Calendar 1995

23-26 April
Society for Technical Communication 42nd Annual Conference
Washington Sheraton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
For information, call (703) 522-4114

9-13 July
Eighth International Conference of the International Federation of Science Editors
School of Biology, University of Barcelona
For information: IFSE-8 Secretariat, Apartado 16099, 08080, Barcelona, Spain
Phone/fax: +34 3 448 2373
E-mail: guerrero@porques.bio.ub.es

27-29 September 1995
International Professional Communication Conference—IPCC 95
Hyatt Regency, Savannah, Georgia
For information, contact G. Hayhoe
(802) 644 5248 or ghayhoe@srs.gov

6-9 May
Council of Biology Editors 39th Annual Meeting
Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, Missouri
For information, call (312) 201-0101

6-9 June
43rd Technical Writers' Institute
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Contact: Elizabeth Keys
Dept. of Language, Literature & Communication, Sage Labs
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, NY 12180-3590
Phone: (518) 276-2828
E-mail: Elizabeth_Keys@rpi.edu

13-15 November
FORUM 95 International Communication Conference
Dortmund, Germany
For Information: Brigitte Bilek, Sanderstrasse 34, D-70192 Stuttgart 1, Germany
Phone: +49 711 55 42 35
Fax: +49 711 55 07 67

Ten Tips for International Communication
by Deborah Flaherty Kizer

Success in today’s global business environment does not depend solely on an excellent product. Rather, you today’s successful international business requires persons who are skilled negotiators and communicators. Through my experiences in international service negotiation and development, I’ve developed my “Top Ten Tips for Effective International Communication.” While they may seem obvious to you at first glance, I have seen situations time and again where these “rules” have not been followed. The effects of such gaffes are cumulative and can lead to undue delays, misunderstandings, and even a total breakdown in negotiations.

Are you ready?

Tip 1: Understand the culture and be cognizant of current events.
Clearly, a key success factor in international negotiations is building rapport with your business partner. By demonstrating a knowledge of the country, culture, and current events, you are showing that you have taken the time and effort to understand your partner. Not doing so can be embarrassing not only for you, but for your colleagues as well. For example, at a meeting in Prague following the break-up of Czechoslovakia, a member of the U.S. delegation continually referred to the country as “Czechoslovakia” rather than the correct name, “Czech Republic.” Finally, a member of the Czech delegation felt compelled to correct the American; all present were very much embarrassed.

In addition to reading globally focused newspapers, such as the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor, you may want to order Brigham Young University’s Culturegrams for the countries you are visiting. These excellent publications provide detailed background information on history, demographics, and culture.

Tip 2: Hold your initial meeting face-to-face.
Granted, this can be expensive, but I have seen how valuable these initial face-to-face meetings can be in terms of building relationships, making sure everyone has a common understanding of the project, and seeking to understand expectations and desired results. You will reap the benefits by taking the time to initiate the project in person. After this first meeting, you can certainly rely on tools such as videoconferencing, facsimile, and telephone.

Tip 3: Understand expectations, motivations, and desired outcomes.
Clearly, if everyone has different goals, expectations, and motivations for a given project, that project is doomed to fail. A good place to start understanding these factors is at the face-to-face meeting. However, because many of these factors

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FROM THE EDITOR

We have a pair of common threads to this newsletter issue. The first is international communication, represented by the page 1 article by Bob Kizer and by two letters to the editor in response to Joe Chapline's letter in the last issue. English is the language of technical communication today, but most U.S. citizens, corporate and individual, seem oblivious to the benefits of knowing some other language to some degree. Whether or not the reason for this is hubris, the inability to even make a start at conversing in another language regularly puts the U.S. party at a serious disadvantage in today's international world.

The second thread is change, a topic brought up in the columns by Michael Goodman and Howard Scheiber. Change is inevitable, so the saying goes; and that's likely true in language, throughout the biological world, and in today's personal and work life as well.

Change can be considered the essence of biological life. Yet even if that is true, the change being referred to is the change of growth and senescence and of occasional, almost imperceptible environmental alternations that can be adapted to without trauma. Major catastrophes — disruptive, life-threatening change — are rare within the lifespan of an individual organism within the natural order.

Organizational changes over the past five to ten years have been, in most cases, neither occasional and imperceptible nor cataclysmic. But the strain of a constantly shifting work environment is, I think, beginning to count among its victims even those who Mike Goodman describes as adaptable.

About six years ago I met a scientist whose workplace had been facing moderate but continuous budget cuts for several years. When we were introduced, he smilingly stated that he was one of the "survivors" in his organization. Today, he still has his job, but he no longer has most of his staff, and cynicism has replaced the smile. Despite winning the "war" for continued support for his work, the attrition of spirit and enthusiasm (and creativity, no doubt!) has been devastating.

Anyone can read the literature and find that placing animals under constant stress over long periods causes both psychological and physical damage. I think that many people today are in an analogous position in terms of their work life: trying to take on new responsibilities, and do everything perfectly, even while they are still learning how to do carry out these new responsibilities... and to top it off, continually wondering if they will be in the next list of those who, in Howard Scheiber's phrase, have been "empowered" by no longer having jobs.

I hope that some of the authors of the literature that Howard and Mike are drawing from recognize that it's not saying that people are a firm's most important asset that is important. What is important is the firm's managers acting on the basis that this is true.

—D.E.N.

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Articles, letters, and reviews from readers are welcome. ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible disks are preferred.

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Last Call for Activators!

If you would like to be an active participant in FORUM 95, send by facsimile or e-mail, a brief proposal outlining your idea to co-chair Brigitte Beutemüller. Proposals will be welcomed for the activities outlined below or others:

- Technical Communication
- Production Aspects
- New Media
- International Communication
- Professional Communication
- Visual Communication

The theme for FORUM 95 is "Disappearing Borders in an International Conference for Technical Communicators". This multinational conference will be held in Dortmund, Germany, 13–15 November 1995. If you would like to attend as an observer/delegate, complete and mail or fax the form on the opposite page.

Conference Site Information

The next issue of the PCS Newsletter will contain detailed information on Dortmund and the Westfalenhallen (the conference hotel), as well as the best way to get there from the U.S.A. or Canada. For the moment, here are some highlights:

- Coal mining is out.
- Seel production, for which Dortmund has been famous for over 100 years, still is a major activity, but so is the city's machine tool and precision equipment industry.
- Commerce, banking, and insurance have become predominant activities.

- Nearly 50% of the city's municipal area consists of green space.
- Dortmund's world-famous beer still tastes marvelous, but wine and dining now have equal prominence. There will be more information in FORUM 95's bi-monthly Newsletter. To receive a copy, contact Ron Blicq at fax (204) 488 7294 or e-mail: r.blcqe@ieee.org.

Conf:

Now that the Professional Communication Society is an INTECOM member, all PCS members qualify for the "member" rate for FORUM 95. The rates below are quoted in Deutschmarks, with 1 DM being roughly equivalent to 70 cents U.S. The first figure in each case is for conference registration only; the second figure (in parentheses) includes three nights’ accommodation:

- Early registration: 695DM (1090DM) (before July 51)
- Late registration: 965DM (1360DM)

Non-member rate:

- Early registration: 965DM (1360DM)
- Late registration: 1165DM (1660DM)

Program Information

For information about the technical program, contact Lisa Moretto at 6001 South Kings Highway (Unit 776), Myrtle Beach, SC 29575; phone (803) 238 9417.

Tips for International Communication

(continued from page 1)

...gaffes are cumulative and can lead to undue delays, misunderstandings, and even a total breakdown in negotiations.

It can also help ensure that the right people are present at the meeting. For example, in preparation for a service development meeting, we sent a “service negotiation package” to our partners in an Eastern European country several weeks before the meeting. Once they received and reviewed the package, our partners realized that they did not have correct technical representation planned. However, because they determined this early on, they were able to plan accordingly.

Tip 4: Confirm everything.

Just because your fax machine indicates that the transmission was received, this does not mean that the desired recipient has the information. Perhaps the fax machine at the receiving end is off the hook or the cleaning woman threw out your fax, which was written in English. Just because you sent a letter confirming your travel arrangements and meeting agenda, don’t assume that your partner received it. Much less understood it! I have been on the wrong end of both these situations, and my recommendation is to confirm everything, in a variety of ways, and in the language of your partner if possible.

And even having done so, expect the unexpected. After working for months to set up a meeting in an Eastern European country, we were told after we had arrived that the meeting had been canceled. Thanks to the intervention of our in-country support person, we were able to hold a meeting after all, but last minute changes aback by the whole experience.

Tip 5: Prepare and send your materials well in advance when preparing for a meeting, conference call, etc.

Always try to send any documentation to your partners well in advance of any meeting, in English as well as in your partners’ language. This will give them time to accurately review the material and prepare any questions, thus making your meeting more productive.

Say Again?

Francis Crick, who shared the Nobel Prize for determining the structure of DNA, was named last month as interim President of the Salk Institute. In the time since, he was appointed to the position permanently. When the change in status was reported, Institute officials claimed the appointment was never temporary: the original press release had not capitalized the word interim.

As reported in ScienCe, 3 February, 1995, p. 619.
Letters to the Editor

It was good to read Joe Chapline's comments in the Jan/Feb issue. I'm glad to know that Joe is still "tickling the keys" [sic] of his organ.

His comment about multilingualism for PCS deserves consideration rather than a knee-jerk response. "Oh, no." The language of engineering and science is English around the world with few exceptions; in those cases the exceptions of the written and read English is still very high among fellow engineers. BUT — and this goes to the notion of Joe's lemma: should PCs deal with communication topics in our field in more than English? He gives us good food for thought.

Also, Editor, an observation about the Newsletter, from a fellow IEEE Editor who got speared by it in the past: one good reason for having the banner head of the publication across the top of the cover is to be able to be visible in the thousands of magazine racks that populate our libraries and other literary establishments. Unfortunately, those of us who would, for good reason, want to turn the title vertically, cannot change those racks. In my parlance, is a SYSTEM CONSTRAINT.

Pop quiz for readers concerned with trivia & systems constraints. How many remember the "improved, pop-up tissue" marketing fiasco of 40 years back? That company never regained market share. We never learn from history.

Keep up the good — and unapologetically what we'd work on the newsletter.

Dana Dobson
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Joe Chapline in his Letter to the Editor in the January/February issue of the Newsletter cites his experience with the technical manuals of the International Society of Organ-builders, which are published in at least two and sometimes three languages; he asks why "bigger and more significant technologies" can't also provide multilingual publications. I can't speak for all such technologies, but I do know something about the situation in physics, having edited a physics journal for much of my career. There are two aspects involved.

First, the development of the subject has been such that the international language of physics has been identified as "broken English". I'm not in a position to say how that came about, but I do know that for many years anyone who wanted to keep up with developments in physics has had to know how to read English. I note that when I got my doctorate over 40 years ago, one requirement was that I be able to read the literature of the subject in German and French; that requirement has long since been dropped as unnecessary.

More pertinent is the matter of economics. The journal I edited was not one of the biggest, but even so it consists of some 5000 or 6000 pages per year. Chapline's proposal would at least double that. And there are journals whose page count runs to tens of thousands per year. Subscription costs are already substantial, and would have to increase — perhaps not by a factor of two, but not far from it. And that doesn't count the expense of finding translators to handle the papers that would be submitted in languages other than English. Someone may say, "Just have the author submit in German and English, with another language if he wishes." That I regard as senseless. If the author knows enough English to submit a version in English, why should there be the bother of publishing in other languages, given that interested persons can read English?

I must say that I think it regrettable that so few Americans bother to learn any language other than English (and far too many don't even learn that very well). But I don't see Chapline's suggestion as a useful way to encourage a change.

—George L. Trigg
Brooklyn, New York

PCS Logo Contest: Free IPC 95 Registration to Winner

Visual communication specialists should have the upper hand in a PCS contest designed to enhance the Society's image with a logo. The winner of the contest will receive free admission to IPC 95 in Savannah and an appropriate trophy. But even more meaningful will be the knowledge that the winning design will regularly appear on Society literature. The IEEE logo, which symbolizes the IEEE discipline, has long graced the Institute's documents. In recent years, more and more IEEE societies have emphasized their own missions by using a society logo in juxtaposition with the IEEE logo. PCS would like to enhance and publicize its mission and hopes to continue this trend.

The contest is open to nonmembers as well as members of PCS and IEEE. The judges are design professionals who are neither PCS nor IEEE members: they include Joan Hantz and Donna Bagley of Windsor Street Design, Rochester, New York; Theodore Kole of the Northrop Grumman Presentations Services Group, Bethpage, New York, and Michelle Robinson of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute School of Architecture, Troy, New York. Details of the contest, including a final submission date and a synopsis of the PCS mission, are presented in the official contest notice (see box).
University of Washington to Launch Digital Media Design Laboratory

Someday soon, according to plans being made at the University of Washington's Department of Technical Communication, a new laboratory on the Washington campus will be up and running. The latest computer technology will be abuzz with activity as part of the digital revolution. If the laboratory succeeds, its organizers believe it will help put Washington State over the top as the undisputed world capital of the multimedia industry.

The facility, called the Digital Media Design Laboratory, springs from a broad private-public partnership involving about 20 of the state's most successful software and software-related firms and organizations belonging to the Digital Media Alliance, a subgroup of the 1200-member Washington Software Association; the UW; and the Washington Technology Center. The latter will house the new laboratory on the UW campus.

The laboratory will serve as a conduit to increase the flow of ideas, talent, and technology between the state's already booming digital media industry and the UW, according to Mark Haselkorn, project advisor and professor and chairman of the Department of Technical Communication in the UW College of Engineering.

"The digital media industry in Washington is poised for unprecedented growth, and is likely to challenge areas such as North Carolina, California, and Georgia," Haselkorn commented. "It is essential that the state develop facilities that bring together experts from the multitude of disciplines that contribute to digital media design, which many believe is the single most common activity in computing today."

The terms digital media and multimedia refer to an amorphous category of new software combining sound, video, and graphics that meld, for example, film and television with computing. This technology is being brought to bear in a host of new delivery mechanisms and applications in business, entertainment, education, the arts, telecommunications, scientific research, medicine, and many other sectors.

As Haselkorn and others point out, however, many fundamental problems remain unresolved, ranging from thorny questions of social and legal policy to hard-core technological challenges. "We want this new laboratory to foster cross-disciplinary and cross-sector interaction among the best minds in digital media in this state today," said Haselkorn.

Initial funding for the project's start-up phase amounts to $60,000: $25,000 each from the UW and the Digital Media Alliance and $10,000 from the Washington Technology Center. For more information, contact Haselkorn at marlo@uwcc.washington.edu or (206) 542-2577.

CURMUDGEON'S CORNER

by Joan G. Nagle

On Writing and Life

No one ever said I could use this column for a book review. No one ever said I couldn’t either, and anyway I’d always rather ask forgiveness than permission. So that’s what this is.

The book, which I wish I could give a copy of to every reader of this column, is Bird by Bird, by Anne Lamott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

"Thirty years ago," she writes in explaining the title, "my older brother, who was 10 years old at the time, was trying to get a report on birds written that he’d had 3 months to write. [It] was due the next day. He was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books on birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him, put his arm around my brother’s shoulder, and said, ‘Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.’"

The work is subtitled Some Instructions on Writing and Life, and isn’t that just good? Haven’t we all been there, in our writing projects and/or our lives, surrounded by the tools for the job but crushed by the weight of the job itself. And didn’t we need someone to tell us, ‘Just take it bird by bird.’ (To say nothing of the arm around the shoulder, which is always nice.)

Admittedly, the writing instructions are aimed at writers of fiction; Lamott, though writing a nonfiction work herself, makes no nod to us who deal in the factual stuff. Except that she sees telling stories as telling truth, in some way, and we are all in that business. In any case, there’s a lot that applies. For instance ...

First, she says, give yourself short assignments. "Often when you sit down to write, what you have in mind is an autobiographical novel about your childhood, or a play about the immigrant experience, or a history of — oh, say — women. But this is like trying to scale a glacier. It’s hard to get your footing, and your fingertips get all red and frozen and torn up."

She describes vividly the ensuing panic (‘I realize that the well has run dry and that my future is behind me and I am going to have to get a job only I’m completely unemployable’), and her efforts to get control through slow and quiet breathing.

At our best, we write one-square-inch pictures.

Then I finally notice the one-inch picture frame that I put on my desk. ... It reminds me that all I have to do is to write down as much as I can see through a one-inch picture frame. This is all I have to bite off for the time being.

Our immediate reaction, as employed writers, is to scream, ‘NO! NO! I’ve got to write this whole manual on the Chip-Chip program, and I’ve got to do it all now!’

But the truth is, we don’t write a manual ‘all now’. Trying to write anything all at once produces convulsion and contortion and complexity. At our best, we write one-square-inch pictures. That’s all the reader can take in at a time anyway. Give yourself and your reader a break, with short assignments.

She also recommends writing bad first drafts. (Well, her word isn’t ‘bad’, but this is a family publication and I am learning to be a Southern lady.) ‘All good writers write them. This is how we clean up with our second drafts and terrific third drafts.’ This is how, she says, we quieten down, and let our hands that tell us what we’re doing very good, or interesting, or marketable.

‘I know that,’ we reply. ‘I’m only just getting it down on paper.’ Lamott calls this draft the down draft, and the next, in which we fix it up, the up draft. And there’s a third version, too, much our hands that tell us what we’re doing very good, or interesting, or marketable.

If you haven’t seen yet how instructions for writing can be instructions for life, try her words on perfectionism:

I think perfectionism is based on the obsessive belief that if you run carefully enough, hitting each stepping-stone just right, you’ll arrive with time to die. The truth is that you will die anyway and that a lot of people who aren’t even looking at their feet are going to do a whole lot better than you, and have a lot more fun while they’re doing it.

Take that, you low-fat-diet nerds!

If any of this makes sense to you, as it does to, and if you adore this kind of deceptively simple, almost monosyllabic, butpacked-withmeaning manual as much as I do, get the book. You’ll love it. ‘Why does our writing matter?’ she asks.

‘Because of the spirit ... because of the heart. Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life: they feed the soul.’

Feed yours a little something today. (And have a doughnut too.)
Tools of the Trade

by Cheryl Reimold

A - C - T - O - W,
A Six-Step Response to Disaster (Continued)

Step 4 (Cont.): Prepare for a More Thorough Response to the World

Once you have organized your center's information, called in experts, and formed a crisis team, you can prepare for a thorough response to the outside world.

Check your priorities. Care, compassion, and safety come first. Your first act at any point is to see if you can do anything more to help the victims or prevent any further disasters. If you are called upon to answer questions while engaged in helping people, simply tell the truth: you are taking care of people now. You will get all the facts later. No one will accuse you of making the wrong choice.

Then, plan for your explanations and updates to the public. Remember that you are addressing people — workers, spouses, parents, and children — not "the media". You are not trying to outsmart, outgo, or evade reporters. Rather, your goal is to speak through the media to the people who are in some way affected by your crisis. If you keep people as your focus, you will give an honest, thorough, and meaningful account.

Prepare for the five W's. You can build good media relations by calling frequent news briefings and inviting reporters from local and national papers, radio, TV, and the wire services. Newspapers want the basic facts for the same day's edition and more background and possible implications for future issues. The broadcast media want less background and more updates. All will ask you the five W's: What happened? Who is affected? What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why? Who? What caused it?

If you still lack answers to these, search for them wherever you can. Get details on the product or event from your engineers, designers, operators, attorneys, and anyone else who would know. Ask any remaining facts from everyone involved, from company executives and outside experts to customers, bystanders, and even the media themselves. You can bet the reporters will check all these sources, and you want to know at least as much as they do.

Be scrupulously honest. Do not try to hide damaging information about your company's performance or product. Remember, you are not the media's only source of information. If you lose credibility in the early days, when people feel some compassion for you in your difficult situation, you will never regain it. Furthermore, mistakes or lapses to cover up a company flaw may eventually bury the company itself.

Now, formulate complete answers to the five W's. Keep up to date facts, figures, and other specifics in a small notebook that you can always refer to and update. Make your answers clear and precise, with all technical terms explained in plain English. Rehearse your answers. You can be pretty sure that with a mile-thick under your chin, your voice will slip a mile. Having your answers ready will help you regain the confidence and composure you need.

Say your piece. Now think about what you want to say. You are not simply an answering machine! You have the right — and the obligation to your company — to get your message across.

Prepare a written statement to read and distribute. Make it a single paragraph if possible. Say what you believe happened, what it means, what your company is doing about it, and any other message your company wants people to hear.

You can use questions as bridges to get your message across. Anywhere in the presentation, then say you would also like to look at the larger picture or take a different approach, and then deliver your own message.

The media can help you get your message across if you approach the interview not as a battle but as a conversation between decent people, both of whom want to help people and stem a disaster. Remember, you need the media even more than they need you. They will ultimately tell the story to the world. How you approach them may determine whose story they tell.

Cheryl Reimold is a member of the PCS Administration's Community and Education Committee. She is the author of more than 200 articles and several books, including How to Write a Million Dollar Memo, Being a Boss, and The Language of Business. She is President of Fern Communications — 44 Dinkel Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583. The line 514-725-1024 is a number she offers businesses in-house workshops and courses in writing, presentations, and on-the-job communication skills.

Do Some Corporate Cultures Adapt to Change Better than Others?

The concept of corporate culture is complex, but for our discussion, we can consider that it is made up of the physical things and patterns of beliefs that reflect the values, beliefs, and basic assumptions of the organization. A culture that values the status quo may resist change, but may paradoxically be best suited to meet the challenge of change. A process culture, such as a public utility or telecommunications company, may have the scope and resources to make a successful cultural change. It has the capacity to survive as the people and processes go through the cycle of change. A macho culture such as an investment bank or movie studio may be entirely wiped out by changes in laws or in the economic environment. AT&T and IBM are still alive, E.H. Buss and Drexel Burnham are not.

The survival of an organization, like the survival of an individual, also depends on its buoyancy, elasticity, resilience. Corporations which have such properties have such organizational abilities.

III. Coming Up...

In the next "On Management Communication," a continued look at the forces changing communication in the workplace, and the role of professional communicators as change agents in the process.

IV. IPCC 95 - The Final Call

Papers, Transactions, and Proceedings are among the items held in the IPCC/PCS Archive at the Madison Campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University. The archive is open to PC members and scholars. If you have questions contact Michael Goodman at (201) 593-8709; or Ron Blicq at (204) 488-7060.

Newsletters

The Newsletter publication schedule is:

Issue Deadline
May/June 7 April 1995
July/August 2 June 1995
Sept/Oct. 4 August 1995
Nov/Dec. 6 October 1995

Contributions are welcome; ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred. Please send them to:

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Rudy Mancke Named Keynote Speaker for IPCC 95

Rudy Mancke, host of the nationally syndicated PBS series Nature-Scene, which is produced by South Carolina ETV, will give the keynote address at IPCC 95. Mr. Mancke will speak about how people perceive the world and make sense of it, and how scientists, engineers, and professional communicators can aid in this process.

IPCC 95 promises to be another success story for the PCS, as proposals are still rolling in from Canada, France, the People's Republic of China, and the United States.

Program Chair Roger Grice reports that proposals are split about 50-50 between workshops and presentations. Conference Chairman George Hayhoe encourages casual dress as we meet in beautiful Savannah to learn and to exchange ideas on maintaining our technical competency in one of the most dynamic and technologically challenging professions.

In addition to learning, George promises fun too. The conference banquet will be aboard the Savannah River Queen, which will leave from River Street adjacent to the hotel and cruise the Savannah River.

Make plans now to attend IPCC 95 and watch upcoming Newsletters for additional details of the conference.

I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which when you looked at it in the right way, did not become still more complicated.

Paulo Alcides
On MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

by Michael B. Goodman

1. Why Organizations Find It Difficult to Change
I have discussed the metaphors of change (Jul/Aug 1994) and the forces driving change (Nov/Dec 1994). Here begins a discussion of why some change efforts succeed and why an overwhelming majority fail. This part of the discussion focuses on people, expectations, and corporate culture.

Keep in mind throughout this discussion that all change is personal. If our foundation rests on that observation, then we can ask: What type of person is best suited for change? What role do expectations play in the change process? Do some corporate cultures adapt to change better than others?

What type of person is best suited for change?
You may have noticed around your organization an individual (and that person may be you) who sees the widespread changes in work processes and outcomes as a stimulating challenge. This person comes to work with a smiling face and a spring in the step, often arriving early and leaving late. No matter how much chaos the organization is in, this person appears to respond well to the situation.

Others in the organization respond less well to change and exhibit dysfunctional behavior, in varying degrees. For instance, examples of a low degree of dysfunction are poor communication, reduced trust, blaming, defensiveness, increased conflict with fellow workers, decreased team effectiveness, and inappropriate outbursts at the office. Moderate dysfunction: lying or deception, chronic lateness or absenteeism, symptoms such as headaches or stomach pain, apathy, and interpersonal withdrawal. High degree of dysfunction: covert undermining of leadership, sabotage, actively promoting negative attitudes in others, substance or family abuse, physical/psychological breakdown, violence, murder, and suicide.

The person who responds well to change exhibits buoyancy, elasticity, resilience — the ability to recover quickly from change. Note that such people possess a strong, positive sense of self, which provides them the security and confidence to meet new challenges, even if they do not have all the answers. These people, like successful athletes, are focused on a clear vision of what they wish to accomplish, and they are tenacious in making the vision real. In addition, these people tend to be accommodating and flexible in the face of uncertainty and organized in the way they develop an approach for managing ambiguity. These people are "proactive." They engage the obstacles, and they are the exception rather than defend against change.

The type of person I have described here is not that unusual. Such a person practices fairness, integrity, honesty, and human dignity — the principles that provide us all with the security to adapt to change.

What Role Do Expectations Play?
If, as I have suggested, all change is personal, then how can we understand and manage expectations help an individual or an organization through the change cycle? Everyone has made personal changes: leaving home for college, getting married or divorced, retooling to another town. Each personal change brings with it feeling that things will get better. As they are, each of the characters in Dickens' Great Expectations, fame and fortune are often illusory, because people neglect to consider that change is an equal opportunity for failure. A contemporary rock song puts it this way: "If you don't expect too much from me you may not be let down."

However, it is not to lower expectations, but to manage them. In managing expectations, consider that in responding to positive change most people go through phases: 1) optimism or certainty at the start, like the joy at a wedding; 2) informed pessimism or doubt (here people may quit publicly or, more destructively, quit privately and continue to work, allowing the negative feelings to go to generate dysfunctional behavior); 3) hope emerging with a sense of reality; 4) informed optimism, revised in confidence; and 5) satisfaction, which closes the cycle of change.

The good news is that the cycle is predictable and can be used to manage expectations by helping people prepare for the rough periods. The bad news is that most people feel that they are the exceptions and they will not follow the cycle from beginning to completion.

Book Bytes (an occasional roundup and review) by H. J. Scheiber

These days, whether you function as a technical communicator, "quality" manager, or corporate VP, you know that your own organization, and scores of others just like yours all over America (and beyond), are now being reinvented — reengineered, rethought, restructured, resized, down-sized, decentralized . . . or just plain streamlined.

Similarly, just about all of you are, have been, or will be (in one form or another) engaged in the process of empowerment — even if, for some of you, that actually means joining the swelling ranks of the under- or unemployed. Or, perhaps you’re currently involved in yet another process, that of becoming a leader and, at the same time, learning to cope with some level of organizational chaos.

On the other hand, maybe you’re working in a cutthroat organization, without readily discernible charismatic leaders or some sort of unique corporate culture. Your organization might be a "gray collar" or "marathon performer," according to Fortune, "built to last," consistently serving customers faithfully, maintaining satisfying PE ratios, and yielding nothing but success.

Is all of this mere hype? Does it all add up to much? Is it all any more than an empty rhetoric of managerial whimsy? And, most importantly, how does it all affect you?

A number of thoughtful books have surfaced over the past few years which you might want to have a look at. With two major aims in mind, (1) to help you survive and prosper during 1995, and (2) to help you sort out the very best of these books from the pretentious "pyhonesque" chatter.

I've put together a list of the creme de la creme in business, management, and organizational studies. Here goes.

Management guru come and go, but Charles Handy seems to be as solid a force in organizational studies as the converted stone farmhouse in the Tuscany hills where he spends much of his time — some 20% — thinking. Actually a self-styled philosopher of business, management, and organizations, Handy has written a number of important texts stressing, most recently, that the "assets of an enterprise are primarily its people" and that "education will have to become non-ending with corporations fully (and finally) recognizing their central role in training and education."

Handy's Understanding Organization (Oxford University Press, 1995) is the revised edition of his classic text examining "how understanding the ways organizations actually work can be used to manage them better". The text illuminates key concepts of concern to all managers: corporate culture, motivation, leadership, power, working in groups, and role-playing. Bold sections of information, quoted material, and short case studies appear throughout the text to aid the reader.

As a student of organizational communication, I have found Handy's discussion of the barriers to effective communication in organizations — including, for example, tactics of conflict, information control, information distortion, networks, and "tale-telling" — particularly perspicuous, comprehensive, and useful. He is equally sensible and clear on such important processes as managing conflict and channeling change. And his review of the field of organizational culture (Chapter 7), examines four varieties of culture:

(1) the power culture (2) the role culture (3) the task culture (4) the person culture and the phenomena, structure, and "set of systems" related to each, as well as the "influencing factors" on these cultures and the "implications for organizational design."

Handy's two most recent books, The Age of Unreason and The Age of Paradox (Harvard Business School Press, 1991 and 1994, respectively), explore a) the nature and consequences of change and "progress," and the disappearance of the "employment organization"; b) the "paradoxes" and "confusions" that confront our society, our businesses, governments, and, increasingly, ourselves, as individuals unprepared for the dramatic changes to be faced in the years preceding and into the next millennium; and c) those innovative organizations already evolving and responding to new technologies and the realities of global competition.

Handy speaks directly, concretely, and prophetically about:

• change: The society which welcomes change can use that change instead of just reacting to it. (Ponsonby, p. 5)
• work: To reinvent work in its fullest sense, we need another word. Portfolio might be that word. (Ponsonby, p. 14)
• collection: A collection of different items, but a collection
which has a theme to it. The whole is greater than the parts. A work portfolio is a way of describing how the different bits of work in our life fit together to form a balanced whole. (Unreason, p. 183)

- the new ("shamrock") organization: a form of organization based around a core of essential executives and workers, supported by outside contractors and part-time help. (Unreason, p. 32)

The shamrock organization has flourished because organizations have realized that you do not have to employ all of the people all of the time to get the work done. . . . Offices for part timers become common rooms for telecommuters and, in time, clubs for everyone. The early morning crush in the commuter train will one day be a thing of the past or at least only a twice-weekly chore. (Unreason, p. 111)

- the paradoxes of our time: If we are to cope with the turbulence of life today, we must start by organizing it in our minds. . . . Framing the confusion is the first step to doing something about it.

I have identified nine principal paradoxes: intelligence, work, productivity, time, riches, organizations, aging, the individual, justice. Nine ways of explaining what is going on in our societies and why some confusion is inevitable. Nine paradoxes that are far from an exhaustive list, but if we can manage them to forge a better world, we shall have done well. (Paradox, pp. 17-18; italics added)

If Charles Handy is down on reengineering because in the final analysis, "there will be results if there is no investment in people," then Michael Hammer and James Champy, in Reengineering the Corporation (HarperCollins, 1993), and Champy in Reen- gineering Management (HarperCollins, 1993), state the proverbial case for the defense. "Reengineering," according to Hammer and Champy, consists in the "radical redesign of a company's business processes, reinventing the way the business operates in order to meet the demands of a modern economy". Reengineering ought not to be equated with downsizing and other "slash and burn" exercises in cost reduction. On the contrary, these authors argue, reengineering has "everything to do with creating and cultivating innovative strategies". These books are chock full of examples and illustrations of what the authors call "true business reengineering". Their examples demonstrate the four requisite characteristics of a reengineering effort and fulfill the definition that reengineering is the fundamental rethink ing and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service and speed. (Reeng. the Corp., p. 46)

In addition, Hammer and Champy provide readers with three rather elaborate cases involving the development, or "redesign", of corporate strategies - at IBM, Credit, Ford, and Kodak - to examine several themes intrinsic to and typical of reengineered processes. Some of the "reengineering themes" encountered at these three corporations, and dozens of others where the authors have observed and participated in reengineering projects, include these:

- Several jobs are combined into one.
- Workers make decisions.
- Steps in the process are performed in a natural order.
- Processes have multiple versions.
- Work is performed where it makes the most sense.
- A case manager provides a single point of contact. (Reeng. the Corp., pp. 51-65)

Hammer and Champy continually remind readers that "reengineering entails the radical redesign of a company's business processes". But they insist, too, that process redesign is just the beginning; basic changes in business processes have implications for every facet of an organization. Indeed, when an organization reengineers its business processes, Hammer and Champy claim that a major shift in the organizational culture will occur as well:

- Work units change from functional departments to process teams.
- Jobs change from simple tasks to multi-dimensional work.
- People's roles change - from controlled to empowered.
- Job preparation changes from training to education.
- Values change - from protective to productive. (Reeng. the Corp., pp. 65-74)

All of the changes necessary for creating a new culture, and sufficient for real "structural [re]configuration", demand support by management and "management systems". That is, senior executives must change "from scorekeepers to leaders"; thus, Champy's Reengineering Management: The Mandate for New Leadership. This book, aimed at managers at all levels, examines how "radically" managers themselves will "have a way of doing things for reengineering to fulfill its promise".

Hammer and Champy have come to understand that without management support - from "self-managers" in sales, R&D, and customer service, from "process managers" and "people managers", and from "enterprise managers" like CEOs and division heads - reengineering "will be stopped in its tracks". Throughout this book, Champy confronts a variety of key questions that have surfaced in connection with the practice of reengineering. He examines four broad issues:

1. Issues of purpose
2. Issues of culture
3. Issues of process and performance
4. Issues of people

- before concluding that we are in the throes of a "second managerial revolution". The first focused on a "transfer of power"; this one involves an "access of freedom". And that, finally, is Champy's central message (however ambiguous):

Free markets need free men and women to invent the future. Feel free . . . " (Reeng. Management, p. 205)

Well, if reengineering can provide such access (personal? professional? to freedom, whom among us wouldn't buy in? [This article will be continued in the next issue. Ed.]

H.J. Schieber is Director of Solaric Communication in Lakeland, Florida. Formerly Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Managerial/Technical Communication at Florida Institute of Technology. Dr. Schieber is a member of the Editorial Board of the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

IEEE Fellows

Congratulations to PCS members Dr. Fred Aminzadeh and Dr. Amitava Dutta-Roy, who have been elected to IEEE Fellow grade as of 1 January 1995. Dr. Aminzadeh, a candidate of the Geoscience and Remote Sensing Society, was cited for contributions to the application of modeling and signal processing, pattern recognition, and expert systems in the processing and analysis of seismic and acoustic data. Dr. Dutta-Roy, a candidate of the Professional Communications

PCS AdCom Meets in Washington, D.C.

At the PCS AdCom meeting on 20 January 1995 were standing, left to right: R. Robinson, D. Dobson, R. Joukh, and H. Michaelson; seated around the table from left foreground, M. Goodman, N. Corbin, D. Kemph, M. Haselborn, R. Grice, D. Flaherty Klzer, J. Rochester, C. Reimold, L. Grove, G. Hayboe, and J. Nagle.
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H.J. Schibers is Director of Solaris Communication in Ilandia, Florida. Formerly Associate Professor of Reform and Managerial/ Technical Communication at Florida Institute of Technology. Dr. Schibers is a member of the Editorial Board of the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

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On MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION

by Michael B. Goodman

1. Why Organizations Find It Difficult to Change

I have discussed the metaphors of change (Jul/Aug 1994) and the forces driving change (Nov/Dec 1994). Here begins a discussion of why some change efforts succeed and why an overwhelming majority fail. This part of the discussion focuses on people, expectations, and corporate culture.

Keep in mind throughout this discussion that all change is personal. If our foundation rests on that observation, then we can ask: What type of person is best suited for change? What role do expectations play in the change process? Do some corporate cultures adapt to change better than others?

What type of person is best suited for change?

You may have noticed around your organization an individual (and that person may be you) who sees the widespread changes in work processes and outcomes as a stimulating challenge. This person comes to work with a smiling face and a spring in the step, often arriving early and leaving late. No matter how much chaos the organization is in, this person appears to respond well to the situation.

Others in the organization respond less well to change and exhibit dysfunctional behavior, in varying degrees. For instance, examples of a low degree of dysfunction are poor communication, reduced trust, blaming, defensiveness, increased conflict with fellow workers, decreased team effectiveness, and inappropriate outbursts at the office. Moderate dysfunction: lying or deception, chronic lateness or absenteeism, symptoms such as headaches or stomach pain, apathy, and interpersonal withdrawal. High degree of dysfunction: covert undermining of leadership, sabotage, actively promoting negative attitudes in others, substance or family abuse, physical/psychological breakdown, violence, murder, and suicide.

The person who responds well to change exhibits buoyancy, elasticity, resilience — the ability to recover quickly from change. Note that such people possess a strong, positive sense of self, which provides them with the security and confidence to meet new challenges, even if they do not have all the answers. These people, like successful athletes, are focused on a clear vision of what they wish to accomplish, and they are tenacious in making the vision real.

In addition, these people tend to be accommodating and flexible in the face of uncertainty and organized in the way they develop an approach for managing ambiguity. These people are "proactive." They engage the changes that are occurring rather than defend against them.

The type of person I have described here is not that unusual. Such a person practices fairness, integrity, honesty, and human dignity — the principles that provide us all with the security to adapt to change.

What Role Do Expectations Play?

If, as I have suggested, all change is personal, then how can understanding and managing expectations help an individual or an organization through the change cycle? Everyone has made personal changes: leaving home for college, getting married or divorced, relocating to another town. Each personal change brings with it feeling that "things will get better." As they do with most of the characters in Dickens' Great Expectations, fame and fortune are often illusory, because people neglect to consider that change is an equal opportunity for failure. A contemporary rock song puts it this way: "If you don't expect too much from me you may not be let down."

However, it is not to lower expectations, but to manage them. In managing expectations, consider that in responding to positive change most people go through phases of denial, anger, or certainty at the start, like the joy at a wedding; 2) informed pessimism or doubt (here people may quit publicly or, more destructive, quit privately and continue to work, allowing the negative feelings to generalize dysfunctional behavior); 3) hope emerging with a sense of reality; 4) informed optimism, reinforced in confidence; and 5) satisfaction, which closes the cycle of change.

The good news is that the cycle is predictable and can be used to manage expectations by helping people prepare for the rough periods. The bad news is that most people find themselves in the expectation phase and will not follow the cycle from beginning to completion.

Book Bytes (an occasional roundup and review) by H. J. Scheiber

These days, whether you function as a technical communicator, "quality" manager, or corporate VP, you well know that your own organization, and scores of others just like yours all over America (and beyond), are now being reinvigorated — reengineered, rethought, restructured, resized, downsized, decentralized . . . or just plain streamlined.

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On the other hand, maybe you're working in a culture organization, without readily discernible charismatic leadership or some sort of unique corporate culture. Your organization might be a "passport" or "marathon performer," according to Fortune, "built to last," consistently serving customers faithfully, maintaining satisfying P/E ratios, and yielding nothing but success.

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Handy also offers a collection of different items, but a collection...
Tools of the Trade

by Cheryl Reimold

A - C - T - N - O - W,
A Six-Step Response to Disaster (Continued)

Step 4 (Cont.): Prepare for a More Thorough Response to the World

Once you have organized your centers of information, called in experts, and formed a crisis team, you can prepare for a thorough response to the outside world.

Check your priorities. Care, compassion, and safety come first. Your first act at any point in time is to see if you can do anything more to help the victims or prevent any further disasters. If you are called upon to answer questions while engaged in helping people, simply tell the truth: you are taking care of people now. You will get all the facts later. No one will accuse you of making the wrong choice.

Then, plan for your explanations and updates to the public. Remember that you are addressing people — workers, spouses, parents, and children — not ‘the media’. You are not trying to outsmart, outgaze, or evade reporters. Rather, your goal is to speak through the media to the people who are in some way affected by your crisis. If you keep people as your focus, you will give an honest, thorough, and meaningful account.

Prepare for the five Ws. You can build good media relations by calling frequent news briefings and inviting reporters from local and national papers, radio, TV, and the wire services. Newspapers want the basic facts for the same day’s edition and more background and possible implications for future issues. The broadcast media want less background and more updates. All will ask you the five W’s:

What happened? Who is affected (employees, customers, stockholders, the public at large, kids)?
Where did it happen? When did it happen? Why? (Who/what caused it?)

If you still lack answers to these, search for them wherever you can. Get details on the product or event from your engineers, designers, operators, attorneys, and anyone else who would know. Seek any remaining facts from everyone involved, from company executives to outside experts to customers, bystanders, and even the media themselves. You can bet the reporters will check all these sources, and you want to know at least as much as they do!

Be scrupulously honest. Do not try to hide damaging information about your company’s performance or product. Remember, you are not the media’s only source of information. If you lose credibility in the early days, when people feel some compensation for you in your difficult situation, you will never regain it. Furthermore, mistakes in the approach to cover up a company flaw may eventually bury the company itself.

Now, formulate complete answers to the five Ws. Keep all latest facts, figures, and other specifics in a small notebook that you can always refer to and update. Make your answers clear and precise, with all technical terms explained in plain English. Rehearse your answers. You can be pretty sure that with a mile thick under your chin, your voice will slip a mile. Having your answers ready will help you regain the confidence and composure you need.

Say your piece. Now think about what you want to say. You are not simply an answering machine! You have the right — and the obligation to your company — to get your message across.

Prepare a written statement to read and distribute. Make it a single paragraph if possible. Say what you believe happened, what it means, what your company is doing about it, and any other message your company wants people to hear.

You can use questions as bridges to get your message across. Answer the question, then say you would also like to look at the larger picture or take a different approach, and then deliver your own message.

The media can help you get your message across if you approach the interview not as a battle but as a conversation between decent people, both of whom want to help people and stem a disaster. Remember, you need the media more than they need you. They will ultimately tell the story to the world. How you approach them may determine whose story they tell.

Cheryl Reimold is a member of the PCS Administrative Committee and author of more than 200 articles and several books, including How to Write a Million Dollar Memo, Being a Boss, and The Language of Business. She is President of PEC Communications, 64 Dickey Road, Scarsdale, NY 10583; (914) 725-1024 — which offers business in-house workshops and courses in writing, presentations, and on-the-job communication skills.

Do Some Corporate Cultures Adapt to Change Better than Others?

The concept of corporate culture is complex, but for our discussion, we can consider that it is made up of the physical things and patterns of behavior that reflect the values, beliefs, and basic assumptions of the organization. A culture that values the status quo may resist change, but may paradoxically be best suited to meet the challenge of change. A process culture, such as a public utility or telecommunications company, may have the scope and resources to achieve successful cultural change. It has the capacity to survive as the people and processes go through the cycle of change. A maestro culture such as an investment bank or movie studio may be entirely wiped out by changes in laws or in the economic environment. AT&T and IBM are still alive; E.H. Hutton and Drexel Burnham are not.

The survival of an organization, like the survival of an individual, also depends on its buoyancy, elasticity, resilience. Corporations which have such people have such organizational abilities.

II. Eighth Conference on Corporate Communication

The Eighth Conference on Corporate Communication, exploring “New Forces in Corporate Communication”, will be held 24-25 May 1995 at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. A 10% discount on registration is available to IEEE/PCMS members. The best papers from the conference will be published in a special issue which will appear in the Transactions. For further information, write to the Conference, Corporate Communication, M.A. Program in Corporate Communication, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, NJ 07940; phone, (201) 593-8709; fax, (201) 593-8510.

III. Coming Up . . .

In the next “On Management Communication,” a continued look at the forces changing communication in the workplace, and the role of professional communicators as change agents in the process.

IV. IEEE/PCS Archive

Papers, Transactions, and Proceedings are among the items held in the IEEE/PCS Archive at the Madison Campus of Fairleigh Dickinson University. The archive is open to PC members and scholars. If you have questions contact Michael Goodman at (201) 593-8709; or Ron Blied at (204) 488-7060.

Rudy Mancke Named Keynote Speaker for IPCC 95

Rudy Mancke, host of the nationally syndicated PBS series Nature-Scene, which is produced by South Carolina ETV, will give the keynote address at IPCC 95. Mr. Mancke will speak about how people perceive the world and make sense of it, and how scientists, engineers, and professional communicators can aid in this process.

IPCG 95 promises to be another success story for the PCS, as proposals are still rolling in from Canada, France, the People’s Republic of China, and the United States. Program Chair Roger Grice reports that proposals are split about 50-50 between workshops and presentations. Conference Chairman George Hayhoe encourages casual dress as we meet in beautiful Savannah to learn and to exchange ideas on maintaining our technical competency in one of the most dynamic and technologically challenging professions.

In addition to learning, George promises fun too. The conference banquet will be aboard the Savannah River Queen, which will leave from River Street adjacent to the hotel and cruise the Savannah River.

Make plans now to attend IPCC 95 and watch upcoming Newsletters for additional details of the conference.

I have yet to see any problem, however complicated, which when you look at it is the right way, did not become still more complicated.

— Paul Aderson

* Newsletter Schedule

The Newsletter publication schedule is:

- Issue: May/June
- Deadline: 7 April 1995
- July/August: 2 June 1995
- Sept/Oct: 4 August 1995
- Nov/Dec: 6 October 1995
- Contributions are welcome; ASCII e-mail and ASCII IBM-compatible diskettes are preferred. Please send the following:
  - David E. Nadziejka
  - David E. Nadziejka, 6009 Osage Avenue
  - Downers Grove, IL 60516
  - d.nadziejka@ieee.org
  - Tel: (708) 252-3297
  - Fax: (708) 252-3387
University of Washington to Launch Digital Media Design Laboratory

Someday soon, according to plans being made at the University of Washington's Department of Technical Communication, a new laboratory on the Washington campus will open its doors. The latest computer technology, he believes, will be a boon to the university and all its students.

According to Mark Haselkorn, project advisor, director of the Department of Technical Communication in the UW College of Engineering.

"The digital media industry in Washington is poised for unprecedented growth, and is likely to challenge areas such as North Carolina, California, and Georgia," Haselkorn commented. "It is essential that the state develop facilities that bring together experts from the multitude of disciplines that contribute to digital media design, which many believe is the single most common activity in computing today.

The terms digital media and multimedia refer to an amorphous category of new software combining sound, video, and graphics that meld, for example, film and television with computing. The technology is being brought to bear in a host of new delivery mechanisms and applications in business, entertainment, education, the arts, telecommunication, scientific research, medicine, and many other sectors."

Admittedly, the writing instructions are aimed at writers of fiction; Ms. Lamont, though writing a nonfiction work herself, makes no nod to us who deal in the factual stuff. Except that she sees telling stories as telling truth, in some way, and we are all in that business. In any case, there's a lot that applies. For instance ...

First, she says, give yourself short assignments. "Often when you sit down to write, what you have in mind is an autobiographical novel about your childhood, or a play about the immigrant experience, or a history of — oh, say — women. But this is like trying to scale a glacier. It's hard to get your footing, and your fingertips get all red and frozen and torn up."

She describes vividly the ensuing panic ("I realize that the well has run dry and that my future is behind me and I'm going to have to get a job only I'm completely unemployed and her efforts to get you back through slow and quiet breathing.

At our best, we write one-square-inch pictures.

Then "I finally notice the one-inch picture frame that I put on my desk. It reminds me that all I have to do is to write down as much as I can see through a one-inch picture frame. This is all I have to bite off for the time being."

Our immediate reaction, as employed writers, is to scream, "NO! NO! I've got to write this whole manual on the Chickensoup program, and I've got to do it all now!"

But the truth is, we don't write a manual "all now". Trying to write anything all at once produces convulsion and contortion and complexity. At our best, we write one-square-inch pictures. That's all the reader can take in at a time anyway. Give yourself and your reader a break, with short assignments.

She also recommends writing bad first drafts. (Well, her word isn't "bad", but this is a family publication and I am learning to be a Southern lady.) "All good writers write them. This is the way you work up with first and second drafts and terrific third drafts." This is how, she says, we quieten our minds.

"I know that," we reply. "I'm only just getting it down on paper." Lamont calls this draft the down draft, and the next, in which we fix it up, the up draft. And there's a third version, too, much our heads that tell us what we're doing very good, or interesting, or marketable.

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Letters to the Editor

It was good to read Joe Chapline's commentaries in the Jan/Feb issue. I'm glad to know that Joe is still "tickling the keys" of his organ.

His comment about multilingualism for PCS deserves consideration rather than a knee-jerk response of "Oh, no." The language of engineering and science is English around the world with few exceptions; in those exceptions the knowledge of written and read English is still very high among fellow engineers. But—and this goes to the nut of Joe's lemma: should PCS deal with communication topics in his field in more than English? He gives us good food for thought.

Also, Editor, an observation about the PCS Newsletter, from a fellow IEEE Editor who got speared by it in the past: one good reason for having the banner head of the publication according to the top of the cover is to be able to be visible in the thousands of magazine racks that populate our libraries and other literary establishments. Unfortunately, those of us who would, for good reason, want to turn the title vertically, cannot change those racks. In my parlance, this is a SYSTEM CONSTRAINT.

Pop quiz for readers concerned with trivia & systems constraints. How many remember the "improved, pop-up tissue" marketing fiasco of 40 years back? That company never regained market share. We never learn from history.

Keep up the good — and unapologetic — work on the newsletter.

—Dave Dobson
Chevy Chase, Maryland

Joe Chapline in his Letter to the Editor in the January/February issue of the Newsletter cites his experience with the technical manuals of the International Society of Organ-builders, which are published in at least two and sometimes three languages; he asks why "bigger and more significant technologies" can't also provide multilingual publications. I can't speak for all such technologies, but I do know something about the situation in physics, having edited a physics journal for much of my career. There are two aspects involved.

First, there may be the subject of the project. There are such things as "broken English". I'm not in a position to say how that came about, but I do know that for many years anyone who wanted to keep up with developments in physics had to know how to read English. I note that when I got my doctorate over 40 years ago, one requirement was that I be able to read the literature of the subject in German and French; that requirement has long since been dropped as unnecessary.

More pertinent is the matter of economics. The journal I edited was not one of the biggest, but even so it consists of some 5000 or 6000 pages per year. Chapline's proposal would at least double that. And there are journals whose page count runs to tens of thousands per year. Subscription costs are already substantial, and would have to increase—perhaps not by a factor of two, but not far from it. And that doesn't count the expense of finding translators to handle the papers that would be submitted in languages other than English. Someone may say, "Just have the author submit in German and English, with another language if he wishes." That I regard as senseless. If the author knows enough English to submit a version in English, why should there be the bother of publishing in other language, given that interested persons can read English?

I must say that I think it regrettable that so few Americans bother to learn any language other than English (and far too many don't even learn that very well). But I don't see Chapline's suggestion as a useful way to encourage a change.

—George L. Trigg
Brooklyn, New York

PCS Logo Contest: Free IPC 95 Registration to Winner

Visual communication specialists should have the upper hand in a PCS contest designed to enhance the Society's image with a logo. The winner of the contest will receive free admission to IPC 95 in Savannah and an appropriate trophy. But even more meaningful will be the knowledge that the winning design will regularly appear on Society literature.

The IEEE logo, which symbolizes the IEEE discipline, has long graced the Institute's documents. In recent years, more and more IEEE societies have emphasized their own missions by using a society logo in juxtaposition with the IEEE logo. PCS would like to enhance and publicize its mission and hopes to continue this trend.

The contest is open to nonmembers as well as members of PCS and IEEE. The judges are design professionals who are neither PCS nor IEEE members: they include Joan Hantz and Donna Bagley of Windsor Street Design, Rochester, New York; Theodore Kole of the Northrop Grumman Presentations Services Group, Bethpage, New York; and Michelle Robin of the RSAI Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Institute of Architecture, Troy, New York. Details of the contest, including a final submission date and a synopsis of the PCS mission, are presented in the official contest notice (see box).
Last Call for Activators!

If you would like to be an active participant in FORUM 95, send by facsimile or e-mail, a brief proposal outlining your idea to co-chair Brigitte Beutennmuller. Proposals will be welcomed for the activities outlined below or others:

- Technical Communication
- Production Aspects
- New Media
- International Communication
- Professional Communication
- Visual Communication

The theme for FORUM 95 is "Disappearing Borders: An International Conference for Technical Communicators." This multinational conference will be held in Dortmund, Germany, 13–15 November 1995.

If you would like to attend as an observer/delegate, complete and mail or fax the form on the opposite page.

Conference Site Information

The next issue of the PCS Newsletter will contain detailed information on Dortmund and the Westfalenhallen (the conference hotel), as well as the best way to get there from the U.S.A. or Canada. For the moment, here are some highlights:

- Coal mining is out.
- Seel production, for which Dortmund has been famous for over 100 years, is still a major activity, but so is the city's machine tool and precision equipment industry.
- Commerce, banking, and insurance have become predominant activities.

- Nearly 50% of the city's municipal area consists of green space.
- Dortmund's world-famous beer still tastes marvelous, but dining and drinking now have equal prominence.
- There will be more information in FORUM 95's bi-monthly Newsletter. To receive a copy, contact Ron Blicq at facs (204) 488 7294 or e-mail: r.blicq@ieee.org.

Committee:

Now that the Professional Communication Society is an INTECOM member, all PCS members qualify for the "member" rate for FORUM 95. The rates below are quoted in Deutschmarks, with 1 DM being roughly equivalent to 70 cents U.S. The first figure in each case is for conference registration only; the second figure (in parentheses) includes three nights' accommodation:

- Member rate: Early registration 695DM (1090DM) (before July 51) Late registration 965DM (1360DM)
- Non-member rate: Early registration 965DM (1360DM) Late registration 1165DM (1660DM)

Program Information

For information about the technical program, contact Lisa Moretto at 6001 South Kings Highway (Unit 767), Myrtle Beach, SC 29575; phone, (803) 238 9417.

Tips for International Communication (continued from page 1)

are culturally driven, they will not always surface immediately. Getting to the heart of these issues requires your having a good relationship with your partner, and this takes time.

For example, one project I was working on concerning the building of a maintenance center in our partner's country seemed to be going nowhere for several months. Through increased communication with our partners, several face-to-face visits, and the assistance of our in-country support staff, we came to realize that we were at a stalemate because of different objectives. Our objective was to provide the best customer service available; our partner's goal was to acquire foreign currency in the short term. Thus, while improving customer service via a maintenance center would likely bring additional revenues in the long term, it clearly would be a currency user in the short term. Once we had realized that we had disparate goals, we were able to deal effectively with this issue.

Tip 4: Confirm everything. Just because your fax machine indicates that the transmission was received, this does not mean that the desired recipient has the information. Perhaps the fax machine at the receiving end instead of the machine of paper or the cleaning woman threw out your fax, which was written in English. Just because you sent a letter confirming your travel arrangements and meeting agenda, don't assume that your partner received it. In fact, I have been on the wrong end of both these situations, and my recommendation is to confirm everything, in a variety of ways, and in the language of your partner if possible.

And even having done so, expect the unexpected. After working for months to set up a meeting in an Eastern European country, we were told after we had arrived that the meeting had been canceled. Thanks to the intervention of our in-country support person, we were able to hold a meeting after all, but this was taken slightly back by the whole experience.

Tip 5: Prepare and send your materials well in advance when preparing for a meeting, conference call, etc.

Always try to send any documentation to your partners well in advance of any meeting, in English as well as in your partners' language. This will give them time to adequately review the material and prepare any questions, thus making your meeting more productive.

... gaffes are cumulative and can lead to undue delays, misunderstandings, and even a total breakdown in negotiations.

It can also help ensure that the right people are present at the meeting. For example, in preparation for a service development meeting, we sent a "service negotiation package" to our partners in an Eastern European country several weeks before the meeting. Once they received and reviewed the package, our partners realized that they did not have correct technical representation planned. However, because they determined this early on, they were able to plan accordingly.

Tip 6: Learn a few words in your partner's language.

You certainly don't need to be fluent in your partner's native tongue — chances are he or she speaks English very well — but it will help break the ice and build a relationship. There are other communication benefits as well. For example, we routinely spent an hour trying to get our partner in Moscow, only to reach a secretary who did not speak English and would hang up. However, once we learned enough Russian to ask, at a minimum, where the individual was or when he would return, we made a connection. Sometimes, our partner was merely at another desk or had just stepped out for a minute. Knowing this, we were often able to complete the conversation.

Tip 7: Choose translators with care.

One size does not fit all when it comes to translation. Consider whether you need a business or legal document translated, a technical document translated, or a meeting translator. Ask for recommendations and be sure to check references. Time permitting, have the document translated back into English as a cross-check to ensure the meaning hasn't changed; you might want to consider tapping a university language department for this if one is nearby. The ideal option is to have a member of your team who is fluent in the language.

Tip 8: Understand the legal structure of the country in which you are doing business. What's legal in Peoria may not be legal in Prague, and vice versa. It is important to understand not only the cultural nuances of doing business in a given country, but the legal ramifications of your actions. Understand in particular the role and validity of contracts. In many countries, the contract is a personal, not corporate, issue. For example, in one country, when the head of the company changed, all contracts issued by the prior corporate officer were deemed

...
FROM THE EDITOR

We have a pair of common threads to this newsletter issue. The first is international communication, represented by the page 1 article by Deb Kizer and by two letters to the editor in response to Joe Chapline's letter in the last issue. English is the language of technical communication today, but most U.S. citizens, corporate and individual, seem oblivious to the benefits of knowing some other language to some degree. Whether or not the reason for this is hubris, the inability to even make a start at conversing in another language regularly puts the U.S. party at a serious disadvantage in today's international world.

The second thread is change, a topic brought up in the columns by Michael Goodman and Howard Scheber. Change is inevitable, so the saying goes; and that's likely true in language, throughout the biological world, and in today's personal and work life as well.

Change can be considered the essence of biological life. Yet even if that is true, the change being referred to is the change of growth and senescence and of occasional, almost imperceptible environmental alterations that can be adapted to without trauma. Major cataclysms — disruptive, life-threatening change — are rare within the lifespan of an individual organism within the natural order.

Organizational changes over the past five to ten years have been, in most cases, neither occasional and imperceptible nor cataclysmic. But the strain of a constantly shifting work environment is, I think, beginning to count among its victims even those who Mike Goodman describes as adaptable.

About six years ago I met a scientist whose workplace had been facing moderate but continuing budget cuts for several years. When we were introduced, he smugly stated that he was one of the "survivors" in his organization. Today, he still has his job, but he no longer has most of his staff, and cynicism has replaced the smile. Despite winning the "war" for continued support for his work, the attrition of spirit and enthusiasm (and creativity, no doubt) has been devastating.

Anyone can read the literature and find that placing animals under constant stress over long periods causes both psychological and physical damage. I think that many people today are in an analogous position in their work life: trying to take on new responsibilities, and do everything perfectly, even while they are still learning how to do carry out these new responsibilities... and to top it off, continually wondering if they will be in the next list of those who, in Howard Scheber's phrase, have been empowered by no longer having jobs.

I hope that some of the authors of the literature that Howard and Mike are drawing from recognize that it's not saying that people are a firm's most important asset that is important. What is important is the firm's managers acting on the basis that this is true.

D.E.N.

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Calendar 1995

23-26 April
Society for Technical Communication 42nd Annual Conference
Washington Sheraton Hotel, Washington, D.C.
For information, call (703) 522-4114

9-13 July
Eighth International Conference of the International Federation of Science Editors
School of Biology, University of Barcelona
For information: IFSE-8 Secretariat, Apartado 16099 K-08080, Barcelona, Spain
Phone/fax: +34 3 448 2373
E-mail: guerrero@phobos.bio.uib.es

6-9 May
Council of Biology Editors 39th Annual Meeting
Hyatt Regency, Kansas City, Missouri
For information, call (312) 201-0101

6-9 June
43rd Technical Writers’ Institute
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Contact: Elizabeth Keyes
Dept. of Language, Literature & Communication, Sage Labs
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, NY 12180-3590
Phone: (518) 276-2828
E-mail: Elizabeth.Keyes@uts.rpi.edu

27-29 September 1995
International Professional Communication Conference—IPCC 95
Hyatt Regency, Savannah, Georgia
For information, contact G. Hayhoe
(805) 644-5248 or ghayhoe@rsr.gov

13-15 November
FORUM 95 International Communication Conference
Dortmund, Germany
For Information: Brichte
Buchenrath, Manfredstrasse 44, D-70195 Stuttgart, Germany
Phone: +49 711 65 42 35
Facs: +49 711 65 07 67

Ten Tips for International Communication
by Deborah Flaherty Kizer

Success in today’s global business environment does not depend solely on an excellent product. Rather, you need to be skilled negotiators and communicators. Through my experiences in international service negotiation and development, I’ve developed my “Ten Tips for Effective International Communication.” While they may seem obvious to you at first glance, I have seen situations where time and again where these “rules” have not been followed. The effects of such gaffes are cumulative and can lead to undue delays, misunderstandings, and even a total breakdown in negotiations.

Are you ready?

Tip 1: Understand the culture and be cognizant of current events.
Clearly, a key success factor in international negotiations is building rapport with your business partner. By demonstrating a knowledge of the country, culture, and current events, you are showing that you have taken the time and effort to understand your partner. Not doing so can be embarrassing not only for you, but for your colleagues as well. For example, at a meeting in Prague following the breakup of Czechoslovakia, a member of the U.S. delegation continually referred to the country as “Czechoslovakia” rather than the correct name, “Czech Republic.” Finally, a member of the Czech delegation felt compelled to correct the American; all present were very much embarrassed.

In addition to reading globally focused newspapers, such as the New York Times and the Christian Science Monitor, you may want to order Brigham Young University’s Culturegrams for the countries you are visiting. These excellent publications provide detailed background information on history, demographics, and culture.

Tip 2: Hold your initial meeting face-to-face.
Granted, this can be expensive, but I have witnessed how valuable these initial face-to-face meetings can be in terms of building relationships, making sure everyone has a common understanding of the project, and seeking to understand expectations and desired results. You will reap the benefits by taking the time to initiate the project in person. After this first meeting, you can certainly rely on tools such as videoconferencing, facsimile, and telephone.

Tip 3: Understand expectations, motivations, and desired outcomes.
Clearly, if everyone has different goals, expectations, and motivations for a given project, that project is doomed to fail. A good place to start understanding these factors is at the face-to-face meeting. However, because many of these factors...