\_Your.html](http://www.mentorfactorinc.com/Strategic_Planning_for_Your.html).

### Speaker

**Judy Glick-Smith** is an STC Fellow and a past president of the Society. She is a speaker, writer, executive and life coach, and conflict resolution specialist. She loves helping people discover their life's purpose through her workshops and presentations on conflict management, leadership, and living an authentic life.





## Meetings

Our chapter holds a dinner meeting the second Wednesday of each month. See *Berkeley STC Meeting Location and Directions* on page 11.

### Upcoming Meetings

#### Resume Secrets that Might Surprise You

by Jack Molisani

*Wednesday, July 8, 2009, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

#### Program

Says Jack Molisani:

"For years, I resisted speaking about effective resumes, thinking that everything that could possibly be said about the subject has already been covered. But after seeing candidate after candidate rejected based on what they had (and didn't have) in their resumes, I realized it's time for me to step up and share what I've observed over the years – resume secrets that might surprise you."

Have you ever submitted a resume for a job but were never called for an interview? Don't miss our July meeting!

#### Speaker

Jack Molisani is the president of ProSpring Technical Staffing, an employment agency specializing in technical writers and project managers: [www.ProSpringStaffing.com](http://www.ProSpringStaffing.com).

He also produces The LavaCon Conference on Technical Communication and Project Management. The seventh annual LavaCon will be held in late October 2009 in New Orleans: [www.lavacon.org](http://www.lavacon.org)

He is also STC Associate Fellow, a member of the Project Management Institute and Meeting Planners International, and is an active member of the committee developing the STC Body of Knowledge and BOK Web Portal.

#### Acting Lessons for Interviewees

by Stan Stansbury

*Wednesday, August 12, 2009, 6-9:30pm*  
Highlands Country Club  
110 Hiller Drive, Oakland, California

#### Program

Job interviews are among the most stressful situations anyone ever faces. The stress can be managed and put to good use.

This presentation offers a new paradigm for interviews that can help you stay relaxed and in control of the process. It demonstrates techniques borrowed from method acting and presents a little experimental psychology. With increased awareness of non-verbal communication and a modicum of practice, these techniques can make the challenging process of interviewing more enjoyable and more effective for technical communicators.

#### Speaker

Stan Stansbury has a checkered past covering acting, teaching, training, and technical writing. He's survived literally thousands of interviews, and is now passing along techniques that have worked for him.



### 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:

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

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\* **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](mailto: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**

Increase your network and net worth—join STC today!

<http://www.stc.org>

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) advances the theory and practice of technical communication across all user abilities and all media. For more information about STC, send an e-mail to [stc@stc.org](mailto:stc@stc.org) or visit [www.stc.org](http://www.stc.org).

## **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.

## **Miscellany**

### **Free Wildlife Images**

#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offers free images**

The federal agency has a massive, online collection of public domain still photographs, which include birds and bird management, environmental sciences, fisheries, habitats and landscapes, history, invertebrates, plants, law enforcement, recreation, training and education outreach, wildlife, and wildlife refuges.

To search for these, go to <http://images.fws.gov/digitalmedia>. You can look at thumbnails and full screens of the available images, as well as video and audio clips -- all in the public domain.

When you select the photo, you can view information about it, including file size, format, resolution, creator (generally the photographer), the source, the contributor, the audience, the location, and contact information. If you like what you see, you can download the photo.

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## Let Your Blog Help You Make the Cut

▼ Some story topics are too full of colorful insights and anecdotes to be confined to a 400-word newsletter article. That's where your blog can come to the rescue.

The next time space limitations force you to trim compelling content from a print newsletter article, save the copy that you've cut and turn it into a blog post.

Source: David Gammel, CAE, president, High Context Consulting, LLC, <http://www.highcontext.com>.

## Email has Increased Impatience

E-mail has ushered in a new era of informality in business correspondence, Mark Wallace says. Writers are paying even less heed to following standard rules of grammar.

That's not the only problem. Because of the Web and e-mail, readers have become impatient, expecting instant access and easy comprehension. They want to have all the information they need in a couple of sentences and resent having to dig deeper to become informed.

Many readers think they've absorbed a document when they haven't paid attention to the details.

Writers must take care to articulate clearly details that they think should be transparent. Organize the information, and think of presentation. Subheads may help guide the reader.

Put the issues in the beginning and be concise, but don't omit important information to meet a length limit, such as one page.

Source: Mark Wallace, professorial lecturer, English Department, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.