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Creating and Managing Interactivity II: Conversing for Results

By Jason Palmeri and Paul Tuten

In our last column we discussed setting and revising the agenda to establish an interactive climate for a presentation. In this column we provide five tips for successfully managing interaction *during* a presentation.

1. Use Visuals Flexibly

PowerPoint can be a very effective presentation tool, enabling speakers to clearly organize their presentations and to highlight key points. Yet, if relied on too extensively, PowerPoint slides can kill interactivity. If a speaker's presentation follows the slides to the letter, the audience will tend to view the presentation as a prepared monologue and will hesitate to interrupt with questions that might lead the speaker off-track. Thus, early on in the presentation, speakers should demonstrate a willingness to extend beyond the visuals by referring to information not on the slides or by moving through the presentation nonlinearly. For example, we've witnessed an executive jump around in a deck of slides based upon audience interest or needs. This is a simple trick in PowerPoint, but also an effective (and relatively uncommon) navigation technique.

To do this successfully you must know your presentation topic very well; rather than just practicing with the slides, you should practice having conversations (perhaps with colleagues playing audience members) about your product or service so that you can develop the ability to speak extemporaneously about it. Furthermore, you should come prepared with all the slides you have about your product or service—even if you don't plan to use them. By having a wide variety of slides that you can mix and match on the spot, you are better able to use visuals to support rather than hinder interactivity.

Finally, speakers should be willing to abandon the slides entirely if the conversation moves in a direction not covered. We suggest always having a white board available in addition to the projector. With a white board you can create impromptu visuals to answer unexpected questions. Likewise, in situations in which you and your audience must brainstorm solutions together, you can invite audience members to collaborate in creating a visual with you.

2. Strategically Manage Seating

For small audiences it can be useful to assign seating. Try to put the key decision makers directly in your line of vision, thus encouraging them to see themselves in conversation with you. If there are audience members who you know are hostile to your position, consider putting them outside of the field of vision of the key decision makers. By strategically assigning seats persuasive speakers can direct the flow

(continued on page 5)



Rudy Joenk

Instant Fame

IPCC 2003 is drawing near, 22-24 September, and I offer **INSTANT FAME** to volunteer authors who write just a paragraph or two about some of the presentations they attend. The idea is to capture a point of view, Q&A, discussion, etc. that isn't in the proceedings. Photographers, too, are eligible for this award; up-close shots are best. If all of you reporters and picture takers work fast right after the conference, we might even get the fruit of your labors in the November/December issue (normal deadline is 15 September, before the conference) rather than in the first 2004 issue.

I'm always interested in receiving proposals for single articles or columns. See the information for authors farther along in this column.

AdCom

The final meeting, including the annual election (see p. 4), will be 20-21 September in Lake Buena Vista (Orlando), Florida, prior to IPCC 2003. PCS members are welcome at AdCom meetings. See the summary of the May AdCom meeting on p. 6.

Potpourri

"Indeed, 'Professional Communication' is flawed, principally because few nonmembers will know what it means. But it offers two advantages that thus far no other name can equal. First, it permits latitude and thereby accommodates change in the pursuits of members without a corresponding change of name. Second, it translates well into other languages and consequently can readily be understood by people for whom English is a second language." *Michael Brady, Asker, Norway*

In the May/June *Newsletter* Jean-luc Doumont wrote about receiving an overabundance of e-mail due to loose use of distribution lists and the *reply to all* function. To those causes I add the *automatic forwarding* of incoming messages with replies. There is occasional need to establish a trail of Q&A or the like, but most of the time I don't need to see again the text I just sent out.

The Society for the Preservation of English Language and Literature (SPELL), founded in 1984, "is an organization of people [2000 in North America] who love our language and

are determined to resist its abuse and misuse in the news media and elsewhere." Among other activities, members use *Goof Cards* to cite errors in grammar, usage, and syntax. Visit <http://spellorg.com/>.

A recent (26 May 2003) *Dilbert* cartoon by Scott Adams shows the pointy-haired manager telling Dilbert to summarize a document for their CEO. Dilbert complains that summarizing will "obliterate the persuasiveness" and cost "billions in lost opportunity." The manager's rejoinder is that "being wordy is bad, too."

"While the **question mark** is younger than the period, it is considerably older than the exclamation mark, having developed at some point between the fall of the Roman Empire and the late Middle Ages." It originated in Latin as *quaestio* abbreviated by *q* and a period. Jeff Chapman in *History Magazine*, June/July 2003, p. 7.

Successor to blogs? The *wiki* (Hawaiian for *fast*) has actually been around longer than the blog but "has been used mainly by techies and Internet free spirits." Whereas a blog is typically the diary-like work of a single

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IEEE Professional Communication Society

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Elizabeth Weise Moeller

Community

Community—a word loaded with connotations and meanings for many. For some, communities are large cities. For others, they are small portions of neighborhoods. For still others, they are a physical location, such as a house of worship. In the age of the Internet, many communities are virtual. The key to a community, though, is relevance to its members.

For example, my husband and I volunteer at our son's elementary school, a non-profit organization that has just launched a capital campaign for a new building. The school is a small community of students, parents, and friends; the response, however, is overwhelming. When the board of trustees comes to the parents and asks for help with a task, there is always someone to help with a smile. When I drop my son off at school in the morning, I have a chance to talk to other parents. Sometimes it is just a friendly hello, sometimes it is a mini-committee meeting, other times it is an in-depth discussion of an upcoming event. The school is a community—a community of students and their families. It is one of the primary reasons we chose to send our son to this school.

PCS is also a community—a community of engineering, education, and communication professionals who all share a common goal: clearly communicating to their respective audiences. In my last column I discussed the society's goals. The administrative committee (AdCom) then used those goals as a springboard for find-

ing a way to better build the PCS community, just as the first sentence of our mission statement now says: *To foster a community dedicated to understanding and promoting effective communication in engineering, scientific, and other technical environments.*

...to facilitate information sharing and discussion of best practices.

Community was the theme of our AdCom meeting in Dallas, Texas, 17-18 May. Our discussions focused on how we can foster a community and what we need to do to bring our members closer

together and to facilitate information sharing and discussion of best practices among our members. Our membership is diverse. Many are practicing engineers, some are technical communicators, and some are educators. We need to find a way to facilitate discussions within special interest groups and across disciplines.

The *Transactions* and the *Newsletter* do a fantastic job of getting information to both researchers and practitioners. We know, though, that they do not reach all of our audiences. Electronic communities, where special topic or regional groups can be formed, is the direction we are heading. There will be online places for researchers, educators, and practitioners to communicate with each other discussing items of interest, sharing best practices, and asking for assistance with a project.

Another way to foster community is the annual conference. IPCC 2003 has been announced and the program is fantastic. If you haven't had a

chance to take a look, visit <http://www.ieeepcs.org/conference/> for more information. IPCC 2003 will take place at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in September. If you feel session topics are missing from that venue, please contact the program chair (g.hayhoe@ieee.org) for IPCC 2004 to propose a paper or panel for the Minneapolis conference.

With close to 40 percent of our membership outside the United States, we are looking for a way for the international community to communicate with each other as well. Our idea includes building virtual chapters online. These would be online discussion forums specifically dedicated to issues of interest to those outside the U.S. They could be regionalized (e.g., Europe, Latin America, Asia) or they could be topic-oriented (e.g., document localization issues, crossing borders with documentation, etc.). The goal is to best find a way for everyone to communicate about issues important to them.

With these communities, comes the need to address privacy. I have appointed a subcommittee of the AdCom to research and create a privacy policy for PCS and our electronic ventures. We have no interest in selling e-mail addresses. And, with the current spam problem, we will do everything in our power to protect e-mail addresses. In addition, we expect the same courtesy from participants.

I know that many of us left the AdCom meeting energized and ready to move forward on those ideas. I

have been back home for only three days and have already heard of progress in some areas. Watch the Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/>) and your e-mail. If you have pro-

gramming skills (specifically PHP) that you would like to share, please let us know. I'm really looking forward to the future of PCS. I think it will benefit us all.

AdCom Election Notice

The Professional Communication Society administrative committee consists of 18 members, each elected to a three-year term. Six members are elected annually, three by the members of the society at large, and three by the current AdCom.

AdCom members are volunteers who work to assure that our society serves its members, the IEEE, and the field of technical and professional communication. The society Web site contains information about candidates standing for election to the 2004-2006 term (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/candidates.htm>).

Members of PCS should cast their votes for the candidates of their choice by 1 September at <http://www.ieeepcs.org/voting.php3>. If you cannot access information on the Web site, please request a printed ballot and information about candidates by 1 August from:

George Hayhoe
106 Buckingham Mews
Macon, GA 31220-8762 USA

Completed ballots must be post-marked by 1 September.

George Hayhoe is a member of the AdCom and program chair for IPCC 2004.

Want Some Recognition?

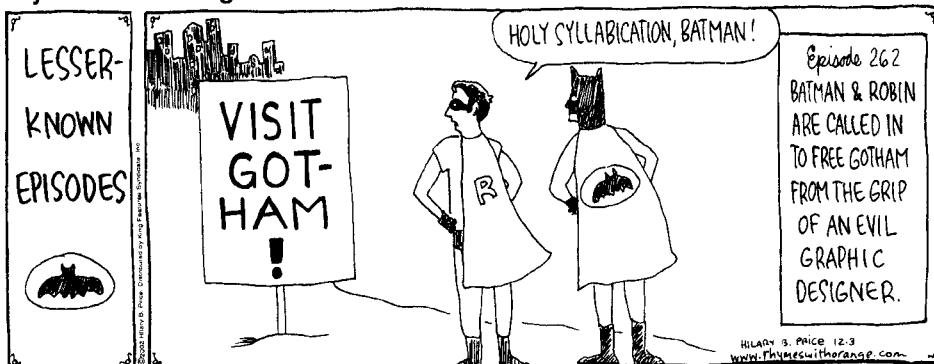
By Bill Albing

If you're an IEEE member, one way to get some recognition is to apply for Senior Member status. If you work in an IEEE-designated field and have been in professional practice for at least 10 years (with significant performance over at least five of those years), you are eligible. That sounded daunting to me, but this past November I applied. By means of my resume, a list of accomplishments in the field, and references by three Senior Members in IEEE, I was awarded the honor. You can be, too.

Besides being acknowledged by IEEE with this new status, you receive an impressive wood and bronze plaque and a USD 25 gift certificate toward a new society membership; you also become eligible to hold executive IEEE volunteer positions. A letter to my employer was the high point. If you have any questions about the process, feel free to e-mail me. (You can even use me as one of your references.) The forms are available on the Web: <http://www.ieee.org/organizations/rab/md/smelev.htm>. For more information or help in completing the forms contact (PCS) bill.albing@ieee.org.

Rhymes With Orange

by Hilary B. Price



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Best Headlines—

- Miners Refuse to Work After Death
- Man Struck by Lightning Faces Battery Charge

Creating and Managing Interactivity II

(continued from page 1)

of the conversation to ensure that it meets their persuasive objective (e.g., closing the sale or gaining support for the project).

3. Ask Knowledgeable Questions

When encountering a reticent audience, ask them questions about their interests and needs to engage them in the conversation. But you must be careful not to ask questions that are too basic as you might inadvertently suggest that you don't know enough about the customer. Rather, begin your questions by stating what you do know about the customer and then ask for clarifications or details. Also, be aware of the political implications of asking certain questions; your questions should engage the audience but not elicit an undesired response.

Video-conferencing is not necessarily a positive.

such technical issues can be overcome, the question remains whether video conferencing enhances the persuasive message.

Having delivered countless video conference presentations, Paul's experience suggests that it does little to enhance interactivity; in fact, audiences tend to be more subdued in a video conferencing environment. People are accustomed to carrying on conversations in person or on the phone, but they may have little experience conversing through video. For many people it seems unnatural to dialogue with a talking head on television

(despite evidence to the contrary provided by those individuals who rant at TV pundits or coach their favorite sport teams from their recliner). Thus many audiences' first response to a presentation given via video conference is to sit back and watch the show. Unless you know that your audience is very comfortable and experienced with interacting in video conferences, you should arrange an in-person meeting or default to the older (yet more familiar) technology of teleconferencing.

5. Make the Environment Comfortable

Audiences are much more likely to engage in conversation if they are comfortable and relaxed. If the presentation is lengthy, schedule breaks in which you provide a variety of beverage and snack choices (making sure to accommodate special dietary

requirements). Then, during these breaks, make an effort to meet each audience member individually. In view of the reality that people buy from (and are persuaded by) speakers whom they like, these informal conversations can be a great way to build relationships. Moreover, individual conversations can provide more reticent audience members with a chance to ask questions they may not have volunteered in the larger group.

Paul, an AT&T employee and information systems doctoral student, is a subject matter expert and frequent presenter on networking technologies, specifically virtual private networks. Jason is an experienced professional writer/trainer and a graduate student in rhetoric and professional communication at Ohio State University. Paul can be reached at tuten@nova.edu; Jason is available at palmeri.2@osu.edu.

Engineer's Terminology—

- *Customer satisfaction is delivered assured:* We are so far behind schedule the customer is happy to get it delivered.
- *Give us the benefit of your thinking:* We'll listen to what you have to say as long as it doesn't interfere with what we've already done.
- *Test results were extremely gratifying:* We are so surprised that the stupid thing works.

Highlights of the May AdCom Meeting

By Jean-luc Doumont

With several of us on the administrative committee (AdCom) attending the 50th STC conference in Dallas, Texas, on 19-21 May, we decided to put on our hats and boots and convene the AdCom there just before the conference on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 May. In this way we could not only reduce travel but also install and staff the PCS booth at the conference in an attempt to attract new members by explaining first-hand the benefits of belonging to PCS. The weather was nice and warm but, as usual, we did not get much chance to set foot outside the meeting room — why, we even worked through lunches and dinners!

Having decided to end our name-change efforts soon after our January teleconference meeting, we focused this time on how to accomplish better the mission that we redefined last year. As always, but perhaps more so now because of our dwindling membership, we strove to maximize what members get out of belonging to PCS.



Besides the usual reports from our treasurer and our conference chairs, among others, we devoted our attention to fostering virtual communities through an improved concept of electronic communication.

Treasurer's Report

Organizations worldwide feel the impact of the economic recession, and PCS is no exception. Unsurprisingly, our financial picture remains alarming with low reserves and a declining number of members. IEEE as a whole is recovering slowly, though, thanks in part to such successful initiatives as their electronic library.

On the argument that “you’ve got to spend money to make money,” treasurer Steve Robinson submitted for the first time a deficit budget for the year 2004. The deficit corresponds to our investing in new initiatives such as Web education. Although a deficit budget goes against established practice, we trust that the IEEE will understand our point of view and approve the budget.

Conferences

If you have not done so yet, check out the preliminary program for IPCC 2003 at <http://www.ieeepcs.org/conference/>. Chair Sherry Steward and program chair Paul Dombrowski came up

*Jean-luc Doumont
(secretary),
Ed Clark (vice president)*

with an impressive line-up of presentations and workshops. Whether you are a professional communicator or a communicating professional, Orlando, Florida, is the place to be in September 2003, with registration and workshops starting on Sunday 21, and the conference running till Wednesday 24. The conference Web site also allows you to register online (before 15 August to get the early registration discount) and provides a handy form to reserve your room at the Coronado Springs Resort.

Future conferences are right on track, too. IPCC 2004 will take us to Minneapolis, Minnesota, from 28 September till 2 October. Among other plans, conference chair Bernadette Longo is arranging a banquet at the splendid Weisman museum. Then plan to join us in Ireland in July 2005. Through close collaboration with the University of Limerick, conference chair Marj Davis is securing very affordable accommodations and planning interesting side activities. If you have never enjoyed the beautiful landscapes and rich heritage of Ireland, why not make it a combined conference-vacation trip for you and your family?

Fostering Virtual Communities

AdCom meetings in 2002 attempted to define better whom PCS serves and resulted in a revised mission statement: *To foster a community dedicated to understanding and promoting effective communication in*

engineering, scientific, and other technical environments. Because our members are scattered around the world, local chapters, no matter how desirable, are unrealistic. Virtual communities seem a more feasible and no less useful endeavor.

During the meeting we identified four major communities to which an improved Web portal should cater: society members and affiliates in general, researchers in our fields of interest, practitioners and educators, and—for lack of a better phrase—“those who seek help.” A first Web

area would be devoted to society operations, much like our current Web site. A second area would, for example, inform researchers of “who is doing what” and encourage collaboration and information sharing through, among other means, an online forum. A third area would address both technical communicators and professionals such as engineers with links to existing resources (such as PCS publications) and to additional ones, as well as an online forum for educators. Finally, a fourth area would promote our services:

workshops, advice from experts, perhaps a job bank, and so on.

Future Meetings

Our last AdCom meeting for 2003 will take place in conjunction with IPCC 2003 in Orlando, Florida, on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 September. All PCS members are welcome to attend AdCom meetings. Interested in seeing your leadership at work? Just get in touch with the PCS secretary for practical arrangements.

Jean-luc Doumont is PCS secretary; jl.doumont@ieee.org.



Bill Albing
(membership)



No, this 1620-room edifice wasn't the AdCom meeting site but it was host to the STC conference.

George Hayhoe ensures an AdCom meeting is not without its pleasures.



No, this 1.6 million sq. ft. building wasn't our meeting site either. The Infomart in Dallas, just a few blocks from our meeting site, is billed as the world's largest technology community; it houses a mix of technical companies, data centers, telecom switches, fiber optic networks, and offices.

Marj Davis
(IPCC 2005)



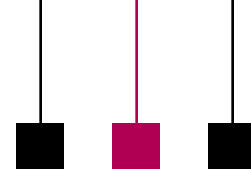
The AdCom meeting site, across Market Center Blvd. from the Wyndham.



Bernadette Longo (volunteers; IPCC 2004), **Julia Williams** (education), **Sherry Steward** (IPCC 2003)

George Hayhoe (nominations), **Bob Krull** (awards), **Marj Davis** (IPCC 2005), **Larry Strianese** (Web master)





From the Editor

(continued from page 2)

author, many authors contribute to a wiki, which resembles a bare bones Web page without HTML, graphics, etc. For an example see <http://wiki.pedia.com>. Amy Cortese in *The New York Times*, 19 May 2003.

Other than being a fear of heights, *Acrophobia* is an early-days-of-the-Internet game that is being revived. “The object of this multiplayer game is to create witty phrases [i.e., acronyms] that fit randomly generated combinations of three to seven letters.” For examples see <http://www.acrochallenge.com> and <http://www.uproar.com>. Pamela LiCalzi O’Connell in *The New York Times*, 22 May 2003.

You may know that *Esperanto* is an “international auxiliary language” developed in 1887 but what is *Tengwar*? Visit <http://omniglot.com>.

Did you ever know the meaning of a word but not be able to pronounce it? Or the name of a foreign diplomat? The Web is host to dictionaries that have audio icons that respond with a vocalization of some words. My favorite—and probably this is tongue in cheek—is the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm>) treatment of *nuclear*. There are three audio icons: The first and second pronounce the word as you expect it in male and female voices, respectively; the third responds with *nuc-u-lar*! For foreign names try <http://ibb7.ibb.gov/pronunciations>. This site also has a subscription dictionary of general

words for USD 1.95 per month or USD 12.95 per year.

Information for Authors

One thousand words makes a nice page-and-a-half article, though longer and shorter articles may be appropriate. Proposals for periodic columns are also welcome. Write about what you know, things that you’re familiar with. If you live outside North America, consider writing about technical communication in your country. You needn’t be a PCS member to contribute.

If you use a wp program, **keep your formatting simple**; multiple fonts and sizes, customized paragraphing and line spacing, personalized styles, etc. have to be filtered out before being recoded in Newsletter style. Headers, footers, and tables lead the casualty list. **Embed only enough formatting and highlighting (bold-face, italics, bullets) to show me your preferences.**

If you borrow text—more than a fair-use sentence or two—from previously published material, you are responsible for obtaining

written permission for its use. Ditto for graphics. Always give credit to the author or artist.

The *Newsletter* issues on our Web site (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/newsletter.html>) can be used as examples. Issues are posted about one month after distribution of the print version and now have active e-mail, Web, and table-of-contents links.

I prefer to receive articles by e-mail; most WordPerfect, Word, RTF (rich text format), and ASCII files are acceptable. My addresses are in the boilerplate at the bottom of p. 2 along with our copyright notice.

Deadlines

The 15th day of each odd-number month is the deadline for publication in the succeeding odd-number month. For example, the deadline is 15 September for the November/December issue, 15 November for the January/February 2004 issue, etc. You won’t be far off (and never late) if you observe the Ides of September, November, January, and so on.

Haiku Error Messages—

Chaos reigns within.
Reflect, repent, and reboot.
Order shall return.

Yesterday it worked.
Today it is not working.
Windows is like that.

If this copy of the *Newsletter* you’re reading isn’t yours, consider joining the Professional Communication Society as either a member of the IEEE and PCS or an affiliate of PCS. Visit our Web page (<http://www.ieeepcs.org/membership.htm>) for information; applications are online. On the other hand, if this copy is yours, please lend it to a friend.

Deadlines are the 15th of the odd-number months.

King of English

By Michael Brady

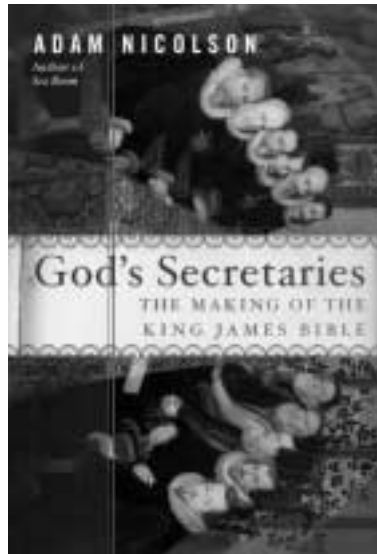
Of all the great books of the English language, the *King James Bible* stands out. Not even the collected works of William Shakespeare, who was alive when the King James Bible was published in 1611, can match its influence on the growth of the language. Through the centuries, this book speaks to the mind as no other.

How this came about is the principal theme of English historian Adam Nicolson's engrossing account, published last spring in the U.S. and in the U.K.* The political background is historical record. In 1603 King James VI of Scotland ascended the throne of England

as King James I. At the time, religion and politics were entwined, and strife between religious factions was commonplace throughout Europe. James immediately set out to stem the strife and thereby unite England.

He was the right man for the task. Baptized Catholic but raised by Scottish Presbyterians, he had been trained from birth to deal with rival

political factions. His solution is the first known example of rhetorical teamwork: Assembling a group from across the tumultuous clergy, from the established Church of England to the Puritans, he charged them with the monumental task of creating a new translation of the Bible.



The goal was not merely the book, as there had been two previous translations into the vernacular, that of 1382 by Oxford scholar John Wycliffe and his followers and that of 1525-1535 by cleric William Tyndale, who had been inspired to the task after visiting Martin Luther at Wittenberg in 1524.

This new translation was to uplift and unite. That it did, with phrasings of beauty and godliness that had never been heard in the street.

The newness was a result of the teamwork that James had initiated. The translators worked in six groups, based at Cambridge, Oxford, and Westminster. They initiated editorial routine by working in ledgers, in which drafts were written on the left and comments and revisions on the right. A draft would be read aloud, and a team would listen and comment. That was another first and perhaps the key to the enduring power of the book that still reads like no other.

Aside from the work itself, the translator-writers left few records of their doings. Yet the remnant records might ring true if written today. One group quarreled incessantly about language. One member of the Cambridge group left a 95-page, 5-in. by 6-in. diary, written not about his work but rather of his penchant for earthly delights. Others left tidbits that have been reconstructed to picture the times and the monumental scope of the task.

Indeed, in his account of the seven-year-long efforts of a group of 47 nigh anonymous, pedantic, self-serving, often drunk divines in creating the *King James Bible*, Adam Nicolson may have provided a clue as to why English, the vernacular of tribes of quarrelsome peasants living on islands off the west coast of Europe, became a world language.

Microwave Exhibit

The IEEE Virtual Museum (VM) has launched a new exhibit, *Microwaves: From Your Kitchen to the Edges of the Universe*. This exhibit highlights the various ways microwave technology impacts daily life and, like all VM exhibits, explains how the technology works and fits into historical and social contexts. *Microwaves* was sponsored and largely written by the IEEE Microwave Theory and Techniques Society. The museum is at <http://www.ieee.org/museum>.

* Adam Nicolson, *God's Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*, New York, Harper Collins, April 2003, 304 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0-06-018516-3, USD 24.95; published in Britain under the title *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible*, London, Harper Collins, April 2003, 282 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0-00-710893-1, GBP 18.99.



Peter Reimold and Cheryl Reimold

Tips for Making Writing Easier

Part 3: Focus on Your Key Message

In the last two columns we discussed quick ways to structure your writing to ensure that you tell your readers what they want to know in a format they can easily follow. Now we come to the writing itself: putting one word after the other. To choose the best words and place them in the most readable order, focus on your message. *What exactly are you trying to say?* If you find yourself getting tangled up in fuzzy words and complicated structures, stop and ask yourself just that: What am I trying to say? Don't write a thing until you are satisfied with your answer. Then try the following suggestions.

Trust your voice.

Don't just trust it—use it. Say your sentences to yourself (quietly!) before you commit them to the paper or screen. Mouth them, whisper them; utter them any way you choose but do not put them on paper until you have *heard* them. After a while you will find that you hear them in your mind as you write them. Then you can dispense with the embarrassing mumbles.

This is the most important rule for clear and simple writing. Almost all the puffy polysyllabic verbiage people produce in the name of business or technical writing would never arrive to torture its readers if the writers had been forced to say the message out loud first. Can you imagine yourself saying, "Per our discussion, enclosed are copies of the documents referenced in our conference paper"? Of course not! You would probably say, "Here are the three articles you

requested," and then list the titles, thus giving the reader more information in much easier language.

Don't worry about sounding too informal if you trust your voice. Inappropriate or inelegant words will jump out at you as you read over your piece (which you must always do). In the example you might have said, "Here are the three articles you asked to see." Although this is still not nearly as bad as the original pompous statement, it could be smoother. Check your action words. If you find strings of small words (like *asked to see*), try to substitute a single verb (like *requested*).

Put your main thought in the main parts of the sentence: the *subject*, *verb*, and *object*.

Because we tend to think and speak directly, you will usually follow this rule if you trust your voice. Overcomplicated, wordy writing almost always violates it. It is an easy rule to test, and it can clarify your sentences most wonderfully. Here is an example.

The fact that we rewarded all ideas in the brainstorming meeting had the effect of inducing more solutions.

Here the subject is *fact*, the verb *had*, and the object *effect*. The result—*fact had effect*—is meaningless. Let's try a rewrite.

Rewarding all ideas in the brainstorming meeting produced more solutions.

Here the subject is *rewarding*, the verb *produced*, and the object *solutions*. The result—*rewarding produced solutions*—captures the essence of the sentence.

Put the most important words at the end of the sentence.

In English, the last words get the most emphasis. To get the reader to focus on the main point of your sentence, try to put it there. Consider some famous sentences:

To be or not to be, that is *the question* (Shakespeare).
When you come to a fork in the road, *take it* (attributed to Yogi Berra).

Either that wallpaper goes, or *I do* (said to be the last words of Oscar Wilde).

Now look what happens if we reverse the order:

The question is whether to be or not to be.
Take a fork in the road when you come to it.
Either I go or that wallpaper does.

Enough said.

Cheryl and Peter Reimold have been teaching communication skills to engineers, scientists, and business people for more than 20 years. Their firm, PERC Communications (+1 914 725 1024, perccom@aol.com), offers businesses consulting and writing services, as well as customized in-house courses on writing, presentation skills, and on-the-job communication skills. Visit their Web site at <http://www.allaboutcommunication.com>.

To choose the best words and place them in the most readable order, focus on your message.



Jean-luc Doumont

Take a Left at the White House

During a recent short vacation on the beautiful island of Madeira, my wife and I were trying to locate a *levada*, one of those narrow watercourses that irrigate the cultivated terraces and serve as the island's main network of walking trails. Noticing at a glance that we had some trouble reconciling the landscape we saw with the sketchy map and unclear instructions in our travel guide, a passerby kindly volunteered some directions. We do not speak Portuguese, but with our knowledge of French and Spanish (and some remnants of school Latin), we figured that he wanted us to take a left at the white house in the village just above us. As I thanked the man and turned around to make way toward the village, I noticed with some dismay that half of its houses were white. Which one did he mean?

The directions we had received might qualify as what my wife (who deals with the breed a lot and is married to one) calls a "consultant's answer": intrinsically correct, seemingly satisfactory, and practically useless. Still, in contrast to the many charlatans out there, our Madeira consultant did not mean to mystify us. Surely, which white house he meant was obvious to him; it did not occur to him that it might not be obvious to us. On a similar note, my mother-in-law built herself a reputation in the family for dinner-table utterances such as, "Oh, I met what's-his-name at the grocery store this morning and he said to say hello." No one has a clue whom she means.

The most fundamental challenge: putting oneself in the shoes of the audience.

Inconsequential as it was, the *levada* incident is yet another illustration of what must be the most fundamental challenge of communication: putting oneself in the shoes of the audience. Those of us who teach communication have probably advised their students many times over to "adapt to their audience." Looking back at many years of teaching, I find that this wise recommendation is something of a consultant's answer, too: "Why, sure," many students readily agree, finding the statement obvious.

Yet it may take many years before they fully assimilate it—and live by it.

Once we perceive a possible meaning in a text or picture, it is difficult to perceive any other or even to imagine that other people

might perceive another meaning—all the more so for the texts or pictures we create, for we already know the intended meaning. Sometimes we can track ambiguities a priori with a test audience, as in usability testing, but often we can only note the damage a posteriori, if at all. Quite a challenge indeed.

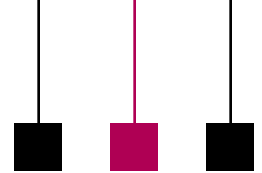
Paradoxically, the Madeira resident who so kindly offered us help went out of his way to adapt to the foreigners we are. Guessing that we spoke little or no Portuguese, he clarified the color of the house he referred to (apparently an important clue) by grabbing the sleeve of my white T-shirt, adding something that must have meant "white like this." Alas, this useful clarification that "casa branca" meant the same as the Spanish "casa blanca" did not suffice.

The *levada* incident nicely illustrates another fundamental principle: the need for effective redundancy. As usual when I must understand an unfamiliar language or accent, I kept my eyes on the speaker, to make the most of his lip movements and facial expressions, and did not turn my head when he pointed at "the white house" above my shoulder—heck, I know a white house when I see one. My wife did look, and could thus save the day ("You know, I think he pointed at *that* white house, over there").

Effective redundancy, however, suggests that the message be conveyed unambiguously in *each* channel—only then can it withstand losses in one channel as a result of noise. For example, an *effective* oral presentation enables blind or deaf audience members to understand, perhaps not all the details, but at least the main messages: Both the spoken text and the visuals should stand on their own, even if they work together in synergy.

Speakers who merely explain their visuals, not unlike museum guides explaining paintings, are like our Madeira benefactor: They lose any audience member taking notes and not seeing what they point at when they say, for example, "This number here is our target for 2004."

Dr. Jean-luc Doumont teaches and provides advice on professional speaking, writing, and graphing. For over 15 years, he has helped audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and nationalities structure their thoughts and construct their communication (<http://www.JLConsulting.be>).



Ronald J. Nelson

Ernie Pyle: War Correspondent

These days—after the liberation-occupation of Iraq and the elimination of Saddam Hussein and his henchmen—seem particularly apt for remembering the war correspondent Ernie Pyle (1900-1945). His humanizing influence, which pervades his every column, speaks to the needs of civilized people—who of course are, on occasion, quite capable of brutality.

The interested professional communicator might invest in his or her own better instincts by purchasing James Tobin's marvelous book, *Ernie Pyle's War: America's Eyewitness to World War II* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1997), which won the National Book Critics Circle Award for 1998. Therein lies a tale well worth the telling. Therein also lies a style well worth the imitating.

Tobin masterfully calls attention to Pyle's contributions and suggests how he achieved his effects. In general, Pyle gave his readers "a way of seeing the war that skirted despair and stopped short of horror. His published version of World War II had become the nation's version" (p. 4). Working for the *Washington Daily News*, Pyle had to produce copy that had "brevity and punch" (p. 14). As a result of his ability to accomplish that goal, he became known for his "efficiency and simplicity": He was "one of the cleanest writers" according to one editor and had "a very orderly mind" according to another (p. 15). He also developed a "poor devil" personal style of writing that has an

admirable integrity about it, along the lines of "I hope I can get this straight, altho it's going to be a little difficult..." (p. 21). This occasional "aw shucks" approach, of course, has limited usefulness in technical documents; yet there is an engaging integrity about it that invites the reader into the situation in a direct, comfortable way. Professional communicators can find ways to ease the reader into points, without putting a shoot of alfalfa between their teeth.

As important as clarity was to Pyle, he strove for other qualities in his writing: "Few readers guessed how carefully he attended to the cadence of a sentence or the choice of a word." Pyle told Lee Miller, "You'll probably think I've gone nuts...but lots of times when I'm describing some scene or feeling, I try to make it sound almost like music, and I think sometimes it does, and I think it does to readers, even though they may not be specifically conscious of it" (p. 32). He clearly had a feel for the natural rhythm of sentences and for the value of the sound of words—points worth remembering for every writer. He also had an uncanny knack for reading situations and people, for example, the character of Londoners during the blitz: "You get it in the attitude of people, you get it in the casual way common folks talk, you get it just by looking around and seeing people going about their business." His use of anaphora ("you get it") in the previous sentence hammers home his sure take on the mettle of

the British. And he had a gift for driving home the point with simple examples: His hotel maid said, "I'll never forgive that old Hitler if he gives us a blitz on Christmas Day" (p. 57).

Returning to Albuquerque, New Mexico, in March of 1941, Pyle contributed an epilogue to a collection of his British columns, entitled *Ernie Pyle in England*. It masterfully addresses "the illusory distance between peace and war":

The long trip home is done. The wars are far distant, and over the desert there hangs an infinity of space and time that seems put here to prohibit any contemplation of giant struggles far away.

It is so quiet out here just at dawn. I don't know what, but something awakens us—the silence or the gen-



Pyle learned the reporting trade and developed his writing style during four years as the Washington Daily News aviation correspondent, flying 100 000 miles and writing more than 1.5 million words. From Ernie Pyle's War by James Tobin; used with permission of the Ernie Pyle State Historic Site and the Scripps Howard Foundation.



Pyle in Normandy. From Ernie Pyle's War by James Tobin; used with permission of the Ernie Pyle State Historic Site and the Scripps Howard Foundation.

tleness—something awakens us just at daybreak. And we get up, and watch the light come softly over the

bare Sandias to the east, and it is a perfect hour. The little birds hop from the sage-filled mesa at daylight, and they come over into our yard and they peck in the fresh earth (p.59).

Here simultaneously is an appreciation of life in its mundane yet precious ways, as well as an awareness of the lurking horrors that threaten the planet.

Pyle, of course, was at his best in his columns. In one from Tunisia, dated April 8, 1943, he begins this way: “The war correspondents over here seldom write about themselves, so it may be interesting if I try to tell you how we live” (p. 255). He briefly speaks of those correspondents who live in the city to the rear [Algiers],

who “live a life that is pretty close to normal. They live in hotels or apartments, eat at restaurants or officers’ messes, work regular hours, get laundry done, dress in regulation uniforms, keep themselves clean, and get their news from communiqués and by talking to staff officers at headquarters” (p. 255).

Then, with unassailably clear logic, Pyle tells the reader that the correspondents whom he favors are embedded in the action: “Since their [those in Algiers] lives are closely akin to the lives of newspapermen at home, we’ll deal here only with the correspondents as they live at the front” (p. 255). And in doing so, Pyle’s writing becomes transformed into poetic prose that Henry David Thoreau would have admired. Here is a healthy sample for your reading pleasure:

The outstanding thing about life at the front is its magnificent simplicity. It is a life consisting only of the essentials—food, sleep, transportation, and what little warmth and safety you can manage to wangle out of it by personal ingenuity.

Ordinarily, when life is stripped to the bare necessities it is an empty life and a boring one. But not at the front. Time for me has never passed so rapidly. You’re never aware of the day of the week, and a whole month is gone before you know it.

Up here the usual responsibilities and obligations are gone. You don’t have appointments to keep. Nobody cares how you look.

Too, it is a healthy life. During those winter months I was constantly miserable from the cold, yet paradoxically I’ve never felt better in my life. The cold wind burns your face to a deep tan, and your whole system gets toughened.

It is a life that gives you a new sense of accomplishment. In normal life, all the little things are done for us. I make my money by writing, and then use that money to hire people

to wash my clothes, shine my shoes, make my beds, clean the bathtub, fill my gas tank, serve my meals, carry my bags, build my fires.

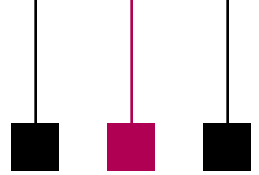
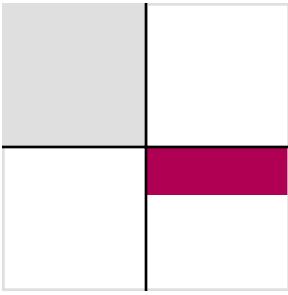
But not up here. You do everything yourself. You are suddenly conscious again that you can do things.

And last, and probably most important of all, is that you have a feeling of vitality. You are in the heart of everything, and you are a part of it. You don’t feel like an onlooker; you feel that you’re a member of the team (p. 255).

Near the end of this particular column, he captures the essence of his experience there:

I’ve written in the past that war is not romantic when you’re in the midst of it. Nothing has happened to change my feeling about that. But I will have

“[Pyle] clearly had a feel for the natural rhythm of sentences and for the value of the sound of words.”



to admit there is an exhilaration in it; an inner excitement that builds up into a buoyant tenseness which is seldom achieved in peacetime (p. 256).

Here is a man who thrives on being part of the action.

Pyle concludes the column in a way that evokes thoughts of those “embedded” correspondents in Iraq, as well as the way it used to be:

In the past no restrictions were put on us; we could go anywhere we pleased at any time. But things are gradually changing, as the established machinery of war catches up with us. There’s a new rule that correspondents can’t go into the front

lines unless accompanied by an officer. Maybe that’s a good rule. I don’t know. But there are about two dozen of us who will feel ourselves in the odd position of being conducted through our own house (p. 256).

Pyle’s admiration for the infantrymen pervades his columns and suggests why he was universally loved by the troops. In another dispatch from Tunisia, dated May 1, 1943, he says, “Now to the infantry—the God-damned infantry, as they like to call themselves”:

I love the infantry because they are the underdogs. They are the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They have no comforts, and they even learn to

live without the necessities. And in the end they are the guys that wars can’t be won without (p. 257).

Never mind the point-of-view shifts and the ending of a sentence with a preposition. Here is writing that is alive and that conveys the feel of the war. His accessible tone, his absolute honesty, his determination to present the truth of the situation—these are the traits that we come away with when we read Ernie Pyle. These are the traits that will ensure integrity in our own writing.

Ron Nelson is a professor of English at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807; +1 540 568 3755, fax +1 540 568 2983; nelsonrj@jmu.edu.

Invitation from Moscow

I am informing you that this year we are preparing to commemorate some important dates:

- 50th anniversary of foundation of our Institute of Radioengineering and Electronics of the Russian Academy of Sciences
- 95th birthday of Professor Vladimir Kotelnikov
- 70th anniversary of Kotelnikov’s sampling theorem

It is widely known that the Institute made great contributions to the development of modern radioelectronics and communications and in the early 1950s established and

developed beneficial and fruitful long-term cooperation with the IEEE.

IEEE Life Fellow Vladimir Kotelnikov is a dean of the Russian communication scientists and engineers and his sampling theorem has marked the beginning of new directions in science and technology such as digital systems, information control, coding, and information processing.

These three events deserve to be well celebrated. We invite you to come to Moscow to participate in a session of the Research Council of the Institute, a conference, and other events devoted to these special occasions.

The preliminary date of our meeting and conference is September-October 2003. The exact dates of our events will be sent to you later.

—*Prof. Yuri Gulyaev*
Director, IRE RAS
President, Russian Popov Society
Chair, IEEE Russia Section

So... You Think You Know Everything?

- Two-thirds of the world’s egg-plant is grown in New Jersey.
- In England, the Speaker of the House is not allowed to speak.

Hopefully

By Michael Quinion

There are few issues of usage that are as contentious as the matter of *hopefully*; almost every modern style guide contains a paragraph warning of the objections of conservative grammarians to it. The objection is not to the word itself: It has been used for centuries in the sense of “in a hopeful manner; with a feeling of hope” (the *Oxford English Dictionary* records its first use from 1639) and there’s nothing controversial in employing it like this, for example, in the proverb “It is better to travel hopefully than to arrive.” What has alarmed and annoyed language purists is its comparatively modern appearance in the sense of “it is to be hoped that,” as in “Hopefully, we’ll win the contract,” or “Hopefully, it won’t rain on the parade.”

The objection is not only to *hopefully*, though that word has suffered more than most, but to the 20th century fashion for a set of such words—which grammarians often call sentence adverbs—in which the word refers not just to one part of a sentence but to the whole construction. Such adverbs are usually (but not by any means always) the first word in the sentence, and are often marked off with a comma from what follows. There are perhaps a dozen or so that people use in this way, including *frankly* (“Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn”), *strictly* (“Strictly, one ought not to use this construction”), *thankfully* (“Thankfully, the surfboard missed his head”), and *actually* (“Actually,

I don’t really like taramasalata”). In grammatical terms they’re elliptical forms that abbreviate a comment into a single word. As we’ve seen, *hopefully* is short for “it is to be hoped that,” *thankfully* can be rephrased as “by good fortune” or “as luck would have it,” *frankly* as “to speak frankly,” and so on. It’s the compactness of these forms that’s their attraction, one that seems to fit our hurried modern lifestyle.

Though sentence adverbs came into the language in earnest in the 20th century, it’s possible to find older examples. Fielding employed *luckily* in *Tom Jones* in 1749: “Luckily, he had fallen into more merciful hands.” Charles Darwin wrote in a letter in 1847, “Oddly, I was never at all staggered by this theory until now.” Jane Austen also used *luckily* in *Mansfield Park* in 1814: “Luckily, the strength of the piece did not depend upon him.” Virginia Woolf turned *mercifully* into a sentence adverb in *To the Lighthouse* (1927): “Mercifully, he turned sharp, and rode off, to die gloriously she supposed upon the heights of Balaclava.”

The dispute is comparatively recent. Even the second edition of Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* of 1965 has no entry for sentence adverbs, let alone *hopefully*. In the U.S. the tirade against it began around that date, reached a peak in the 1970s, and has substantially subsided since. In Britain the fuss started rather

later, and since the form was originally American, was also tinged with distrust of it as an upstart Americanism. The objection to it in the U.S. seems in part to have been based on a mistaken idea that it was a German term, *hoffentlich*, that had been transferred into English, so that arguments against it in the U.S. were at times as chauvinistic as some of the later ones in Britain.

In its favor, *hopefully* conforms to a type of construction that is far from new, is a useful condensation of an idea that would otherwise require a wordy circumlocution, and is widely used. It is hard to provide much in the way of a list of objections save that it has become a shibboleth of

correctness among conservative grammarians and stylists, which requires today’s writer, even 40 years after the great witch hunt began, to be a little circumspect in bringing it into action. As

always with any sort of writing, you need to consider your audience. For myself, as you have noticed, I use it when it seems appropriate, untroubled by any potential strictures. That’s because I have a stack of modern style guides ranged at my back, chorusing that it is standard English and that it is both acceptable and accepted.

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...elliptical forms that abbreviate a comment into a single word.



Dynamic PDFs—Way Cool!

By Elizabeth Weise Moeller

Have you ever had one of those “way cool” moments when you were able to complete a project, figure out that last piece of programming, or write the ultimate paragraph—one of those moments when you just want to show everyone around you? I had one of those a couple of weeks ago when, with very little help from a systems programmer, I was able to create a PDF file from dynamic data—on the fly.

For my client’s application, users enter a serial number in a Web-based form, which pulls in graphics and other product data to create a certification document. The PDF file is locked so that users can only print or save it to disk. This saves time at the company as customer service representatives no longer have to pull the individual pieces of paper together to create the certification. They can now direct customers to the Web site where the task is performed automatically, which not only saves time but also allows them to complete work that requires human intervention in a more timely manner; everyone wins in this situation.

Creating PDF files dynamically opens up a large new world for content providers who need to maintain formatting and security while still providing information in a universally known format. PDF, the portable document format standard from Adobe (<http://www.adobe.com>), is one of the most popular ways to transmit data across platforms. In

fact, the ISO PDF/X standard (ISO Standard 15930) is the standard for pre-press transmission of electronic documents. This has made publication work much easier for some print houses—they simply request a PDF file of the document for print. A PDF file is also flexible enough to output in CMYK for effective color management and has been identified by governments and agencies worldwide as a standard for transmitting and archiving data.

For Web access, Adobe offers Acrobat Reader, a free download from its Web site, to read PDF files. Adobe reports that Reader has been downloaded over 500 million times, making it the de facto standard in this arena. In addition, millions of others have purchased Adobe Acrobat, which mimics a printer and lets users print to a PDF file from applications such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, Quark Xpress, and Adobe PageMaker.

The primary benefit of PDF files, especially on the World Wide Web, is that creators can maintain formatting. Without using PDF, content developers cannot guarantee the way a page will be rendered. The ultimate look depends on a range of variables, including browser choice, browser settings, platform, and other computer-specific settings. Additionally, printing is another significant variable, depending on the printer, the margin settings, the browser configuration, and so forth. A PDF file is rendered and printed exactly the way the

creator intends, often because it was created using a page layout program like Quark or PageMaker. The portable document format’s other main benefit is its security features. Creators of PDF files can password-protect the file so that only certain people can alter the content.

These features made nice, static, documents. A couple of years ago, Adobe raised the bar with PDF forms. People could create forms, such as for conference registration, and let users enter data in the PDF and print out a neat, well-formatted form, which was then mailed in with payment. Or they could e-mail it back to the sender with the data embedded. The next step from PDF forms was tying the data to a database. Since the PDF is an open file format specification, developers were able to create, view, and manipulate PDF files in a dynamic environment.

PDF files are created using a page definition language similar to SGML, so truly dynamic PDF development soon evolved, which brings us back to my “way cool” moment. Using a combination of the PHP scripting language, an open source conversion library, and a MySQL database in a Unix environment, we are able to create PDF files based on user needs and requirements. This can also be accomplished in other environments using other libraries and scripting languages. For more on what you can do with PDF files, Planet PDF (<http://www.planetpdf.com>) provides a one-stop location for news, features, tips, and scripts.

...improves information presentation online.

(continued on page 17)

What Are the Uses of Machine Translation?

By Alicia McBride

Machine translation has some serious weaknesses; it is not a replacement for human translators. These systems can translate words but they have difficulty determining context and the writer's intended meaning. Machine translation can, however, make the translator's job easier by providing translation suggestions and by translating repetitious phrases.

Complexities of Translation

When translators render words from one language into another, they are not only translating vocabulary, they are also determining the context in which the words are used. A document about wine making is likely to use the word *spirit* differently than a document about organizational ethos. The seemingly simple process of translating words from one language to another requires translators to analyze documents carefully.

In addition to recognizing context, translators have to understand the writer's intended message and how to render that message in the target language. That is, translators need to know not only the literal meaning of the words but also "the intention of the target text sender, cultural conventions in presenting and textualizing this intention, and the social relationship between sender and receptor" (Susanne Lauscher, *ATA Chronicle*, 24-25 October 1997). For example, a translator rendering an English manual into German needs to know that the two languages use different verb tenses to relate instructions.

Translation depends on the context in which words are used.

Such complexities can cause problems for machine translation, particularly when the system has not been provided with a specific set of meanings for words that are likely to occur in the document. AltaVista's *Babel Fish* system (online at <http://babel.fish.altavista.com/translate.dyn>), for example, has problems when it selects the wrong context. Fred Klein (*TC Forum*, 8-9 July 1998) discovered "the term 'miss distance,' (the distance by which a missile misses a target) was rendered as 'senorita distancia' [or Ms. Distance]." AltaVista had similar difficulties deciphering idioms, which tend to be culturally specific.

Machine Aid

Machine translation almost certainly can be improved. For example, machines could be programmed to evaluate the chosen translations and repair mistakes. For the moment, however, machines can help determine the general content of a doc-

ument, thus allowing readers to decide whether it is worth translating. Readers could then opt to hire someone to translate useful passages.

Machine translation tools can also aid translators themselves. These tools, often called translation memory or TM, expedite the translation process by matching recurring words and phrases and by offering suggestions, perhaps a translation used previously by the translator, who retains the option of rejecting the suggestion. Translators then can devote less energy to repetitious translation tasks and more to the more difficult job of translating contextual and culturally specific material. Rather than pursue the holy grail of a perfect machine translation system, developers in this area should work to enhance assistance systems.

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Net Notes

(continued from page 16)

The ability to create PDF files dynamically significantly improves information presentation online as well as provides that information in a secure format. Developers and communicators should seriously look at the available technology for how it can help their organizations; it really is pretty cool what you can do today.

Elizabeth Weise Moeller is president of PCS. She owns Interactive Media Consulting, LLC (+1 518 587 5107, beth@imediaconsult.com), a World Wide Web and Internet training firm in Saratoga Springs, New York, which provides Web site design and Internet training for businesses in the northeast.



Execute those Executables: Use Verbs, Nouns, and Adjectives Correctly

The Professor was quite alarmed to see that her e-mail program was usurped while she was absent from her usual duties. One might have guessed it would be the not-so surreptitious handiwork of Dr. Grammatica [*Prof. Grammar's sister*]. One can only be relieved that Dr. Grammatica does know her grammar.

Speaking of people disguising themselves as others, sometimes we try to force words to play a part of speech that is beyond their role. One way to keep our writing clean and crisp and avoid confusing our readers is to use the correct part of speech, not invent new words based on another form of the word.

Verbs Disguised as Adjectives

Consider the following heading and sentence:

Heading: Install procedure

Sentence: Perform the install procedure to install the wiziwig.

In the heading the verb *install* is masquerading as an adjective that modifies procedure. Whereas nouns can sometimes be used as adjectives, verbs cannot. In the sentence the word *install* is used twice in different forms. The first time it is again disguised as an adjective to modify procedure. The second time it is finally unmasked as a verb.

Consider the following suggested heading and sentence:

Heading: Installing the wiziwig

Sentence: Install the wiziwig by....

Now the heading is task-oriented, revealing the fact that what follows is a task and not reference or conceptual information. The sentence is now rid of the excess baggage that burdened the original, and its true intent is now obvious.

Nouns Disguised as Verbs

You might have heard or seen a sentence similar to:

This meeting has been set up to solution the resource problems facing us next year.

In this example the noun *solution* is masquerading as a verb in the infinitive form. Whatever happened to the good old verb *solve*?

This problem probably occurs less frequently than some of the other misuses mentioned in this lesson. However, it might be more difficult to spot. Be careful not to fall victim to such deception. If in doubt, check the dictionary to make sure the verb is not really a noun cloaked in a verb's costume.

Adjectives Disguised as Nouns

Here are a couple of examples from some technical documentation in which an adjective is trying to masquerade as a noun:

Change to the directory for the folder where the executables are installed.

It isn't clear whether the adjective *executable* refers to an executable file, an executable program, or some other noun. Watch for any word that ends in *-able*. Remember that an adjective is able and willing to modify a noun, but it cannot stand by itself. It needs a noun to fulfill its purpose. Learn to recognize the difference.

The SCSI front end I/O received by the storage system is whatever I/O is generated by the host systems.

There are several problems with this sentence so you will all probably have a lot of fun reworking it. Here's one possibility, assuming that the noun that *I/O* refers to is *operations*:

The storage system receives SCSI front-end I/O operations from host systems.

Holding true to her role, the Professor is off to unmask other misuses of the English language.

Copyright 2001 by IBM Corporation. Used with permission. Professor Grammar is an advisor to the IBM Santa Teresa Laboratory Editing Council. Each month she sends a lesson to the technical writers at the Laboratory. Many of the Professor's lessons are based on tenets described in the Prentice-Hall book Developing Quality Technical Information: A Handbook for Writers and Editors, recently authored by the Council.

Moving Right Along

By Paul Dombrowski

The IPCC 2003 program committee (J. D. Applen, N. Coppola, P. Dombrowski, and K. Kitalong) selected 68 of 85 proposals submitted, many of which have multiple presenters; 17 presenters are coming from countries other than the U.S. Those presentations range across a wide spectrum of topics relating to the *Shape of Knowledge*, from empirical research on PDAs, to content management, to academic programs.

There are three concurrent stems from which to choose: Sources, Users and Applications, and Shaping. Within the stems are panel discussions on curriculum innovations, recent research, understanding TC project management, and academic TC programs. Here is a sample of the presentations:

Adapting Communication Styles and Technology Use to International Environments

M. Flammia and H Sadri, Univ. of Central Florida

To shape knowledge effectively we must be able to communicate across cultures and adapt to technologies that change rapidly. We focus on practical techniques and theoretical models for effective intercultural communication of scientific and technical knowledge. We also address issues of adapting to different levels of technology use and availability in international environments. Practical applications are offered based on our experiences working in various regions including the Middle East and the Caribbean.

Embedded-Zooming Applications for Personal Digital Assistants

K. B. Lee and R. Grice, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

The increasing popularity of PDAs provides challenges for those designing interfaces. The physical limitations of small screens mean that users cannot have immediate visual access to large amounts of information. We have developed several models of zooming applications for small screens that enable users to focus on information of interest. We describe the models and present the results of usability evaluations.

Professional English Language Support for Graduate Schools in Japan

T. Orr and I. Smith, Univ. of Aizu, Japan

Many professionals educated in Japan have difficulty mastering English and using it in academic, business, and government settings, despite existing training programs. We present a well-researched solution based on surveys and studies of Japanese graduate schools. It involves establishing professional English research and development centers quite different from writing centers in the U.S. These centers would research the professional discourse of specific disciplines and provide training opportunities for professionals and professionals-in-



training through employment of high- and low-tech media to enable both independent and cooperative learning.

Shaping Knowledge for Graying Audiences:

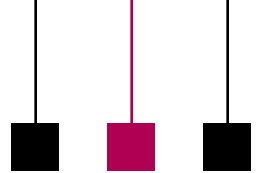
Where are the Technical Communicators?

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This paper explains the need to investigate the effect of aging on our technical and professional communication audiences, including the lack of clear, friendly documentation and accessibility needs. Three challenges result from this awareness: (1) the need to redefine the demographic variable of age; (2) the need to incorporate design and language choices to accommodate older adults; and (3) the need to proactively research document design and communication strategies for older adults.

In addition, six **workshops** are available for registration (the number presented will depend on there being sufficient enrollment). Workshops are offered on the afternoons of Sunday and Monday (21-22 September) and the mornings of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (22-24 September). See the May/June *Newsletter* or the conference Web site (<http://www.ieee pcs.org/conference/>) for descriptions.

Visit the Web site for full information and to begin shaping your conference experience.



Philadelphia

In April the IEEE Philadelphia section and PCS chapter held their 12th annual student writing contest for Delaware Valley area college students. First place went to Stefan Krause, Rowan University, for “An



Flanked by Janet Rochester, Philadelphia section chair on the left, and John Schanely, contest coordinator on the right, are: (left to right) 3rd place coauthors Apostolos Topalis and Jeffery Tisa (David LaMaina was not present) of Rowan University; 2nd place author Richard Primerano of Drexel University; and 1st place author Stefan Krause of Rowan University.

Ensemble of Classifiers Approach for the Missing Feature Problem.” Second place went to Richard Primerano, Drexel University, for “Improved Rectilinear Motion in Robotic Snakes.” Third place went to Jeffrey Tisa, Apostolos Topalis, and David LaMaina, Rowan University, for “Streetlamp Life Monitoring System.”

Awards were presented in a ceremony aboard the battleship U.S.S. New Jersey, and the evening also included a tour of the ship and a naval presentation. The nation’s most decorated battleship, the New Jersey is now a floating museum on the Delaware River, along the Camden waterfront across from center city Philadelphia.

This annual event encourages development of writing skills in engineering students. About 65 percent of the judging criteria address communica-

tion aspects of the papers. Certificates and awards of USD 200, 150, and 100 were given for first, second, and third place winners, respectively.

Following the local contest, the top paper (only one entry is allowed per school) from each of the three participating schools was forwarded to the IEEE Region 2 contest, held this year at the University of Maryland in Princess Anne. There, all three papers made a clean sweep of the prizes. The Philadelphia section’s first and second place winners achieved first and second place, respectively, in the regional contest as well! Third place was won by the remaining entry from the Philadelphia section: Yue Li and Michael Y. Tu, Swarthmore College, for “Fighting Corrupt Speech—Reduction of Background Noise in Recorded Speech Signals.” Oral presentations added a dimension to the regional contest.

