

STC ORLANDO

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From L: Mary Burns, chapter vice president and program manager; W.C. Wiese, former Society treasurer and STC Fellow; Jon Kessler, chapter webmaster; Dan Voss, manager of chapter mentoring program and STC Fellow; and Debra Johnson, chapter president.

Three Unspoken Rules to Thrive

By Tavia Record

Many young professionals seeking the perfect guide for success in the workplace have read self-help books, attended seminars and have listened to motivational speakers, but they still feel unprepared when faced with “real-world” workplace politics.

During the October 2014 meeting for the Orlando Central Florida Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication, a panel made up of veterans from the technical writing industry presented the nuances of how they became leaders in their professions.

The panelists explored in great detail the academic courses, certificates and degrees pursued before landing their highly coveted positions.

W.C. Wiese, a communications manager in the defense industry, highlighted the importance of learning to write various types of content such as speeches, trade articles and annual reports.

The software technical writer, Jon Kessler, stressed the importance of understanding grammar fundamentals in writing.

The tone of the panelists’ responses took a spine-tingling turn when Lisa Bottomley, a chapter member in attendance, asked them to share lessons that were *not* taught to them in the classroom, yet helped them to rise in the ranks within their careers. The question unearthed sentiments over experiences that sounded almost reminiscent of a soldier in the middle of a battlefield.

To my enjoyment, the panelists dove deep on this topic. The following takeaways from the discussion resonate with me the most.

1. YOUR RELATIONSHIPS MATTER because every person that fills a position in the workplace is an investment worth value. Similar to the stock exchange, the value of an investment can change without warning. Therefore, “treat colleagues in all disciplines with courtesy and professional respect ... politely, but firmly, insist on the same treatment

[for yourself],” advised the chapter mentorship manager, Dan Voss.

2. PAY YOUR OWN WAY to avoid unexpected obligations for accepting freebies. Nothing of value is for free. Power moves are expensive. By choosing to pay the full price for earning your advancement into a position or a desired opportunity, you are only indebted to God and yourself.

3. BE INDEFINABLE, which is the art of being fluid. This trait will enable you to stay afloat with change. Use your skills and strengths as transferable assets that help your team to win as you take on different responsibilities and fill different roles. Never limit yourself to a job title. As chapter president Debra Johnson expressed, “Versatility is a protection against a reduction in force.”