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FrameMaker Moves Online

BY M.J. PLASTER, SENIOR MEMBER

Adobe FrameMaker, the long-standing de facto standard for large, complicated, technical documents, has made the move toward online help. Over the past several years, conversion options have grown to include:

- Print to a PDF file using Adobe Acrobat.
- Convert to various online outputs with Quadralay WebWorks Publisher Professional.

WebWorks Publisher Professional offers the only true single-source solution for FrameMaker documents. The devil, however, is in the details; and while there are many users, there are only a handful of WebWorks experts.

- Save as .RTF, and import into eHelp's RoboHelp Office or ForeFront's ForeHelp.
- Save as .MIF, and import into ForeHelp.
- Convert to HTML in FrameMaker for import into any help authoring tool.
- Convert to generic HTML with WebWorks Standard, bundled with FrameMaker 6, for import into any help authoring tool.

RoboHelp and ForeHelp provide migration paths for online help, but neither can directly import .FM (FrameMaker) files. Each tool requires the same basic steps:

- Convert the .FM file to another format.
- Import the file into the help authoring tool.
- Build a Table of Contents.
- Build or tweak the Index.
- Clean up the files in the help authoring tool.

Style Handling and Mapping

When importing .RTF or .MIF, both RoboHelp and ForeHelp allow topic creation based on a style tag or style in the imported document. ForeHelp allows mapping; for example, you might map Subhead style or tag in the .RTF or .MIF to Heading 2 or H2. When creating HTML via WebWorks, you have an option to map tags to HTML elements.

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EITHER WRITE SOMETHING WORTH READING OR DO SOMETHING WORTH WRITING.

----- BEN FRANKLIN

PARENTHETICAL REMARKS (HOWEVER RELEVANT) ARE UNNECESSARY.

----- FRANK L. VISCO

FROM NOW ON, ENDING A SENTENCE WITH A PREPOSITION IS SOMETHING UP WITH WHICH I WILL NOT PUT.

----- SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

A WITTY SAYING PROVES NOTHING.

----- VOLTAIRE

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The Most Powerful Investment Tip: Invest In You

BY ROB HOUSER, REGION 3 DIRECTOR-SPONSOR

It's time to start planning your professional development for the year. Do you know what you will have to learn to remain competitive in the marketplace? Here are three questions you need to answer to create learning goals for the upcoming year.

QUESTION 1: *Is there ONE skill I could improve to do my job more effectively?*

You probably have a good idea of what skill you need to strengthen. Often the parts of our jobs we avoid or save until last are the ones we need to improve. Even if you think you know what needs improvement, ask somebody else to help you answer this question (or at least verify your assumption).

If you're a full-time employee, ask your supervisor during your performance review for *one* suggestion of how you can improve or add a skill to enhance your performance. Knowing what your company values helps you decide where to concentrate your effort, and allows you to show progress by the time of your next review. If that's too uncomfortable, or your supervisor can't make a suggestion, go to a trusted colleague who works with you.

If you're a contractor working for an agency, ask the agency to find out from the client what one skill you could improve to be more effective. If you're self-employed, ask someone who works closely with you for one suggestion of what you could improve to make yourself a better technical communicator.

Regardless of who you ask, probe for a more skill-oriented suggestion by asking what you already do that you could do better. Keep in mind that the skill may fall outside your formal education. Industry knowledge or more in-

depth technical abilities can improve your job performance significantly.

QUESTION 2: *Is there ONE tool that would increase my value?*

Although we know that there are underlying skills required to use any tool effectively, many employers assume that if you don't have the tool knowledge, you don't have the ability to do the work. For example, most job ads list a tool like RoboHelp or ForeHelp rather than the ability to design online help. Managers want people who can "hit the ground running." If you don't know the required tool, you might not get a chance to take on a desirable project.

If you're a full-time employee, ask your manager what *one* tool you could learn to benefit the department/company. Sometimes managers know of upcoming projects that you haven't heard about yet, so you might get the jump by learning the tool ahead of time. It's often easier to get funding to attend training that was suggested by your manager.

If you're a contractor or self-employed, talk with the agencies and look at the job ads to see what tools command the best pay.

Knowing the most common tools can translate into more job opportunities. It's also true that mastering a tool that few people know can command the highest rates (such as SAP, Visual Basic, or Oracle).

Generate a list of tools, prioritize them, and pick one for the year.

QUESTION 3: *Is there ONE tool or skill that I would like to learn?*

This tool or skill is for you. You may envision yourself working someplace

else in another year or two, and undoubtedly you will have to learn some new tools/skills. Or maybe you just have a strong interest in a topic and want to pursue it more seriously. Pick something that motivates you and moves you toward your long-term goals.

You might decide you want to move closer to training, so you identify a skill like instructional design or a tool like Authorware. You might want to move into web-based solutions, so you identify a tool like Dream Weaver or Flash. Maybe you have an interest in foreign languages, photography, or graphic design. Even if the skill you pick doesn't benefit your immediate job, it can move you in a positive direction.

CONCLUSION: *Create a written plan and execute it.*

After you have answered these three questions, identify ways you can achieve these learning goals. Don't just think in terms of corporate classes, although they are often effective. Also consider conferences, books, web-based training, certificate programs, graduate programs, and community schools. Identify all of the possibilities for each learning goal, making sure to note cost and availability.

Next, make choices based on your budget and schedule. Your company should provide some support for your training. If not or if you are self-employed, consider it a business expense and pay for it yourself. Training is an investment in you. Don't short-change your career by putting it off. Force yourself to take the time to learn three new things this year. If you execute this modest training plan, you will have the best kind of job security available—you will be excellent at what you do. ✍

Technical Publications Competition

BY ED GREGORY, WEB SITE MANAGER

About 60 chapter members and guests got a first-hand look at local prize-winning projects when they attended the chapter's annual awards banquet March 15 at the University Club at Vanderbilt.

Ron Kidd, Holly Quick, and Linsey Sieger shared the top honors, winning both a Distinguished rating and Best of Show. Working under the aegis of Tanner Corporate Services on behalf of client Quorum Health Resources, they produced an impressive binder for hospital administrators called *The Guide: A Marketing and Public Relations Resource 2000*.

Their entry also won an award of Excellence at the international competition.



HOLLY QUICK ACCEPTS THE BEST OF SHOW AWARD.

Three entries won Excellence ratings. They were:

Chromalox 2110 Product Data Sheet, **Rita Johnson** and **Joey Hayes**, Tanner Corporate Services.

1999—2000 Educational Offerings Catalog, **George Cassidy, Linsey Sieger, and Ron Kidd**, for Quorum Health Resources by Tanner Corporate Services.

Ten Things You Should Know About Koala, **Christina Dunn**, HCA—The Healthcare Company.

Nine entries were awarded Merit certificates. They were:

Client Review Job Aid, **Jennifer Lambe**, Tanner Corporate Services.

Getting Results with Protector 9.2, **Karen A. Fardella**, Equinox Information Systems.

I-Max User Guides 1 and 2, **Matthew Coleman** and **Rebecca Barrette**, MACCESS Corporation.



REBECCA BARRETTE (RIGHT) ACCEPTS A CERTIFICATE OF MERIT.

Ingram Industries Benefits Communications, **Pat Cosky, Bill Smith, Katharine Ray, and Linsey Sieger**, Tanner Corporate Services.



KATHARINE RAY (LEFT) AND BILL SMITH (RIGHT) ACCEPT THEIR MERIT AWARD.

IT&S iNews, an Online Newsletter, **Tiffany Conner** and **Margret Buxkamper**, HCA—The Healthcare Company.

Navigating IT&S Flashes and Updates, **Cresa Pugh** and **Margret Buxkamper**, HCA—The Healthcare Company.

POWERZONE 4 Low Voltage Metal—Enclosed Drawout Switchgear: Catalog, **Kathy Guarente** and **Tim Hunter**, Square D Company.

POWERZONE 4 Low Voltage Metal—Enclosed Drawout Switchgear: Instruction Bulletin, **Kathy Guarente** and **Tim Hunter**, Square D Company.

POWER ZONE Metal—Enclosed Bus Duct System: Instruction Bulletin, **Joel Butts, Ed Vernon, and Tim Hunter**, Square D Company.

This article originally appeared on the Chapter web site at www.stcmid Tenn.org. ✍

Awards Banquet

PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA PRYOR, NEWSLETTER EDITOR

THANKS AGAIN TO EVERYONE WHO GENEROUSLY GAVE THEIR TIME TO JUDGE THE TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS COMPETITION THIS YEAR

KEEP ALL YOUR CURRENT DOCUMENTATION PROJECTS IN MIND FOR POTENTIAL ENTRIES IN NEXT YEAR'S COMPETITION: IT WILL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT!



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: BILL SMITH, RITA JOHNSON, JOEY HAYES, KAREN FARDELLA, KATHARINE RAY, JENNIFER LAMBE, MARGRET BUXKAMPER, TIM HUNTER, HOLLY QUICK, JOEL BUTTS, CHRISTINA DUNN

E-tiquette: Rules of the Road

BY HUGH HAY-ROE, SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSTON CHAPTER

According to a 1998 Pitney-Bowes survey, U.S. office workers are faced with an average of nearly 200 communications a day, of which fewer than one-fifth are hand-delivered (snail mail and package services); all the rest arrive electronically. The electronic deluge consists of phone calls (48 percent, including pager and cellular calls, voice mail, and message slips); faxes (2 percent); and e-mail (25 percent).

That final 25 percent represents a relatively new burden based on the ubiquity of the desktop computer or workstation, even though some e-mail contains messages that previously would have arrived by telephone or as hard copy. Some office workers are faced with sixty to eighty e-mail messages every day.

We find ourselves in a situation analogous to that of Third World countries where the Automobile Age arrived so suddenly that there was no time to develop a comprehensive set of rules of the road, much less *train people to use them*.

Where development begins in a haphazard fashion, progress toward widely obeyed rules, guidelines, and standards of courtesy is slow and painful. Meanwhile, traffic is chaotic and drivers are overtaxed. Right now, e-mail seems to be at about the same stage as automobile transport in remote corners of the globe, and we need some rules of the e-road.

If you are on the receiving end of unclear, long-winded, or totally irrelevant e-mail messages, you will agree that many senders of e-mail desperately

require guidelines. And for some of your correspondents, "guidelines" may not be enough; they need to be thumped over the head with *commandments*.

So, here are nine commandments for perpetrators of e-mail. (Why not ten? Because I couldn't think of another good one, and I needed to observe Commandment No. 1.)

- 1) Thou shalt recognize that in the realm of e-mail, **quantity** is the enemy of **quality**.
- 2) Thou shalt pause a moment to choose an *informative* "**SUBJECT:**" to orient thy time-pressed readers (there is no other kind).

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The Job Bank

Gallagher Financial

TECHNICAL WRITER

SKILLS & REQUIREMENTS

Bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience in English, Communications, or a related field, and 3+ years experience in developing software documentation and/or technical marketing materials.

Must have a strong technical aptitude, the ability to learn quickly, and proficiency in at least one desktop publishing package. Must have the ability to create thorough and well-organized technical documents such as operation, installation, and configuration manuals for software systems.

The ideal candidate will have HTML experience, and a good sense for basic page layout and design. Candidates must be creative, self-motivated, able to adapt quickly, and work well under pressure.

If you are interested in this position, send your resume to humanresources@gogallagher.com, or contact Jared Humphrey at (615) 221-7300. ✉

If you or your company has any open positions in the technical communication field, and would like to include them in our chapter's publications, please send information to the Employment Officer, David Dunn, and Web Site Manager, Ed Gregory (contact information on page 2).

Chapter Member Presents at STC's 48th Annual Conference



Middle Tennessee chapter member Laura Vaughn will present at STC's 48th annual conference May 13-16 in

Chicago as part of a panel discussion titled "Balancing Creativity and Conscience: Ethics and the Technical Communicator."

The panel facilitator will be Dr. Kristene Sutliff, an STC fellow and head of the technical writing program at Southwest Missouri State University, where Laura is currently completing thesis work to earn her master's degree in technical communication and was last year's STC chapter president. Other panel members are Michael Stowe, an instructor at Southwest Missouri State University, and Dian Dillingham of Texas A&M University.

The panel will discuss ethical dilemmas for technical communicators, with emphasis on ethical considerations for technology use, and ways to teach ethics in technical communication courses.

In addition to presenting at the national conference, Laura presented at the Region 6 Student Conference, titled "Maximize Your Window of Opportunity," on April 7 at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. She was part of a panel discussion titled "Reach for the Sky: Know How to Diversify." Other panelists were Alan Wilds, a writer for Midwest Consulting Group and president of the Kansas City STC chapter; Laura Filla, a freelance technical writer from Kansas City, Missouri; and Catherine Janzen, a writer for Data Systems International in Overland Park, Kansas. ✉

E-tiquette: Rules of the Road

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

- 3) Thou shalt come directly to the point in every e-mail message.
- 4) Thou shalt aid thy readers with short paragraphs and line lengths.
- 5) Thou shalt use plain and simple language, with no attempt to impress thy readers, neither with strange jargon, nor rare acronyms, nor yet with mysterious abbreviations.
- 6) "Do unto others..." Thou shalt prune thy distribution list, resisting the temptation to sandbag thy colleagues with "cc's."
- 7) Thou shalt not forward copies of messages thou hast received, unless they prove relevant to thy reader. *E-mail is not a chain letter*—make haste to break the chain.
- 8) Thou shalt make no attempt to hand off responsibility by retransmitting a problem description thou hast received from someone else, nor by e-mailing thine own problem descriptions to defenseless colleagues.
- 9) Thou shalt not forward virus warnings without first checking to ensure that they are not hoaxes (many people receive more fake warnings than real ones).

Set a good example. Do your bit to reduce pollution in cyberspace.

This article is reprinted with minor changes from the March 2001 issue of intercom.

FrameMaker Moves Online

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

RoboHelp

RoboHelp Office contains two separate tools: *Classic* for WinHelp authoring and single sourcing to HTML-based help, and *HTML Edition* for HTML-based help only. RoboHelp offers several migration paths, depending on your selected output. Further, for HTML-based output, there are two distinct options.

FOR WINHELP:

- 1) In FrameMaker, convert the .FM file to .RTF.
- 2) Create a new RoboHelp project.
- 3) Import the .RTF into the RoboHelp project.
- 4) Tweak.

FOR HTML-BASED HELP:

Via RoboHelp Classic

- 1) Follow steps 1-3 above.
- 2) Single-source to HTML Help.
- 3) Open the converted project in RoboHelp HTML Edition, and continue working.

Via RoboHelp HTML Edition

- 1) In FrameMaker, convert to HTML using WebWorks Publisher Standard Edition.
- 2) Create a new project in RoboHelp HTML Edition.
- 3) Import the individual HTML files.
- 4) Remove the headers and footers.
- 5) Tweak.

ForeHelp

ForeHelp and ForeHTML share the same interface, using separate modes to facilitate ease of use. While .RTF and .MIF imports are supported in WinHelp mode, and HTML imports are supported in HTML mode, changing back and forth between modes simply requires a single mouse click. For example, you can import in HTML mode even if you output to WinHelp.

WINHELP OR HTML-BASED OUTPUT:

- 1) Create a new ForeHelp project.
- 2) Switch to WinHelp mode to import .RTF or .MIF files
or
Switch to HTML mode to import .HTML files.
- 3) Remove the headers and footers from HTML files.
- 4) If necessary, switch modes to match your selected output.
- 5) Tweak.

What is the best route from FrameMaker to online help?

The route you take depends on your ability to convert Frame files. The WebWorks Publisher Standard conversion option exists only in FrameMaker 6. Earlier versions require conversion to FrameMaker's HTML, .RTF, or .MIF. Converting a graphics-intensive document to .RTF is slow and frustrating. This process can most accurately be described as "minutes per graphic." If the original document contains many graphics, converting to .MIF is faster.

You will need to assess your specific project, and your tolerance for after-the-fact cleanup in the authoring tool to determine the best route for you. Based on non-scientific testing, it is the conclusion of this author that the best route is via WebWorks Publisher Standard to HTML, importing the resulting HTML files directly into the authoring tool for HTML-based output. ✍

Meeting Notes

On February 20, about 30 members and a few guests gathered at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center on Broadway for appetizers and a presentation by M.J. Plaster, "Rx for Your Help."

M.J. gave an overview of the most commonly used help authoring tools (HATs), and updates on the newest releases and features/capabilities of each. She also provided information about many inexpensive third-party add-ons and other software and free-ware that can either fix various "bugs" in our tools, or provide a streamlined, simple way to perform previously daunting tasks.

All of the valuable information divulged in her presentation can be found on her web site, at www.wininnovations.com/STC.

M.J. Plaster, President of World Wide Innovations, Inc., is a certified Doc-to-Help, Fore-Help, and RoboHelp trainer and consultant.

STC's 48th Annual Conference

WHEN: May 13–16, 2001

WHERE: Chicago, IL
Hyatt Regency, Conference
Headquarters

WHAT: STC's annual conference is the largest conference in the world that focuses on the arts and sciences of technical communication. The conference includes more than 250 educational presentations. It offers opportunities for networking and a chance to view vendor exhibits and award-winning entries from STC's technical communication competitions.

WHO: STC members are technical communicators—people whose work involves making technical information available and understandable to people who need it. Conference attendees include the following professionals:

- Technical writers
- Technical editors
- Documentation specialists
- Technical communicators
- Technical illustrators
- Managers of technical communication departments
- Teachers of technical communication
- Web designers
- Technical translators
- Information developers

Conference events address the needs of technical communicators at every level of experience, from entry level to senior management.

WHY: STC holds the annual conference to provide education opportunities for members, to support professional development, and to expand networks of contacts. Full registration entitles you to three days of educational presentations (technical sessions), vendor exhibits,

social events, useful handouts, and a copy of the conference Proceedings.

HOW: Contact the National STC office (see the contact information on page 2). Or, visit the STC web site for all the conference details, including a “To Do List” to prepare for the conference. Go to www.stc.org, and click the link to information about the 48th annual conference.

REMINDER: Early register for reduced rates by May 4. Register online, or mail or fax forms to the address or fax number for the Society office, listed on page 2. Address them to the attention of Annual Conference Registration. ✉

Chapter member Laura Vaughn will present at the annual conference. See page 6 for details.



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SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

