STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

STC Communication Strategy
2006-07

Introduction

Communication is an organization's lifeblood that can energize and enable its members, leaders, and staff to carry out its strategic goals. Our ability to communicate well within each group, between groups, and to the outside world is what will create the synergy we need to move STC forward and make it successful.

All STC members, leaders, and staff need the ability to quickly identify, send, receive, and understand information that is credible, sensible, and relevant. Thus, STC leaders must structure their communication efforts in full support of the strategic priorities, with a strong focus on four strategic communication objectives:

- Culture
- Conversations
- Credibility
- Celebration

Through these four communication objectives, STC leadership will strive to integrate it's formal, semi-formal, and informal voices. All STC leaders must strive for consistency between their communication and their conduct. (Do what you say you will do, always.) Only through this behavior can STC achieve growth in membership, enhance its value to members, and attain global preeminence.

STC's Communication Strategy is designed to complement other STC strategies, such as the Interim Strategic Plan for 2006-07. All STC committees and communities should address communications specifically in their strategic and operational plans for the year.

Communication Guiding Principles

All STC communications must:

- Be sent by a named sender.
- Have a clear purpose.
- Be timely and relevant.
- Engage, inform, and inspire recipients.
- Be focused and disciplined; short and targeted.
- Be sent with honest and good intentions.
- Set expectations for rollout (if all the information is not available).
- Provide a path to background, supporting, or additional information, as appropriate.

Objective 1: Culture – create a culture of positive, open, honest, and effective communication

Situation Statement

STC communication is often reactive rather than proactive.

The Board of Directors needs to change the STC culture across the entire membership to promote good, proactive communication as a key element of how the Board conducts business and interacts with each other, members, and partners.

Description of Success

STC becomes an open-information organization.

The Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff must set the right "tone at the top" and become strong role models for the communication behaviors we expect from members and leaders at all levels of the Society, and in all dealings with business, partners, and academe.

Strategy 1.1: Make all information, unless legally protected, available to members.

Situation Statement

The general membership does not have all the information that it should have.

Failure to communicate information is unfair to members and serves to perpetuate a negative image of how the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and the STC Office Management/Staff conducts STC business.

Description of Success

All information, unless it requires legal protection, is made available to members in a timely, complete, and appropriate manner.

Information that members may find helpful includes election results (with vote counts and statistics), Board meeting agendas, and reporting schedules for community and committee leaders. Members get the information they need when they need it, understand how to request information, and have choices in the way the receive it. Regular improvements to communication processes, tools, vehicles, and content are built in to our quality model.

Strategy 1.2: Ensure that the STC Board of Directors works to a formal Communication Plan.

Situation Statement

A formal Communication Plan will help ensure that all communication is well-thought out, targeted, timely, and relevant.

The nature of the Board's work will continue to present situations where they must communicate to members about unplanned situations and events. Knowing this and planning for the unplanned situations, will help the Board to respond in a timely and sensible fashion.

Description of Success

The Board of Directors creates and executes a formal Communication Plan annually.

This plan is a living document that details as much planned communication as possible. It allows for unplanned communication in response to unexpected situations and events. As a result, the Board becomes much better at anticipating member needs and takes a proactive approach to identifying, preparing, and disseminating communications to meet member needs.

The Communication Plan is available to all members and partners, so that they are aware of what to expect from the Board and when to expect it. Member and partner input is an essential part of the Communication plan, and is gathered through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, and other feedback mechanisms on a regular basis.

Strategy 1.3: Ensure that every STC community, committee, and Management works to a formal Communication Plan.

Situation Statement

All bodies within STC must have their own communication plans.

These plans must reflect STC's guiding principles and help to develop and enforce the new communication culture. In addition, each plan must also reflect the specific needs of its members. For example, a small geographic community will have a different plan from a large virtual community or a multi-national working committee.

Description of Success

All leaders create a formal communication plan that is a living document, detailing planned communication and addressing an approach to unplanned communication.

These plans will help each community and committee to anticipate member needs and take a proactive approach to identifying, preparing, and disseminating communications to meet them.

All committee communication plans are available to the Board, office management, and the members, so that all are aware of what to expect from a committee and when to expect it. Member and partner input is an essential part of the Communication plan, and is gathered through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, surveys, and other feedback mechanisms on a regular basis.

Objective 2: Conversations – employ and promote conversational exchanges

Situation Statement

Conversations are two-way, open, and active exchange of information and ideas. Ideally, they are symmetrical and help to ensure mutual awareness, accuracy, understanding, agreement, and collaborative behavior.

Conversational exchanges will help STC leadership create the best experiences for our members, partners, and leadership and management teams. STC must adopt a much more conversational approach to communicating both internally and externally.

Description of Success

STC develops a conversational approach for communicating so that all constituents – individual, community, and committee – become engaged with enthusiasm and vigor. Our messages are *heard* and *believed* by all. It's all about relationships!

STC leadership openly and actively solicits member input and works closely with partners to communicate our programs and successes to the outside world.

Strategy 2.1: Openly gather and use member input to improve existing programs and services and to create new ones.

Situation Statement

This year – for the first time – a serious attempt has been made to garner member input to STC business.

The Society exists to serve the needs of it members and members must have input to its programs and service offerings. The process of gathering member input needs to be developed, refined, and reinforced to ensure that it becomes ingrained in how STC does program and service development.

Description of Success

STC employs a variety of appropriate feedback mechanisms to collect member input to and feedback on most aspects of STC business.

Members come to expect that their input and feedback will be solicited and used to help shape programs and services. This information exchange becomes part of the STC business process.

Strategy 2.2: Engage in joint communication activities with new and existing partners to further mutual goals.

Situation Statement

As identified in the Interim Strategic Plan, STC needs to extend current and develop new partner relationships to broaden the reach and scope of the organization.

Part of building these relationships successfully includes participating in joint organization activities and promoting those activities through joint public relations efforts.

Description of Success

At the onset of new partner relationships, STC and its partners make joint announcements and issue press releases about the mutually beneficial relationship.

Whenever an event or activity is planned, STC and its partners issue statements jointly to publicize the activity or event, such as joint press releases, magazines articles, and other appropriate items. Both organizations engage fully and enthusiastically in this communication with and to others.

Objective 3: Credibility – create, foster, and reinforce the credibility of the STC Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff

Situation Statement

The credibility of the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff has been declining.

This decline is due largely to a lack of information flow rather than any intentional deception or misdoing. Good progress has been made to reverse this decline, but there is more work to do before STC members and others perceive these entities as credible allies.

Description of Success

Integrity is the foundation of credibility.

The Board of Directors, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff must perform with the highest standards of integrity in all their interactions with each other, members, partners, industry, academe, and others. Conduct must always be consistent with what is communicated. Do what you say you will do! Over time, consistent behavior will demonstrate to all constituencies that the Board, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff are honest, genuine, and most importantly, credible.

Strategy 3.1: Make the Board of Directors, Executive Director, and the Office Management/Staff more accessible, visible, and approachable to members.

Situation Statement

Many STC members do not know who the Board members, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff are, or what they do to further STC.

This lack of knowledge and exposure creates a perception of distance between members and the leaders and management staff. Thus, the Board and office personnel appear to be out of touch and uninterested in what members want and need.

Description of Success

STC members and community leaders know who the Board members, Executive Director, and Office Management/Staff are and feel comfortable approaching them with their needs and concerns.

Information about board members and the entire staff is readily available to members. Members know how and who to contact for specific items. They feel confident that they will get the information and support they need when making this contact and asking for assistance.

Objective 4: Celebration – do good things and tell people about them

Situation Statement

STC does not do enough to openly acknowledge and actively communicate / publicize its successes.

It is not currently part of the STC culture to do good things and tell others about them. While STC has some strong recognition programs, these programs do not adequately address the breadth and depth of the recognition needed, and there are no programs aimed at recognizing significant efforts to communicate or publicize our accomplishments and successes.

Description of Success

STC puts emphasis on identifying and celebrating our internal and external successes by communicating them actively and openly at all levels of the organization and to the world.

As projects are completed, both on the Society and community levels, project participants write success stories that capture the best practices and the knowledge/lessons learned from the experience. These success stories will appear in Intercom, community newsletters, on the Society website, and any other appropriate communication vehicle.

When these projects/experiences are as a result of interaction with business leaders, partners, and/or other organizations, STC members will write the articles, share them with the other entities, and ask them to publish through their own outlets, such as newsletters and on their websites.

Strategy 4.1: Recognize and reward communities and individual members for actively sharing information across communities throughout STC.

Situation Statement

While communities tend to share ideas and information loosely through list-servs and discussion forums, there is not a formal mechanism for sharing information Society-wide.

In addition, there are no awards currently that recognize how effectively a community is participating in information exchange and the sharing of good ideas with other communities.

Description of Success

Our communities and individual members are recognized and rewarded for publicizing and sharing their successes and "cool ideas" throughout STC, benefiting all members.

The recognition and rewards available as a result of active information exchange become coveted by communities and members. The result is strong participation in the cross-pollination of successful ideas throughout STC (and maybe, a healthy sense of competition too).

Society and community leaders will be educated on this program and encouraged to actively watch for incidents where members are sharing and making information available to others.

Strategy 4.2: Openly acknowledge and highly publicize the success of STC communities, members, and activities and our joint activities with partners and academe.

Situation Statement

Currently, there are not enough options available to recognize the successes of individual members or communities for their special contributions, particularly in the communications area.

While there is the Community Achievement and Pacesetter Awards, these awards are targeted at the very highest levels of contribution and are not intended to acknowledge lesser, but still significant accomplishments. Also, these awards are only given annually to one community in each category.

Description of Success

STC expands its reward and recognition (awards) portfolio to acknowledge and publicize a wider array of contributions and accomplishments and on a more frequent basis. New awards are created that recognize successful communication on a regular basis. (Other Areas may create awards that recognize contributions to those areas, such as successful membership drives, marketing and PR campaigns, and so on.)

Special Society-wide recognition programs are created such as "STC Community of the Month" and "Technical Communicator of the Month". A Board member will attend a local event where the award is given to the community and/or members. In addition, the communities and/or member are spotlighted on stc.org and other Society-wide communication vehicles, such as in the Society pages of Intercom or acknowledged in the President's monthly e-mail message to members.

These programs will have communities and members vying for these extremely prestigious forms of recognition on an ongoing basis rather than once a year. Press releases and news articles are created as a regular part of these programs. Our powerful story continues….