

The Value of STC: The Society for Technical Communication

The many rewards of membership cause me to renew every year—for myself and my clients

THINK OF YOUR LIFE-CHANGING MOMENTS. Rewarding, aren't they? I had one in the spring of 1995 when two local technical writers asked me to join them and others to start the Vermont chapter of the Society for Technical Communication—STC. Sounds worthwhile. Sure, I'll join.

And with that simple decision, I embarked on an incredible journey that has enhanced both my personal and professional life far beyond any heights that I could have imagined. To that, I am indebted to STC and its members.

Renewing my membership. I gain so much as an STC member, learning and applying an abundance of skills over these past fifteen



years. My career has been enhanced, and my clients have benefited. Membership has opened new venues for me, some that I couldn't possibly have envisioned. I simply cannot imagine being a professional technical communicator and not belonging to the one organization that supports and promotes that profession—STC.

This is a simple decision for me. I simply rejoin.

The cost of membership. There has been much debate about the dues for membership including belonging to a chapter and a special interest group (SIG). Is STC really worth the price of admission?

I look at this issue two ways. STC dues are about \$5.00 a week, the same as a venti espresso drink. Isn't membership in your chosen professional organization worth that? Not being a member also has its costs: lost benefits, lost access, lost opportunities, lost revenue. And those losses represent a far greater cost than dues.

Giving and receiving. I have given a lot to STC, volunteering for one position or another for every year I've been a member. While that might seem a lot, I have received in return far more. Let me enumerate.

Members. STC members are nothing if not passionate. This tells me a lot about the people who join, get involved, practice their profession, and commiserate with other members. STC members are the real deal. They—we—know our profession benefits others. There isn't puffery or pounding chests. Just pure competence, integrity, genuineness. Case in point: my three newest clients were all garnered through my association with STC and its members. Billings this year alone will exceed many tens of thousands of dollars, with more next year.

My continued membership keeps me in touch with other members, many of whom are my friends. I continually meet other members. I almost always come away from encounters with members with a profound appreciation for that person.

My local chapter. Don't ever let it be said that a few dozen people cannot impact the world. They can, and we did. At our meetings, we learn from each other. Our local chapter raised the bar for our profession. Employers and prospects look for and prefer STC credentials. Over the years, my company has received a number of contracts because of our STC membership, totalling well over one million dollars (\$1,000,000+) in billable services.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs). Early on, I joined the Consultants and Independent Contractors (CIC) SIG. Later, I also joined the Marketing and Instructional Design SIGs. All three are ready platforms for ideas, assistance, perspective, and simple camaraderie. Through the listservs sustained by STC, I have met and discussed much with members from all over the world. Always a helping hand, from people I respect and trust.

Intercom and Technical Communication. Recently, I was instructing a client on how to create meaningful slides (incor-

porating graphics and text) for their presentations. They balked. "What's wrong with bullet lists?" They wanted to know. I pointed to six articles from *Technical Communication* to support my position with valid research, as well as a number of articles from *Intercom*. That is the value of STC's publications.

Friends. "So, why aren't you playing music anymore?" This question, from a close STC friend, spurred another one of those life-changing moments. I didn't have a good answer. So I bought a new drum kit and began playing again. That led to the genesis of The Open Jam, which led to the formation of *The Rough Drafts* (see photo), and a number of gigs at STC annual conferences. This is just one anecdote in a procession of joyous encounters with my many STC friends.

Annual conferences. For a professional technical communicator, there is no other venue for collaboration, commiseration, education, repartee, consideration, reflection, growth, interaction, wonderment, and just plain excitement than STC's annual conferences.

Professionalism. In 2008, I became an STC Fellow. I had been striving for that goal since first becoming a member.

While I am quite proud of my accomplishment, it's more than just an award. What is most important is the professional that I have become because of that quest, how I am able to apply my expertise, how I have been remunerated, and the contacts I have made along the way.

Over the years, STC has provided the framework for my professional growth. My current level of expertise and professionalism is due in large part to the value of being an STC member. 🍷

—RICH MAGGIANI

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