



15 December 2009

Dear Fellow WVC Member:

It's that time of year again: time to renew our STC memberships, which expire on December 31st. I realize that for many of us, the decision whether or not to renew may be more difficult this year. The combination of the poor economy, employer belt-tightening, and the new STC dues structure will likely make all of us think harder about the value of our STC membership.

Each of us must consider for ourselves what that value is and whether it justifies renewal. I'd like to share with you what I consider to be some of the greatest benefits—both old and new—of membership and also make you aware of some opportunities that may help you be able to renew even if you are facing economic hardship.

Benefits of International Membership

Here is a summary of what I think are some of the most valuable benefits for all STC members:

- **Networking, networking, networking.** Members can introduce themselves to each other and share information through chapter meetings, regional and national conferences, special interest groups (SIGs), STC blogs and social networking sites, chapter listservs, national and local job lists, and more. And while this networking can certainly prove immensely valuable to members who are seeking employment or contracts, it can provide much, much more than job leads. Networking also fosters an exchange of ideas that helps members keep abreast of new processes or tools, get feedback on new ideas, or solicit help with particular challenges.
- **Access to timely information relevant to the profession.** Members can easily stay informed through two journals (*Intercom* and *Technical Communication*), an active STC blog, and a monthly STC news summary. The Body of Knowledge that is currently under development will also serve as an exceptional resource for defining the profession and its best practices.
- **Powerful lobbying for our profession.** STC as a body continually advocates for recognition of our profession and—by its mere existence—contributes to the “professionalization” of our industry. STC’s recent work to educate the Bureau of Labor Statistics more fully on the range and importance of our work should, in the long term, increase awareness of technical communication and even potentially lead to higher salaries.
- **Employment and Contracting Support.** In addition to gaining leads from networking, members seeking jobs also benefit from access to both national and local job lists, the Job Seekers Boot Camp, and frequent articles, conference sessions, and webinars on employment-related topics. Members can also purchase the annual STC salary report, which can help them negotiate starting salaries and raises.
- **Affordable, high-caliber educational opportunities.** Members can easily stay current on best practices, new tools and technology, and other industry developments through STC-sponsored webinars (now available 24/7), local and regional conferences, and the annual international summit. Members can also benefit from free webinars and conference sessions sponsored by industry vendors and practitioners specifically for STC members.

- **Professional recognition.** All members can claim and advertise their affiliation with the largest and most widely recognized professional association in the industry. Members who participate in certain online, annual summit, or pre-conference training sessions can also receive STC certificates in certain topic areas. And members who participate in local and international competitions receive not only entry fee discounts, but also recognition from the industry's leading professional group.
- **More discounts!** Industry vendors frequently provide STC members with discounts on books, software, and other merchandise. STC International also provides pension plans and group discounts on disability, critical illness, life, and long-term care insurance.

Benefits of Local Membership

In addition to the features listed above, members of the Willamette Valley Chapter can expect these benefits in 2010:

- **More networking!** Based on feedback from you, we are incorporating more networking-only meetings. These very low-cost events will provide you with even more opportunity to meet local colleagues and share ideas (and yes, job leads)! The first of these in 2010 will be on **Thursday, January 21** and will be **free to new members or members who have already renewed for 2010!**
- **Discounts at our exceptional program meetings.** The first half of our 2009-2010 programming year has already brought talks by industry leaders JoAnn Hackos, Anne Gentle, and Ann Rockley. Stay tuned for similarly high-caliber presentations for the remainder of 2010! Chapter members will typically receive a discount of \$10-15 compared to attendees who do not belong to STC at all and \$5-\$10 compared to attendees who are STC members but not WVC members.
- **Discounted educational workshops.** For the remainder of the 2009-2010 program year, we are planning two workshops: a half-day "Getting Started in Technical Writing" workshop and another sponsored workshop. And there will be more educational program meetings and workshops in the fall, after the 2010-2011 program year begins.
- **Opt-in listserv memberships.** Stay current on WVC news by registering for the announcements list. Or start a discussion on a topic of interest on our "talk" list or through our LinkedIn group.
- **Jobs list.** Our local jobs list is available for free to WVC members. Register for this service to get first crack at postings submitted to us by local companies.
- **Excellent newsletter.** Our newsletter, *The Galley*, is truly excellent! It recently won that evaluation in the 2009 newsletter competition. In addition to chapter news, the *Galley* offers timely articles on a wide range of topics relevant to technical communication in general and our chapter in particular.
- **Volunteer opportunities.** In addition to helping you maximize the networking benefits of WVC membership, volunteering provides great leadership development—and it doesn't hurt your resume either! Some volunteer opportunities provide yet other benefits. For example, competition judges gain exposure to what other technical communicators are doing, while web site managers and *Galley* authors develop portfolio pieces. I invite you to volunteer and help us make the local chapter even more vibrant and valuable to members.

Choosing and Paying for Your STC Membership

The dues for 2010 are both significantly different in structure and, alas, a bit more expensive. Although the increase feels sharp, especially in this economy, I continue to believe membership is a good value.

To help members fit renewal into their budgets in this challenging economy, STC is offering several different membership packages.

- **Basic Membership** (\$215 plus \$25 per chapter and \$10 per SIG)
- **Gold Membership** (\$395, includes one chapter, one SIG, and a long list of educational and other benefits)
- **SIG Value Package** (\$375, includes all SIGs; \$25 extra per chapter)
- **Student Membership** (\$75, includes one chapter and one SIG)
- **Retired Membership** (\$145, includes one chapter and one SIG)

We hope that you will be able to find a membership package that meets your needs and is affordable. Here at WVC, we also hope that you will either **select a membership that includes a chapter membership or add a WVC membership onto your Basic Membership or SIG Value Package. We need the support of chapter members to be able to continue to deliver valuable services to our local members!**

If the cost of *any* STC membership is prohibitive for you this year, I encourage you to apply for one of a limited number of “recovery packages” that are being provided for renewing members only. A full subsidy is available for members who have been underemployed or unemployed and a partial subsidy is available for others experiencing financial hardship. For more information, see <http://www.stc.org/2009/12/stc-offers-recovery-package-for-membership.asp>. The deadline for applying for a recovery package is December 31, 2009. STC is also offering a four-payment installment plan for all members.

A Final Thought

I do earnestly hope that you find your STC memberships valuable and that you will renew both your STC and your WVC memberships. In addition to availing yourself of the benefits I’ve summarized above, you will also be giving back. Your membership fees strengthen the profession by guaranteeing the existence of a high-caliber professional organization for technical communicators.

I look forward to seeing your name on our list of renewals. And I hope you have a happy holiday season.

Toni

Toni Mantych
2009-2010 WVC President