

Paula Berger, Candidate for 2nd Vice President

I want to thank the STC membership for giving me this opportunity to run for 2nd Vice President. Many people asked me to run for this office because STC and our profession need strong leaders. I have been a voice for change and progress in STC for years, I have a clear vision of where our profession and our society need to be, and I have the strength and willingness to lead us through these changes.

This article presents my views on the major issues that STC must address. The ballot materials and the candidate information printed in *Intercom* offer a brief summary of these issues. You can read more about my views, my STC experience, and my professional experience at www.paulaberger.com.



Providing Better Value to Members

Membership has dropped in recent years, partly because members and employers no longer believe STC provides enough value. We must re-engage technical communicators by redefining and improving our services. This is a major goal of STC's Transformation.

One of STC's primary duties is to foster the career growth of members by defining and supporting career paths they can follow in their own discipline or related ones. Our activities and offerings must focus on lifelong professional development.

- STC must increase educational opportunities for both newcomers and for senior members. We need to add educational offerings that focus on advanced skills for advanced practitioners.
- STC needs to develop comprehensive, industry-supported training programs that provides clear value to members **and** employers. Our strong special interest groups should work with education and industry experts to define curricula for basic and advanced certificates in their disciplines.
- Webinar topics and other educational offerings must be part of a coherent training structure, with the value of each topic defined in context of the focused training programs.

STC's financial arrangements must respond to the day-to-day concerns of members. Our membership fees must be appropriate and manageable. We must provide additional financial value to members, such as STC discounts on software products and reduced prices at an online bookstore. We should also partner with other associations to offer reciprocal discounts on events and membership.

Promoting the Technical Communication Profession

STC must embrace the multi-disciplinary nature of technical communication. Our diversity is a positive sign that our profession is evolving and we must welcome and support the many disciplines that constitute technical communication. As one society with communities from many related disciplines, we can take advantage of the stronger voice we have because of our diversity.

We must truly **lead** the profession, promoting best practices and educating the public, employers, and industry about the importance, usefulness, and diversity of technical communication. We must define where technical communication fits in the global business landscape of 2005 and beyond. To better define and increase our business value, we should solicit high-level industry leaders to join a new STC Board of Advisors.

Greater corporate support is key to STC's future. We must aggressively solicit support from companies that understand the benefits of a strong technical communication profession. We must promote corporate sponsorships for education programs, scholarships, and even specific recognition awards.

We must have a strong global presence and actively pursue new members and corporate involvement outside the U.S. Working outside the U.S. and belonging to a chapter in Europe for several years has helped me understand the global business of technical communication.

Other societies exist to support many of the technical communication disciplines – user experience, information design, and more. STC needs to look outside its boundaries and interact with other societies. We must build alliances with them, arranging reciprocal discounts on events, offering shared educational offerings, and perhaps even holding joint conferences.

Supporting STC's Communities

Communities have always been a real strength of STC. While many associations boast strong networks, STC is truly unique in the quality of the relationships that members form. Our members are committed professionals who care a great deal about what they do and about each other. STC has been a wonderful part of my personal and business life, with many STC members I consider both colleagues and friends.

We must nurture all our communities and help them thrive. "Seasoned" STC members usually have close ties to their chapters. Now, more people have also developed close ties to virtual communities. All our communities have great value and need to be supported fairly and equitably.

Our annual conference is an important part of the society year and offers wonderful networking opportunities. We can strengthen the conference by updating our approach to reflect our changing community structure. It may be time to align the conference stems with the special interest groups and have these communities take responsibility for defining the offerings in their stems. Perhaps our smaller conferences throughout the year can be based on disciplines and run by larger interest groups, either instead of or in conjunction with regional conferences.

We must also provide society-wide technology solutions that simplify community operations and communication, such as portals, job banks, event listings, online classes, and forums. We must provide additional training and support for community leaders, particularly in light of the proposed changes to the sponsor role.

Improving Our Management of STC

It is no secret that we need some internal changes in STC. The Transformation is a good start, but the STC Board needs to communicate better than it has. The Board needs to listen to members, to invite participation in discussions and decisions, and to explain what the Board is doing.. If I am elected, sharing information will be one of my key priorities.

We need to improve our management of the society's resources. STC needs to "open the books" to a greater degree, allowing members to understand how the society's resources are used. We also need to be sure we are deriving the maximum benefit from the STC office and directing them effectively.

Another area for change is the election process. Very few STC members vote, because our election process does not foster member involvement or bring issues into discussion. We should evaluate alternatives, such as requiring all potential candidates to submit petition signatures showing demonstrating member support.

Please Vote

STC is at a crossroads. We need leaders who are not afraid to take the more difficult path if it leads to greater benefits. Please give me the chance to help STC help us all. Thank you.