



In this issue:

To Certify or Not to Certify	1
Summary of Fall Meeting Programs	1
Upcoming Events	2
Opportunity to Serve	2
2006 Competition Update	2
Member Spotlight	3
Time to Renew	3
Member News	3
Do You Know the ABCs of Career Change?	4

To Certify or Not to Certify



STC has looked into the certification process a number of times in the past. Each of the previous three times, Dan Wise has been at the forefront of the proposed initiative. Dan, from the Birmingham chapter, spoke at our November 14th meeting, themed *Pros and Cons of Certification for Technical Communicators*. He gave an overview of the certification process and opened the floor for discussion from attendees.

Exploration of the certification issue will be ongoing for some time, and Dan solicits input from all interested parties. He encouraged attendees to submit comments related to certification to him at: dwise@iccsafe.org.

that meeting, the attendees generated many points to consider in defining and implementing certification and participated in lively discussion on the value (or lack of value) of certification.

The November discussion was a continuation of the certification topic for those who attended the Middle Tennessee Chapter's annual Whine and Cheese meeting in October. At

For more comprehensive information on the STC MTC discussion on certification, please see the Meeting Notes section of the STC MTC website (www.stcmidtenn.org).

Summary of Fall Meeting Programs

September – The chapter year began with a dinner meeting at Old Spaghetti Factory. Chapter President Steven Brooks presented a program entitled *Are You Overwhelmed by Information Overload or Cruising on the Information Highway?*, in which he recited many interesting statistics and explored trends in the information industry.

October – Our annual Whine and Cheese meeting featured two main subjects.

First, Rita Johnson and Beth Tanner gave the attendees information on attaining STC

honors such as Distinguished Chapter award. They showed some awards our chapter has achieved in the past and gave the attendees information on options for qualifying for these awards.

Second, Kathleen McDowell facilitated a discussion of the pros and cons of certification for technical communicators. This discussion was preparation for Dan Wise's presentation at the November meeting.

November – Dan Wise reported on research

currently underway to determine whether STC should implement a certification program. (See the article above for more on this subject.)

December – Members gathered at the home of Eileen Wollam to eat, drink, and be merry. Those who chose to do so engaged in a lively gift exchange game.

For more information on the subjects discussed at these meetings, please see the Meeting Notes section of the STC MTC website (www.stcmidtenn.org).

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ADVERTISING: We will publish advertisements for industry-related events free of charge. The newsletter editor, in conjunction with the chapter's governing board, reserves the right to refuse advertising submissions. Non-chapter member ads are limited in page size at the editor's discretion. We encourage advertisers to send promotional items to our chapter to be used to further promote the event. Publication of advertisement in the Communiqué does not constitute endorsement by STC or its members.

Upcoming Events

Following is a list of upcoming chapter events and other opportunities that may be of interest to STC MTC members. More events may be added to the calendar after publication of this issue, so

check our website (www.stcmid Tenn.org) often for the latest scoop.

January 16: STC MTC Annual Awards Banquet at Big River Grille. See website for details and RSVP.

If you have ideas for chapter events or if your company can provide meeting space for an event, please contact Steve Brooks or Kathleen MacDowell.

Opportunity to Serve

The position **Director, Employment** for our chapter is still available. If you would like to serve in this capacity, please contact Steve Brooks or any chapter officer. (We have a handbook to help new officers!)

2006 Competition Update

Report from Director of Competitions, Judith Meyer:

We sent 20 entries (12 online and 8 print) to the Philadelphia Chapter for judging. The entries were submitted by Lexmark International, Life Care Centers of America, and Tanner Corporate Services.

Entrants should receive feedback on their entries sometime in December. Judging results will be shared at the annual banquet on January 16, 2007. More details about the banquet will be posted on the STC MTC website as they become available.

We received 9 entries from the Philadelphia Chapter (2 online and 7 print) to judge. A special thanks to the following people who volunteered their time to serve as judges in this year's competition:

- Matt Conley
- David Major
- Kathleen McDowell
- Amy Oldham
- Leigh Price
- Betsy Smith
- Jennifer Wendell
- Eileen Wollam

Member Spotlight



This issue, the **STC Spotlight** shines on chapter member Amy Oldham. As a technical communicator, Amy's work focused primarily on developing and maintaining software documentation manuals and sales proposals. From 1997 to 2005, that work centered on the mortgage lending industry. During that time, she worked for Gallagher Financial Systems, makers of the NetOxygen loan origination and processing software. Recently though, Amy took a departure from the corporate world to enjoy her son's last year before kindergarten.

During her time away from the corporate world, Amy has remained active in STC, which she says "has provided many opportunities for keeping her technical communication skills sharp." One of the projects she enjoyed working on last year for STC was *The MTC Officer Handbook*, which includes tips, procedures, and best

practices for the chapter's governing board members. Many 2005-2006 board members contributed articles and guidelines relevant to the various board positions. Amy collected, compiled, and edited the information for the handbook.

In 2006, she got an opportunity to work on another book project. This book, entitled *The Road to Shodan: A Guide to Reaching First Degree Black Belt*, was altogether different from previous projects in which she'd been involved. Amy was asked to copy edit this book, which describes common experiences that occur across all styles of martial arts as students strive for the rank of black belt. Amy learned a lot about the various aspects of martial arts, including how to choose a school and instructor. The book was published in October, 2006 and has been picked up for global distribution. For more information, see <http://www.RoadToShodan.com/>.

Time to Renew

If you haven't done so already, please access the National STC website at www.stc.org and renew your membership for 2007.

Member News



New Job

Steve Brooks has a new job with Dynamics Research Corporation in Nashville. Steve's email address there is jbrooks@drc.com.

Do You Know the ABCs of Career Change?

Making a career change is one of the toughest job-search challenges. For clarification, "career change" means much more than "job change." A career change means choosing a completely new profession or industry. A "job change" is simply changing employers within the same industry and profession.

Why do people change careers? The two main reasons are:

- The industry or occupation becomes obsolete (or is outsourced overseas)
- Job dissatisfaction (If you dread going to work on Monday morning, you're probably in this category.)

What makes a career change so difficult? After all, most job seekers attempting a career change know exactly why they would do well in a new profession or industry. The problem comes down to communication. Most job seekers have difficulty communicating in their resume their ability to excel in a new career. Resumes, by definition, focus on career experience (history), but career changers need employers to see their expertise (current skills) in order to be viewed as a viable candidate.

If you are attempting a career change, it becomes easier when you understand the ABC's of career change:

- A: Assess
- B: Bridge
- C: Communicate

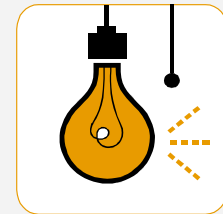
Assess what you want changed.

Before you can make a successful change, you must decide what needs changing. Is it the duties you perform? Your overbearing boss? Your current geographic location? The industry you work in? The size of company you work for? The level of responsibility you hold? Once you pinpoint your exact source of unhappiness, you're on your way to making the correct choice for change.

Bridge the gap between what you've done and what you want to do.

The key to selling yourself based on your expertise rather than your experience is transferable skills. Transferable skills work like bridges to help you cross over from one industry to another or one occupation to another. Transferable skills are those skills you now possess that qualify you as a viable candidate for your career change.

(Story continued on page 5)



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Do You Know the ABCs of Career Change? (Continued)

Communicate your ability to excel in your new profession or industry.

Your resume is your front-line communication tool to prospective employers. No matter how well you interview, if your resume doesn't sell you, there won't be an opportunity to convince them in person. Use your accomplishments to prove the strength of your transferable skills, and you'll get interviews faster and with more enthusiasm.

An experienced career coach can help you apply these ABCs to your current resume and your interview skills. Once you practice the ABCs of career change you'll be on your way to changing your career and changing your life—for the better!

Deborah Walker, CCMC

Career Coach ~ Resume Writer

Find more job-search tips and resume samples at:

www.AlphaAdvantage.com

Email: Deb@AlphaAdvantage.com

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