



IEEE Professional Communication Society NEWSLETTER

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Editor: Emily Schlesinger.
Baltimore Gas and Electric Co.
Baltimore, MD 21203

Bert Pearlman, President IEEE/PCS
Stauffer Chemical Co., Engr. Cntr.
Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

Craig Harkins, Secretary IEEE/PCS
27 Heath Road
Fishkill, NY 12524

John Phillips, Treasurer, IEEE/PCS
RCA, P.O. Box 588
Burlington, MA 01803

Ad Com Meeting

Most of the business and reports discussed by PC's AdCom on February 11, 1980, at IEEE Headquarters are the subjects of separate articles in this issue of our Newsletter. Briefly, however, announcements and deliberations were made as follows:

1. Lois Thuss appointed to replace Pat McBride for the AdCom term ending 1980.
2. Dan Rosich planning a PC conference to be held in either Washington, DC, or Boston, probably October 20-22.
3. Consideration given to preparing a workshop "package" that could be offered to any IEEE Society conference.
4. Scholarship applications coming in slowly.
5. Goldsmith Award to be presented to E. O. Taylor at a meeting of the UK/RI Chapter.
6. Bert Pearlman chairing committee to nominate Division VI Director.
7. PC's Transactions issue on patents (June 1979) selling for \$7.00 per copy; 1,000 sold to date. Extra copies of March 1980 issue on public speaking available for \$5.00. Send check to Rudy Joenk.
8. PC membership increased from 1748 to 1932 last year--up 13%; only the Computer Society grew faster.
9. Three PC publicity releases sent to IEEE Societies and their Newsletter editors, the Society for Technical Communication, the Council of Communication Societies, and Toastmasters International; subjects--our home-study course, scholarship program, Transactions on public speaking.
10. Consideration given to revising PC Bylaw 6, paragraphs 1, 2, and 2, which describe procedures for electing AdCom members; old and proposed text to be published in Newsletter.
11. IEEE to pay dues to Society for Scholarly Publishing, PCS to represent the Institute, Emily Schlesinger to represent PCS.
12. Consideration given to coordinating or merging some PC activities with those of IEEE Education or Engineering Management Societies.
13. Suggestion made that non-U.S. members should ask AdCom for specific help or services.
14. Suggestion made that the Newsletter have a feature column of "worst sentences." Send sample excruciating expressions, PC-ers; the editor will print them.

MD 21228

APR 21 26N

BALTIMORE
7 HOLMEHURST AVE
E K SCHLESINGER
3692233 SM

Letter from the President

I am writing this letter in the comfortable position of a second-term President. The comfort comes from knowledge of the workings of the IEEE; assurance that PC's officers, committee members, and editors will remain hard-working and dedicated to the aims of the Society; and experience in representing PC at meetings of IEEE's Technical Activities Board and Public Relations Committee.

In the past year, we added to PC's accomplishments and enhanced its professional status, as Membership, Education, and Publicity Committees increased their activities. We established a Scholarship Program and expect to make the first presentation in 1980. We ended 1979 as second in growth of all IEEE Societies. Our Chapter in England continued to be active; PC-ers in the Boston area formed a new Chapter. More Institute members continued to enroll in our home-study course, "Technically--Write!". Our report-writing seminars were presented at more locations.

For the first time, PC membership ads and news releases appeared in the Newsletters of other IEEE Societies, and one IEEE Society has expressed interest in having PC participate in some way in one of its conferences. AdCom members represented PC at the Society for Technical Communication's annual conference in 1979, and we are planning to have a PC-sponsored conference/seminar in 1980.

Our Transactions and Newsletter continue on the highest level to exert influence and provide information. The special Transactions issue on patents (June 1979) has received wide acclaim, with requests for copies coming from many non-IEEE organizations and individuals. The index in our December Transactions shows the broad range of subjects discussed during the year.

In 1979 PC became an Affiliate Member in the International Council for Technical Communication and continued to be represented on the administrative boards of the Society for Technical Communication and the Council of Communication Societies.

As PC's President, I am proud of our achievements and extend my thanks to the many members who have been responsible for the Society's growth, to AdCom members for their dedication and productive efforts, and to all of you for your confidence in me.

I look forward to the continued growth and usefulness of the Professional Communication Society and urge all members to take part in its activities wherever they can--by working on a committee, by submitting articles for our Newsletter or papers for our Transactions, by

telling AdCom what we do right and what we do wrong, and by suggesting what additional services the Society might offer.

Please look in our Transactions and find the names of PC's officers and committee chairmen. Call or write to any of them with questions, suggestions, and offers of assistance.

Let us move forward together to strengthen and expand our work in the field of technical communication as we enter into the 1980's.

Bertrand B. Pearlman
President IEEE/PCS

New AdCom Member



LOIS K. THUSS

Lois Thuss, recently appointed to PC's AdCom, is a graduate of Fisher College (Boston) and has over twenty years' experience in the publications field--writing, editing, and monitoring the production of technical documents for government, military, and commercial applications. She is now a Technical Writer and Editor with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, serving as managing editor of documentation for the Systems Evaluation Branch. Previously, she worked for Trans-Sonics, Inc., Technical Operations, Inc., RCA, and IBM.

A member of the Society for Technical Communication, Lois will chair the Writing/Editing Stem of that organization's 1981 International Technical Communication Conference. She is PC's new Chairman of Student Membership.

Welcome, New Members !

From December 1, 1979, through February 15, 1980, 264 new members joined the PC Society --180 from 33 of the United States, 28 from 6 Canadian Provinces, and 78 from 30 other countries. Welcome to all!

And now, please do more than pay PC dues and read PC publications. Write to PC officers and editors--send suggestions for action, suggest subjects for discussion, send articles for publication, send offers to work on committees.

Or, better still, come to an AdCom meeting--take part in our deliberations and decision-making, find a job that strikes your fancy or matches your talents, and help yourself by working for the Society.

PC's AdCom meets four times a year, usually at IEEE Headquarters in New York City. This notice will not reach you before the meeting on April 10, but there will be two meetings in the Fall--probably September and either November or December. Let a PC officer know if you would like to be notified more precisely by letter.

And for those who live in Minneapolis--do try to get in touch with the PC-ers who will attend STC's 27th ITCC at the Radisson South Hotel, May 15-17, 1980. They will be glad, and you will never be sorry.

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Terence G. Condon
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Damien J. Dumlop
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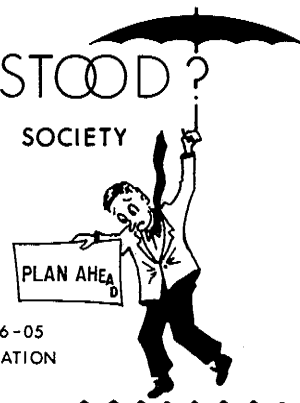
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT Mr. RICHARD M. ROBINSON, C26-05
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Blicq Workshop

Ronald S. Blicq of Red River Community College in Winnipeg, Manitoba (Canada) is shown conducting a workshop on effective business and technical communication. His presentation was given in January for 25 staff members of the Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, MD (USA).

The two all-day workshop sessions were devoted to step-by-step methods of "identifying the main message, determining readers' interests, choosing the right words, cutting out 'chaff,' and homing in on facts."

APL's course coordinator described Ron's presentation as "highly interactive and idea-packed." Participants said

- *The instructor was encouraging and stimulating.
- *The course content and level were appropriate for those who attended.
- *The procedures recommended were applicable to individuals' normal work assignments.
- *The workshop should be offered to other co-workers.

Ron Blicq, a member of the Society for Technical Communication and the American Business Communication Association, is Chairman of PC's Education Committee, owner of the Roning Group (communication consultants), and author of books and papers on technical and business communication.

Opportunity

The Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory, where Ron Blicq recently presented his two-day workshop on communication and report writing, is the "home company" of Lois Thuss, a newcomer to PC's AdCom.

Other AdCom-supporting firms have used Ron's course too, notably Bob Woelfle's E-Systems, Inc., in Greenville (TX) and Bert Pearlman's Stauffer Chemical Company in Dobbs Ferry (NY). Stauffer, indeed, offered the workshop twice in 1979 and has scheduled four repetitions for 1980-81.

Material for this course comes from Ron's book "Technically--Write!" on which PC's home-study course, Technically--Write, is based also. Ron's sessions at APL were videotaped in full, and the tape has been edited into a condensed seven-hour version for use in training other workshop teachers.

PC-ers, STC-ers, or other interested readers of this Newsletter are welcome to inquire about learning to present this workshop or having it presented to a company or IEEE group. Write to Ronald S. Blicq, 569 Oxford Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3M 3J2, or call him at 204-632-2292 (business)

PC Scholarship

To encourage the development of communication skills, PC will give annually a scholarship of \$1,000 to a second-, third-, or fourth-year college student who is a member of the Society. Applicants must submit a completed application form, a one-paragraph statement of career goals, a certified transcript of academic record, and recommendations from two faculty members.

Get forms and further information from Dr. Della Whittaker, 10804 Ashfield Road, Adelphi, MD 20783; 301-937-1555.

PC's Transactions

Copies of PC's Transactions on patents (June 1979) can still be obtained from the editor. Send \$7.00 to R. J. Joenk, IBM Corporation, P. O. Box 1900, Boulder, CO 80302.

The March 1980 issue--20 papers on public speaking--is similarly available. Send \$5.00 as above.

Two 1977 issues (September and November) and two 1976 issues (March and December) are also still in stock. Send \$2 for each copy to Bert Pearlman, Stauffer Chemical Company, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522.

PC's PR

PC membership ads like the one in this issue of our own Newsletter are appearing in the Newsletters of other IEEE Societies. PC membership leaflets have been sent to Student Members and Student Chapters.

End-of-1979 figures show that PC now has nearly 2,000 members. This number represents a 10 percent increase over the previously announced total and the second highest growth reported for any IEEE Group, Society, or Section.

PC-er Bob Woelfle's Guide for Better Technical Presentations is third on the IEEE Press Best-Seller List. This statement refers to the original version, in English; the translation into Japanese is a best-seller also. Do you have a copy of this book in either language? It is an indexed collection of 35 reprinted articles. Send \$7.95, your IEEE Member Number, and an order for PP 00554 (paperbound) to IEEE Service Center, 445 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854.

Applications for PC's \$1,000 scholarship are still being received and considered. The award will be announced in our July Newsletter. Get more information from Dr. Della Whittaker, 10804 Ashfield Road, Adelphi, MD 20783; 301-937-1555.

Call For Papers

IEEE Transaction on Professional Communication

Special Issue: Making Information Usable

Devices, machines, and systems are becoming more complex and sophisticated while at the same time they are being made available to more people. Unfortunately, the operation of these products—whatever their nature—is seldom self-evident. At best we turn to instructions simply to confirm our expectations and learn what is new. At worst we must depend on them to compensate for a lack of human engineering in the product. Most of the time, however, we need instructions to use all the functions and capabilities that have been provided to us at an acceptable cost. Information *has* to be part of the customer's package. In issue number one next year we will be looking at techniques for making printed information usable.

Special Issue March 1981

MAKING INFORMATION USABLE

THE APPLICATION OF HUMAN FACTORS TO INFORMATION TRANSFER

Deadline August 15, 1980

What makes information usable? It has to be available and its availability has to be known. It has to address the appropriate tasks or problems. It has to be written for the audience. It has to be understandable. Its use has to leave the user with the knowledge of accomplishment. These qualities suggest three areas of investigation:

- **Understanding the user**—motivation, expectations, intelligence, experience, learning characteristics, human information processing, task identification
- **Designing for comprehension**—organization, task orientation, paced instruction, graphics, cues, reinforcement
- **Building in readability**—grammatical factors, sentence structure, vocabulary

The IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION is published for engineers, engineering managers, technical communicators, teachers and others who are concerned with communicating technical information. Our twofold purpose is to provide them with pragmatic material in digestible doses and to offer exposure to new ideas, methods, etc., useful in technical communication.

Normally, there is little human factors training in their backgrounds. Therefore, we are inviting tutorial, pragmatic, and "how to" papers to educate and guide our readers in the design and development of printed instructional materials. Case studies with an enlightening result would also be of interest, as would critical reviews with a useful conclusion. Papers should be previously unpublished but need not contain new research results. All papers will be refereed.

An expression of intent to submit a paper and a two-page draft summary are requested by June 6 to aid planning and avoid overlap. Our "Information for Authors and Readers" is in most issues of the TRANSACTIONS. Please write or phone the Editor for further information.

Papers will be due by August 15, 1980. The principal requirements are double-spaced typing, two complete copies, an informative abstract, and an author-identification sentence including occupation, address, and phone number. Well illustrated papers will be especially welcome. Send all material to the Editor.

R. J. JOENK, *Editor*
IBM Corporation
P.O. Box 1900
Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 447-5764

STC and PC in Minneapolis

It is not too late for PC-ers who live in or near Minnesota to consider attending the 27th International Technical Communication Conference. This year's sessions will be held at the Radisson South Hotel in Minneapolis, May 15-17, 1980, under sponsorship of the Society for Technical Communication.

Registration fees are \$120 for STC members, \$150 for non-STC members. Both fees cover admission to all sessions, two luncheons, one banquet, and one copy of the Conference Proceedings. The non-member fee includes a one-year membership in STC.

Five types of communication and communication-related activities will be discussed in lectures, workshops, and demonstrations:

Computer application and technology
Graphics and audiovisuals
Management theory and practice
Research and education
Writing and editing

Get more information from John Muller, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108.

PC-ers who work or live in Minneapolis are especially urged to attend this Conference. If you cannot register or go to any sessions, at least call or visit the Radisson and try to see or talk with any of the following AdCom members who will be there:

Ron Blicq
Craig Harkins
Lacy Martin
Bert Pearlman
Emily Schlesinger
Lois Thuss
Della Whittaker

We will have at least one PC dinner meeting or after-dinner meeting, as we did in Los Angeles at the 26th ITCC last year. STC's annual Conferences provide wonderful opportunities for PC-ers to get to know each other. Minneapolitans, let us hear from you either before or during the 27th ITCC, and let us see you at our May AdCom meeting in your great city.

INTECOM

Mary Schaefer represents the Society for Technical Communication and the United States in INTECOM, the International Council for Technical Communication. She is also President of INTECOM in 1980. Her report on INTECOM's 11th Council and General Assembly, held in Paris in September 1979 is as follows:

1. Plans were approved for the Norwegian Society for Technical Communication to hold Forum '80 in August under INTECOM sponsorship. [See full-page announcement.]
2. The Professional Communication Society of IEEE has been accepted as an Affiliate Member of INTECOM.
3. Delegates agreed to provide information on laws

and practices in their respective countries regarding responsibility for safety in the use of products, especially as it might relate to technical communicators. A committee in Sweden will analyze the data and prepare a position paper for submission to the European Economic Community (EEC) with the approval of the INTECOM Member Organizations.

How to Kill an Association

1. Don't participate beyond paying your dues---let "them" handle things.
Then complain that members have no voice in management.
2. Decline all offices and committee appointments---you're too busy.
Then offer vociferous advice on how to do things.
3. If appointed to a committee, don't work---it's a courtesy appointment.
Then complain because the organization has stagnated.
4. If you do attend management meetings, don't initiate new ideas.
Then you can play "Devil's Advocate" to those submitted by others.
5. Don't rush to pay your dues---they're too high anyway.
Then complain about poor financial management.
6. Don't encourage others to become members---that's selling.
Then complain that membership is not growing.
7. Don't read the mail from headquarters---it's not important.
Then complain that you're not kept informed.
8. Don't volunteer your talents---that's ego fulfillment.
Then complain that you're never asked and never appreciated.
9. And, if by chance, the organization grows in spite of your non-contributions
Grasp every opportunity to tell the youngsters how tough it was, how hard you worked in the old days to bring the organization to its present level of success.

--Reprinted from the Journal of The Virginia Academy of Family Practice through STC's Intercom, October 1979.

Report Construction, by Mary Fran Buehler, has been reprinted with slightly larger type. Order from IEEE/PC, 6411 Chillum Place, N.W., Washington, DC, 20012. Prices: 1 to 10 copies, \$2.50 each; 11 to 25 copies, \$2.40 each; 26 or more, \$2.25 each. Send check with order; get helpful guidelines for "building" reports.

Zaire to Satellite to Anywhere

Writing in Technology and Society (December 1979), Carlos M. Varsavsky of New York University's Institute for Economic Analysis suggests "Exporting Hydroelectric Energy."

Why not develop technology for generating hydroelectric energy in low-demand, undeveloped areas of Africa, Asia, or Latin America, transforming it into microwaves beamed toward a reflector in geosynchronous orbit, and returning the microwaves to areas on the earth where energy is needed?

Varsavsky points out that he is proposing a modification of the Solar Power Satellite (SPS) concept, in which

1. a large array of photovoltaic cells (an area of about 100 square kilometers) in geosynchronous orbit would produce dc electricity
2. the dc electricity would be converted to microwaves and beamed to earth from an antenna of about 1 kilometer radius
3. the microwaves received on earth would be transformed back into dc electricity
4. the dc electricity would be converted to ac electricity for use in existing power grids.

Varsavsky's scheme would

1. substitute a hydroelectric station for the solar energy collector
2. put in space only a passive reflecting antenna (large, but smaller than the array of cells)
3. eliminate eclipse-caused blackouts
4. help a developing country or countries
5. appear to be easier and quicker to implement than the SPS plan.

The chief disadvantages of Varsavsky's scheme are the need for larger investments on earth than the SPS effort would involve, and probably greater losses.

Coal Burner

A "little black box" that could solve many of today's critical coal-burning problems may be only a few years away from electric utility application, according to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) Journal for December, 1979.

Called a fluidized-bed boiler, the "box" would burn coal of any quality--low-sulfur to grades high in sulfur, ash, and moisture content--with few, if any, sulfur or nitrogen emissions.

The emissionless operation is achieved through specialized tubing which, unlike the boiler's standard tubing, is embedded in burning coal and heated limestone that is continuously churned by forced air.

While the burning coal makes up less than 1 percent of the bed, all the particles are heated quickly by the turbulent action, which surrounds the boiler's

water-filled tubes with hot solids and gases. This intimate contact makes heat transfer much more efficient than in a conventional boiler where pulverized coal must be blown out of jets and burned in midair before the resultant heat is used to boil water in the tubes and thus create steam.

The limestone in the fluidized-bed combustion, moreover, traps dry calcium sulfate waste that results from the burning, so that the new process may even eliminate the need for costly scrubbers.

EPRI, the research and development arm of the U.S. electric utility industry, which is actively supporting fluidized-bed boiler technology, is hopeful that commercial use of "the little black box" may be available in the late 1980's.

--From Baltimore Gas & Electric Company's Facts (January 1980).

Engineers' Ethics

In "Ethical Trilemmas" (Technology and Society, December 1979), L. B. Cebik discusses the three-cornered conflict often faced by on-the-job engineers in their triple role as professionals, employees, and concerned citizens.

Professor Cebik (University of Tennessee) points out that such trilemmas, created by real problems, have pushed professional codes of ethics into the arena of quasi-law and required investment of time, money, and effort. But, he concludes, in addition to the forms and activities prescribed and proscribed by codes, regulations, and procedures, there are still "human relationships and ideals of endeavor to preserve and make real. As in all ethical adventures of mankind, not the printed page but only the hearts and minds of dedicated professionals can preserve them."

Second-Language Research

A new newsletter has been established for researchers and teachers working in the field of second-language acquisition. Its goal is to inform its readers about the most recent developments in the field of second-language research. The newsletter is called SLANT, which is short for Second Language Acquisition Notes & Topics.

Researchers in second languages are invited to submit to SLANT résumés of their research in progress. These résumés may describe their subjects, data acquisition procedures, analyses, and the language involved but must be limited to 200 words. Researchers should include their name and complete mailing address so that others who are interested in the work can contact them directly.

SLANT is published semi-annually, fall and spring. Subscription prices for the calendar year are \$2 for individuals in North America and \$5 for others. Rates are \$3 higher for institutions.

Send research resumes to Research Résumés, SLANT Newsletter, and subscription correspondence to Tom Nunnolley, both c/o English Department, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA 94132 U.S.A.

--From Communication Notes, November 1979.

forum '80

LILLEHAMMER - NORWAY
AUGUST 24 - 27 1980

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL INTECOM
CONFERENCE ON TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION.

COMMUNICATION IN A COMPLEX FUTURE

FORUM'80 will be the meeting place of technical communicators motivated to improve their professional standards for a challenging future -

FORUM'80 will be the meeting place for technical communicators from all aspects of scientific and technical communication, willing to share their experience and test out their ideas -

FORUM'80 will let you discuss information problems and possibilities with your user groups -

FORUM'80 will offer a creative conference environment in one of the most interesting towns of Norway -

FORUM'80 is sponsored by INTECOM.

The International Council for Technical Communication

FORUM'80 is organized by NFTI

The Norwegian Society for Technical Communication.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT AND CALL FOR PAPERS

FORUM'80 KEY TOPICS

According to the main theme of FORUM'80 - Communication in a Complex Future - we call for papers especially dealing with practical aspects of the following topics, but any related suggestions are welcome:

- training and educational programs
- multimedia communication
- man-machine communication
- software and hardware documentation
- the microprocessor - problems and possibilities for the communicator
- scientific information and the end users
- consumer information in the future
- online technical communication - where is the communicator?
- subcontractor information
- the creative role of the editor
- standards and standardization
- economics and organization of technical communication
- computer graphics
- training and recruiting communicators

FORUM'80 - Dedicated key-note speakers will give presentations on:

- the consumer, the communicator and product responsibility
- a psychological approach to effective communication
- marketing and advertising ideas into technical communication
- the stress factor, a matter of consideration?
- humour in technical communication - to get through the human barrier?

FORUM'80 CONFERENCE FEES

Participant fee US \$ 225,-
Additional fee per accompanying person US \$ 50,-

The participants will all stay at the conference hotel.

Price per person, covering accommodation and all meals, per day US \$ 50,-

FORUM'80 PRELIMINARY REGISTRATION

- 1: I plan to present a paper
give a poster presentation
submit a topic for the workshop
- 2: I will forward the abstract to the Organizing Committee by April 1st., 1980
My contribution will deal with
- 3: I plan to take part in the conference as an ordinary participant, please send further details
- 4: I intend to bring accompanying persons.
- 5: I would like to take part in the post-conference tour and look forward to receiving details.
Number of persons interested in joining the tour

PLEASE PRINT !

Name

Title

Company

Address

Phone Telex

Forum '80

**PLEASE
FORWARD BY AIR MAIL**
Due to International
Postal Regulations,
your preliminary registration
must be forwarded in an envelope.

FORUM'80
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE
NFTI - POLYTEKNISK FORENING
ROSENKRANTZ GT. 7
OSLO 1
NORWAY

FORUM'80 FROM DAY-TO-DAY

Participants are advised to arrive in Oslo not later than Sunday, August 24th., where they will be taken care of by members of The Norwegian Society for Technical Communication (NFTI), before bus transfer to the conference hotel in Lillehammer.

After registration, an informal get-together party will be hosted by NFTI on the evening of arrival.

The conference will have the official opening ceremony after breakfast on Monday morning and close after lunch on Wednesday, August 27th.

A post-conference bus tour will be arranged to the West Coast of Norway, visiting the magnificent fjords and mountains. This two-day tour will end in Oslo on August 29th. Further details later.

In addition to the general social activities, a diversified program will be offered to **accompanying persons**. Further details later.

FORUM'80 TIME SCHEDULE

Abstract submission	April	1st.,	1980
Acceptance of papers	April	15th.,	1980
Full paper submission	June	15th.,	1980
Registration deadline	June	15th.,	1980
Conference	August	24-27th.,	1980

FORUM'80 MAILING ADDRESS:

FORUM'80 - Organizing Committee
NFTI - Polyteknisk Forening,
Rosenkrantzgt. 7
OSLO 1, Norway.

Following the success of FORUM'75 in Malmö, Sweden, The Norwegian Society for Technical Communication (NFTI) is proud to extend this invitation to participate at FORUM'80.

FORUM'80 is sponsored by INTE COM - The International Council for Technical Communication.

FORUM'80 will provide creative conference opportunities to professional technical communicators working in industry, research organizations, technical journals, publishing houses, consulting firms and governmental bodies.

FORUM'80 participants will be writers, editors, PR-officers, information managers, illustrators or educators, - and they will meet people representing user groups at FORUM'80.

FORUM'80 - CALL FOR PAPERS

As the conference will be arranged with plenary and specialist sessions as well as discussion groups, we hereby call for authors to present papers, provide poster presentations or submit topics for the workshops.

Authors should submit abstracts of 200 - 300 words, written in the English language. These abstracts must clearly state the main purpose of the paper. Authors to participate in the poster session or in the workshops are asked to submit abstracts as well.

Abstracts should reach the FORUM'80 Organizing Committee not later than April 1st., 1980

As we expect to publish proceedings of the conference, final papers should be submitted in English according to the instruction for authors, which will be sent upon acceptance of abstract.

Who wants to communicate anyway?

V. A. Bram

Message
from
Britain

Introduction

Communication has been the focus of considerable attention in recent years and a great deal of time and energy have gone into analysing the causes of communication problems and in suggesting solutions to them. But what has been overlooked is that effective communication is often the last thing people want in British industry today. Indeed, any marked increase in the accuracy of messages, or any decrease in their ambiguity, might severely restrict the running of some companies. There are a number of reasons for this — none of which concern the job — that illustrate the types of conflict that give rise to deliberately ineffective communication.

The struggle for power

The struggle to tilt the delicate balance of power in favour of unions or management is constantly manifest in communication exchanges. This is one area when the status quo can be maintained by exploiting failings in communication systems, especially when the issues under discussion involve face-saving, or projecting a specific image. For example, I was told by staff in a number of companies that union representatives may deliberately misinterpret messages for a number of reasons. Either they read too much into them in their search for hidden motives, and so add their own interpretation to the original information, or their version may be unlike the intended message because their interpretation of the wording is different from that of the management, for emotional or psychological reasons. Sometimes, I was told, they feel it is their duty to create difficulties because too close a relationship between themselves and the management arouses suspicion among their members, and they want to avoid this. The psychological needs

and desires that prompt these actions obviously influence the efficiency of communication to a considerable extent, and while this struggle for power exists the situation is unlikely to change.

However, management can be equally guilty of deliberately ineffective communication. It is often more expedient in the political games they play to create confusion by using vague or ambiguous language. It was widely agreed that by doing so 'they allow themselves room to manoeuvre' and that this is essential because 'if you try to tie everything down, then things won't work'.

But the struggle for power is not only evident between union and management; it exists between managers themselves and influences their communication exchanges too. One classic example was provided by a trainee executive who complained that the instructions he was given by his superior were vague and forced him to make his own decision about what the job entailed and how he should get it done. The senior executive explained that he did not want to give the younger man any preconceived ideas, so he kept his message brief. But an objective third party had this to say about the situation:

The instructions were obviously explicit enough just to get the job started, but general enough for the boss to claim credit or disclaim blame when it was finished.

An interesting situation, but one that is hardly conducive to efficiency or success. In this type of situation the interests of the company are of secondary importance to the psychological needs of the staff involved, and effective communication is the last thing staff aim at.

But this drive for power can be equally well revealed by the absence of any communication at all. Over 50% of the managers questioned agreed that individuals try to strengthen their position within a company by withholding infor-

mation. They enhance their status by becoming experts on subjects about which others know nothing and are able to learn nothing. As one manager said, 'they clutch information to them like a hot water bottle — warm and comforting'. This practice of refusing to communicate is found in all types of industry, and no amount of training in communication skills is likely to change it.

The instinct to survive

Where the success of a company depends on unified and harmonious cooperation between employees, then a sense of insecurity can have serious repercussions on efficiency, as communicating will often be a tense business with each side wary and defensive. In this type of situation the desire to survive is uppermost and can lead to all sorts of inefficient communication exchanges.

The most common misuse of the communication system is to produce vast amounts of unwanted and unnecessary paperwork either as a form of self-protection, or in accordance with Parkinson's Law, as a means of self-justification.

Producing large amounts of paperwork as a form of self-protection has a number of advantages. It provides a barrier for the 'weak' manager to hide behind, it enables him to shift responsibility by sending memos, and he can protect himself by publishing his intentions in advance, before committing himself to a specific course of action. He may also use the postal system to avoid having to give immediate answers to difficult or incriminating questions.

On the other hand, the reams of paperwork produced can simply be a means of justifying his existence in the company and help add to the illusion that he is indispensable by virtue of the amount of work he does. Again over 50% of the managers questioned agreed that this was so, and one was prompted to add that

Dr Valerie Bram (Member) is Lecturer in English and Communications at the South Wales Institute of Higher Education.

'40% of the memos [he] received were unsolicited, unwanted, and required no reply'.

But just as people desire to withhold information to create a position of strength, so they withhold it to protect themselves from a position of weakness.

By not communicating they can often avoid becoming implicated in difficult situations. They may be reluctant to communicate for fear of showing the job has grown too much for them, or because they might reveal some personal shortcoming that could result in demotion, or to informal degradation within the company hierarchy. Such fears, I was told, are common among staff 'with no transferable skill and with no motivation to acquire new ones'.

Communication systems are frequently abused to reduce the work load too. I was told that reports were often 'doctored' to give the results of experiments a certain slant and to cut down on the follow-up work required. Information was also manipulated to vindicate company policy, or to reduce the company's liability in the case of a customer complaint. Furthermore, if his superior wanted, or expected, to receive a certain type of information in a certain way, then a writer would frequently bend the truth or bias the report to give his boss what he wanted.

We can all communicate, can't we?

But one of the reasons that people in responsible positions do not want to improve their communication skills, is that they feel they communicate perfectly well already and that improvement is always someone else's responsibility.

It has been aptly said that:

Unlike other job skills, communication is the only one in which almost everybody, including top management, claims amateur status.¹

Unfortunately, few people care to admit this, and those who do are indifferent to the implications of the statement anyway.

One of the main problems in improving communication among

highly educated men who are specialists in a particular field is in eliminating their indiscriminate use of jargon. This verbal shorthand may save time in discussions with fellow specialists, but it makes them virtually unintelligible to their non-specialist colleagues, since this esoteric jargon is understood only by a small elite group, who perpetuate the custom in order to reinforce or maintain their position. Universities are aware of the inability many specialists have in communicating. One professor admitted:

I'm afraid we educate students in this department to communicate only with specialists, and this causes problems when they begin their careers and have to communicate with all sorts of people.²

But universities appear to have no deliberate policy about improving communication skills among the graduates they turn out. Indeed, the scientific and engineering departments I contacted seem to encourage this inefficient system by training students to use jargon and to write in the dense, stilted prose found in specialist technical journals.

However, industry is equally to blame for poor communication skills among its managers. There are no widescale 'in-company' training programmes in communication for newly qualified graduates when they enter a firm, nor refresher courses for more experienced employees. Furthermore, companies have limited expectations about the standard of communication they can expect from their employees. One man claimed

resignedly,

It is not to be expected that those whose function is primarily technological or scientific will be perfect in practising or understanding communication.

This argument, that in our technological era specialists do not need to improve their ability to communicate, is unacceptable.

Conclusion

So there are a number of reasons why people do not want to communicate more effectively. Indeed, some do not want to communicate at all. Most of these are social or psychological reasons and seldom have anything to do with the nature of the job in hand.

There is very little that can be done about this. Certainly training in communication skills won't help alleviate these types of problem. That would mean re-educating people. But while managers are quite well aware of the nature of these problems, few see any feasible solution. Besides, ineffective communication can actually help things run smoothly, can give people room to manoeuvre, to save face and to survive. So, who wants to communicate anyway?

References

- 1 Redding and Sanborn (ed) *Business and Industrial Communication*. Harper and Row. 1966 pp.38-9
- 2 Professor of Physics.

Question for PC-ers

In this article, Dr. Valerie Bram says that deliberately ineffective communication is used consciously by business and professional people as a tool in the struggle for power and survival, and as an ego-support or status symbol.

Is this true of everyone, PC-ers? Do we maintain careers through deception? Do we advance by lying and falsifying?

For the Whole Family

Individual brochures in a university Technology and Society Report Series should be of interest to social, civic, student, consumer, and even professional groups. For example, the 32-page "Auto Safety" discusses Traffic Fatalities:

Traffic Fatalities: A Major Health Problem
History of Auto Safety
S3E: Safety, Economy, Environment, Energy
Research Safety Vehicles
Drunken Driving
Driver Education
55-MPH Speed Limit
Occupant Protection
Air Bags
Testing Restraint Systems
Cost Benefit Analysis
Public Response
Motor Vehicle Safety Standards

Another booklet, "Supermarket Automation," discusses the operation and management of large food stores and the use of automated systems in stores and service industries, including a complete account of the Product Code Number and its black-and-white striped representation.

The Reports are thoughtfully conceived, beautifully designed, carefully written, and excellently illustrated. Covering "particular socio-technological issues and recent developments in technology," they were planned to "provide background information for courses offered . . . from pre-college through graduate levels" and to "contribute to public understanding of problems of current national importance."

To obtain them free of cost, write to the Department of Technology and Society, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, State University of New York at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, New York 11794.

Can You Answer Questions ?

Do you know how to give answers that are direct, precise, and easy to follow--especially after you've given a speech, when your audience wants more information? Leon Fletcher, in "Questions, Anyone?" (The Toastmaster, December 1975) makes the following suggestions:

1. Listen carefully, to catch the intent as well as the content of the question.
2. Repeat the question, so that you and all present will know what was asked.
3. Define terms, to put everyone on the same basis.
4. Present facts as simply and briefly as possible.
5. Give opinion as opinion, but support it with evidence.
6. Relate your answers to your main speech, or to what has been said earlier.
7. Respond directly to argument, maintain your point of view, but don't argue.
8. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so.

9. Recognize as many different members of your audience as possible.

10. Help people to word their questions if they seem to have trouble asking them.

How Do You Listen ?

Augusta C. Yrle and Jean M. Vining write about listening skills in a recent issue of The Toastmaster (January 1979):

When listening, in one-to-one exchanges, in meetings, or at formal presentations,

1. Do you "hear speakers through"?
2. Do you "listen between the lines"?
3. Do you try to remember (or write down) and confirm important points and key phrases?
4. Do you "tune speakers out" when you dislike them, their messages, their tone, or their manner?
5. Do you become hostile or upset when you disagree with a speaker?
6. Do you let yourself be distracted when you should be paying attention?
7. Do you show interest in what is being said, or do you look bored, half-dead, or absent-minded?

Ask yourself these questions. You should answer yes for Nos. 1, 2, and 3, no for Nos. 4, 5, and 6, and split No. 7 down the middle--yes for the first half, no for the second half. If you don't listen now according to this program, start practicing.

Suggestions

Articles in The Toastmaster for October, 1979, contain the following ideas that may help PC-ers:

Thomas Montalbo urges us to use "Tantalizing Speech Titles." Too often we give our talks interest-killing labels, he says. Why not improve a conventional title by making it do one of these things:

ask a question, as in "Why Exercise?"; or

contain words from a familiar quotation, as in "Good Night, Sweet Prince" (from Hamlet); or

show alliteration; as in "Good as Gold" (the same sound starts several words).

* * * * *

Gregory Barrett ("Charting Your Path to Success") says that it's much easier to get where you want to go if you decide on a port of destination before you launch your vessel. Don't sail the vessel of your life at the mercy of wind, tide, and current, he advises.

Instead, answer seven questions honestly and specifically, in writing, and review your actions and intentions at least every week:

1. What goals do I want to reach and why?
2. Do any of these goals conflict?
3. What obstacles exist, and how can I overcome them?
4. What sacrifices am I willing to make?
5. What specific actions must I take?
6. In what order and when must I take these actions?
7. With whom can I form "goal groups"? (i.e., Who can help me, whether they know my goals or not?)

Nuke - Speak

Frank Kotasek, Jr., of East Patchogue, NY, sends the following item of interest:

Science (December 7, 1979) notes that the Double-speak Award given annually by the National Council of Teachers of English was granted in 1979 to the Nuclear Power Industry for meritorious performance by industry spokesmen before, during, and after the accident at Three Mile Island.

William Lutz, Professor of English at Rutgers University and Chairman of NCTE's Double-speak Committee, cited as cause for the award such expressions as

abnormal evolution
normal aberration
plant transient
energetic disassembly (explosion)
rapid oxidation (fire)

Perhaps the most delicate euphemism veiled the fact that plutonium had contaminated the reactor vessel--spokesmen acknowledged that plutonium had "taken up residence" there.

The NCTE gave a special award to incoming Brazilian President Figueiredo, who announced, "I intend to open this country up to democracy, and anyone who is against that I will jail, I will crush."

Professor Lutz called 1979 "a good year for Double-speak."

Pause to Emphasize

In "Applause for the Pause" (The Toastmaster for April 1979), Carole Anne N. Facas points out that silence gets attention, and that well-timed "rests," in speaking as in music, reinforce the sounds which precede and follow them.

It takes courage to use deliberate pauses for the first time, admits this free-lance consultant, and it takes practice to use them effectively. But, she says, speakers who emphasize arguments and separate topics by pausing are more enjoyable, more understandable, and more successful than those who rush through remarks or punctuate speeches with "uhhs."

Visual Aids

The Toastmaster for July 1978, was a special issue devoted to audiovisual presentation. Some of the articles may give PC-ers helpful ideas.

Robert B. Konikow writes on "AV Devices: Which Should You Use?" He discusses and we may consider, for our own particular application, the use of hand-held visuals; opaque and transparency projections; "movies;" and videotapes. Which visual aid is most suitable, most practical, most manageable for any given situation? Whichever you choose, rehearse with it.

* * * * *

Robert McGarvey discusses "How and When to Use Slides." This practical article points out that not all material lends itself well to slide presentation, that a speaker's words and his pictures should be in full partnership, that the slides must be logical and simple, and that slides and speech must be rehearsed together. Furthermore, the speaker must familiarize himself, before the time of his presentation, with the physical aspects of his projector and the room he is to speak in. As far as possible, he should control these to suit his purpose.

* * * * *

Bert Y. Auger, in "Up Front with the Overhead Projector," tells how to put a picture, diagram, etc., on a letter-size transparent film and how to project this onto a large screen to reinforce verbal messages. This is an excellent "do-it-yourself" article for beginners.

Good Usage

How can writers compromise most usefully between slavish adherence to strict rules and impulsive yielding to transient fashion?

Don Bush, in "How to Handle Grammatical Dogma" (Technical Communication, First Quarter 1980), makes a cosmic-view suggestion: We should recognize a "higher law" than strict grammar, he says--

the need for smooth, natural, communicative English, which does indeed observe the highest historical standards but which is written to satisfy both the intelligent reader and the writer himself.

If the writer sounds natural, and avoids a few obvious "pet peeves," the chances are that his writing will be more effective, and the narrow grammatical pedant will never know the difference.

Beyond Speech

Nonverbal Components of Communication:
Paralanguage, Kinesics, Proxemics is a specialized newsletter available from Dr. Rosalyn Lindner, Department of Geography/Sociology, SUNY-Buffalo, 1300 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14222.

Shorter is Better

Ric Cox, a senior editor for The Reader's Digest, talked about "Effective Editing" at a recent national meeting of Agricultural Communicators in Education, according to a report in the ACE Newsletter (September, 1979). In particular, he described somewhat as follows the RD approach to condensing articles:

Editing is the art of improving an article by making it shorter while maintaining, even enhancing, its essence. To make writing better, material that is unessential, unimportant, or uninteresting should be modified or eliminated--paragraphs, sentences, and single words.

An edited article or publication is better than the original because it requires less reading-time, is easier to understand, has more impact, is more enjoyable--the reader isn't distracted and bored by repetitious, uninteresting, or irrelevant material.

The first step in editing is to read and re-read an article as many times as necessary to thoroughly understand its purpose and construction. Your challenge as an editor is to find or create, if necessary, the objective or structure of the article without unduly changing it. Sometimes outlining the material is helpful.

Once you understand the piece and are satisfied with its structure, delete the dull and insignificant material. This sharpens the focus of the piece, giving it greater unity.

Next, provide smooth transitions to fill the gaps left by eliminating sentences or paragraphs. Good transitions are vital and are worth the time it takes to write them.

Work on individual sentences, phrases and words to make the material as concise and smooth-flowing as possible, then correct for grammar and style.

--ACE Newsletter, September, 1979.

Signs of the Times

SYMBOL SOURCEBOOK: An Authoritative Guide to International Graphic Symbols (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972; 8½ x 11, 292 pp., \$34.95).

Symbol Sourcebook, by the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss, is a dictionary of graphic symbols. The collection derives from a "data bank" of 20,000 representations obtained from all over the world. Alphabets, numbers, trademarks, and logos are not included--only "signs" used to give instruction, direction, or warning.

Dreyfuss' symbols do not constitute a language, nor can they easily be used as elements of conversation. Rather, the book was compiled to show what standardized forms exist as universally understandable representations, and to define these forms for the convenience of designers, students and teachers, engineers and manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers, farmers and technicians, and those concerned with safety, shipping, standards, and regulations.

Graphic symbols may be classified as representational (silhouette of man on bicycle), abstract (signs of the zodiac), or arbitrary (musical clef signs). More importantly, however, they may be organized as Dreyfuss has arranged them, in three ways according to the Discipline in which they are used (agriculture, business, photography, religion, etc.), their basic Form (square, circle, arrow, silhouette, etc.), and their Design Category or class of meaning (building signage, in and out, measurement, off and on, pressure, time, etc.)

The list of Disciplines covered is the book's Table of Contents, printed in 18 languages. Introductions, explanations, and legends are in English, as is the Index, which lists the Design Categories alphabetically. Thus a given symbol may be located and identified from knowledge of either its primary meaning or the kind of work or activity it relates to. It can also be found "out of context." In the Graphic Form section, the symbols are grouped according to shape and type of line in a 16-class organization by Key Forms, without regard to meaning. Here all the basically square forms appear together, and each is referenced to its page in the Discipline Section; triangular forms are similarly presented in another group; and so for circles, ellipses, rectangles, U's, V's, etc.

Early in the book, thirty-odd Basic Symbols are shown and ways of combining them are delineated. Near the end of the book, a Section discusses the use of color to convey information and presents a "glossary" of color symbology. The Bibliography Section gives titles of books not limited to any one Discipline; all sources used plus additional material, listed by Discipline; and sources which supplied information on color.

A two-page spread shows the geographic areas from which material was obtained; most importantly, none came from China and parts of southeast Asia, Asia Minor, most of Africa, and a few countries in Central and South America. Dreyfuss further acknowledges the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities, UNESCO, a number of national and international standards organizations, and various governmental Departments of the U.S.

Symbol Sourcebook is an amazingly sophisticated yet easily used reference volume, certainly a significant effort to solve problems of international communication, and to promote international understanding and goodwill.

One interesting flaw is noted by the author, who points out that the book contains no symbols for the simplest of actions: Push and Pull. Unfortunately, he says, these two motions seem to defy obvious graphic delineation. An elephant pushing a tree, a man pulling a rope, positioned hands, abstract designs, isometric arrows--many symbols have been suggested, but all seem limited in application or just plain confusing.

Have you any good ideas, PC-ers?

Knowledge, like timber, is best when well seasoned.

Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere.

When you point a finger at someone, remember--three of your fingers point at you.

Metric Mnemonic or Crawford's Crutch

The following list of equivalents is suggested to help those who have trouble remembering SI prefixes:

10^{18} minations	= 1 examination
10^{15} coats	= 1 petacoat
10^{12} bulls	= 1 terabull
10^9 lows	= 1 gigalow
10^6 phones	= 1 megaphone
2×10^3 mockingbirds	= 2 kilomockingbird
10^2 withits	= 1 hectowithit
10 cards	= 1 decacard
10^{-1} mates	= 1 decimate
10^{-2} mentals	= 1 centimental
10^{-3} cents	= 1 millicent
10^{-6} scopes	= 1 microscope
10^{-9} nannettes	= 1 nanonannette
10^{-12} boos	= 1 picoboo
10^{-15} fatales	= 1 femtofatale
10^{-18} boys	= 1 attoboy

---Dick Crawford in Technical Communication
(Fourth Quarter 1979)

Affect or Effect ?

1. Outward sign, appearance --
2. Result (noun) --
3. To accomplish --
4. To result in or cause to come into being --
5. To feign --
6. To cultivate or make a display of using --
7. To influence or act upon to produce a response --

There are three kinds of people: Those who make things happen; those who just watch things happen; and those who don't know what happens.

It's easier to keep up than to catch up.

You can't come back from where you haven't been.

There isn't much sense in putting your best foot forward if you drag the other one.

Answers

5-7 Affect

1-4 Effect