P&P Across an Organization, continued from page 1

comfortable writing policies and procedures.
- 95 percent were using the computer-based support tools.
- Mean score on the learner-satisfaction survey was 90 percent.
- 80 percent had used the job aid.

The hospital also compared writing samples before and after training. Improvements were seen in the following:

- Clearly defined purpose
- Increased use of the active voice
- Titles more reflective of content
- Categorizing and organizing information logically
- Increased use of subheadings to help users find their way through documents

In the future, the hospital plans to put all policies and procedures on an organizationwide intranet and, based on feedback from workshop participants, provide workshops on editing and proofreading of policies and procedures.

The hospital is well on its way to harmonizing all of its policies and procedures, with almost 1,000 in place already. The hospital also has been successful in creating a quality process to support staff in writing policies and procedures better and faster.

The job aid, "Writing Policies, Procedures, Protocols, & Guidelines—8-Step Best Practice Model," is available by contacting Rhonda Sussman at 416/744-2500 ext. 2457 or by sending an e-mail to rsussman@hrrh.on.ca.

Author's Note: This article was written with files from Claudette Moulton, patient representative, and Priscilla Fraser, educator, Humber River Regional Hospital.

Rhonda Sussman is policy and procedure coordinator at Humber River Regional Hospital in Toronto, Canada, and is a member of STC.

Deadline Reminder

The deadline for submission for the winter issue of *Steps & Specs* is November 25.

E-mail submissions to:
Kathy Craddock at
dizsuitsme@aol.com or
call 919/966-7904
for more information.

Steps & Specs
Kathy Craddock, Editor
103 Blueridge Rd.
Carrboro, NC 27510

Prsrt Std
US Postage
Paid
Akron OH
Permit #286

The mission of the Policies and Procedures special interest group is to assist STC members in developing, implementing, and managing policies and procedures communication through educational and networking opportunities, STC conference sessions and publications, and communication with other STC SIGs and professional organizations in areas of common interest.

Steps&Specs

The newsletter of the STC Policies and Procedures Special Interest Group

STC SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Developing Policies and Procedures Across an Organization

By Rhonda Sussman

In 1998 three hospitals in the northwestern section of Toronto—Humber Memorial, Northwestern General and York-Finch General—merged. After the merger, the new organization, Humber River Regional Hospital, faced many challenges related to policies and procedures. Each hospital had been following different procedures and using different formats and styles. Hundreds of policies and procedures needed to be harmonized and standardized. Consistent, high-quality policies and procedures needed to be developed. A key reason for doing so was to reduce duplication and increase efficiency.

To accomplish this, the hospital in 2000 developed a three-part solution: a model, training and on-the-job support. After speaking to managers and policy and procedure writers, researching best practices in policy and procedure writing, and consulting other health care organizations, the hospital developed an eight-step best practice model.

Overview of Model

The following steps were used to develop the model:

Step 1: Assess need. Do we have an existing policy or procedure? Do we need one? Is anyone in the organization developing one on this subject?

Step 2: Research best practice. Review policies and procedures from the predecessor hospitals, review policies and procedures from other hospitals, and ask the librarian to search for information.

Step 3: Develop writing plan. Set target dates for first draft and so on.

Step 4: Write policy or procedure. Draft, edit, and ask a potential user to comment.

Step 5: Review the policy or procedure with stakeholders. Get intensive input from managers of affected departments as well as from potential users.

Step 6: Obtain approval from the appropriate committee and/or senior management.

Step 7: Disseminate, communicate and educate.

Step 8: Review policies and procedures on a yearly basis.

After developing the model, the hospital had to provide staff workshops on how to use the model and the computer-based support tools available to them. Support tools include a master table of contents for easy search of the harmonized and approved policies and procedures, a list of policies and procedures in development, and review and approval forms. A job aid for staff to use when developing policies and procedures also was created.

In 2001 the hospital found that 90 percent of active policy and procedure writers had attended the workshops. To assess the effectiveness of the initiative, a random sample of trainees was involved in a follow-up assessment. Results indicated the following:

- 100 percent found the model easy and effective.
- 100 percent said they felt more

P&P Across an Organization continued on page 8

In This Issue

Steps & Specs is published quarterly by the Society for Technical Communication's Policies and Procedures Special Interest Group.

Editor
Audrey Cielinski Kessler,
330/677-8598 (office & fax)
330/677-1168 (home)
audck@aol.com

Assistant Editor, Design/Layout
Kathy Craddock
919/966-7904 (office)
919/968-6489 (home)
dizsuitsme@aol.com

P&P SIG Team Leaders
Audrey Cielinski Kessler, SIG Manager and Listserv
330/677-8598 (office & fax)
330/677-1168 (home)
audck@aol.com

Linda Charles, Listserv Archiving
416/960-6852 (office)
416/964-2417 (home)
lcharles@interlog.com

Candie McKee, Membership
818/557-0805 (office/home/fax)
candie_mckee@yahoo.com

Janice Haskins, Webmaster
davejan@ibl.bm

Raymond E. Urgo, Immediate Past Manager and Information Request Coordinator
323/957-9317 (office)
rurgo@urgoconsulting.com

Society for Technical Communication

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
703/522-4114 (office)
703/522-2075 (fax)
http://www.stc.org

Manager's Report:
Newsletter in PDF . . . Conference Call . . . Web Site Update Project

I regret to say that this issue of *Steps & Specs* likely will be the last one to be printed on paper and delivered through the U.S. mail. All of the SIGs' budgets were reduced this year, with each SIG receiving $4 per member. For the P&P SIG, that's 800 or so members. With postage alone costing close to $300 an issue and printing costs at least as much, there simply is not enough money in the budget to provide the members with four issues a year.

So unless something changes—like a printing company offering to print the four issues for free or at a substantially reduced price, then it will be necessary to follow through on plans to deliver the newsletter as a PDF file via e-mail. I hope that you will continue to find the newsletter useful even though the method of delivery will have changed.

****

The STC office held another conference call in September with a small group of SIG managers. One topic of discussion was the members-only section coming to the STC Web site. Included here will be the membership directory, a jobs database and back issues of *Intercom.* It was also noted that "a lot of proposals" had been received for next year's conference in Dallas. There also was some discussion about whether the SIG Web sites and Listservs should be open to anyone or to members only. The consensus among those participating in the conference call was that both should be open to all. Both were seen as ways to attract and retain members.

****

As I reported in a previous column, the SIG's Web site is being revamped. I anticipate that the revised site will be up and available by the end of September. I still want to add more content and would like suggestions from members about what they would like to see on the site. One way to contribute is to submit a question and answer for the FAQ link. The questions can be for any experience level, and the answer doesn't have to be long. It could be as basic as the difference between a policy and a procedure or something more complex. I want the site to be useful and used by current and prospective members. The way that can happen is if the members tell me what they want. I'm sure there are a lot of good ideas out there, and I'm eager to hear them. Send them to me at audck@aol.com.

Educational Opportunity

Introduction to Policies & Procedures Communication
(Web-based course)

University of California,
Los Angeles Extension

Dates: October 10-December 5

Fee: $550

Course No.: 439.19

Reg. No.: Not yet available

Instructor: Raymond E. Urgo
Contact: UCLA Extension
310/825-4192 or
http://www.uclaextension.org

Listserv Contributions, continued from page 6

In our former paper world, the main procedure would be on the left (back) of a page, and the detailed subprocedural information would be on the right-hand page(s) for folks to look over at.

I'm working with a credit union in California to develop structured on-the-job training. We're developing the procedures to 1) facilitate training by SMEs and 2) provide easy look up through the credit union's online help system. In order to accomplish this we've had to "chunk" the information. We call these chunks competencies; in an online help system they'd be referred to as topics. We organize the competencies into tasks, and then group the tasks into Learning Modules.

For example:
Learning Module:
  Opening New Accounts
Task:
  Open a New Membership Account
Competency:
  Verify Membership Eligibility
Competency:
  Issue an ATM card
Competency:
  Start a Payroll Deduction

What you'll find is that many of the competencies can be used in other tasks. For example, "Start a Payroll Deduction" and "Block and ATM Card" are used in several tasks throughout the credit union. In this regard, we try to "author for reuse." In the credit union's online help system, we write these once and then "assign" them to various tasks. Also, these topics become the searchable content for online help and quick reference by experienced employees.

* * * * * * * * * *

In our organization, I've instituted a process dubbed "visual documentation." This documenting system uses a variety of diagrams and quick reference procedure maps that reduce every task to simple steps. The process map shows the flow of the entire process examined, and the detail pages show the function, stimulus and response. The average read time is less that twenty seconds, and the average retention is about 90%. The process works best for procedures. This process is used in 911 call centers, and similar types of organizations. Placing this type of documentation in a PDF or similar file creates fast documentation that is easily referenced.

SOPs vs. "Other" Procedures

I am in the process of restructuring the system of procedures at the company I work for—a dairy manufacturer of mostly iced tea and ice cream. Currently, the bulk of our written procedures are for cleaning. Recently, our Change Management team identified the need to add "SOPs" for critical tasks as a priority (finally). This will include both technical (equipment start-up, operation, shutdown, cleaning—manual and CIP/COP, etc.) and non-technical (material handling, warehousing, etc.) tasks.

As I launch this effort, I struggle with the term SOP. Why are SOPs distinguished from "other" procedures? Personally, I prefer to eliminate this distinction. I think the division adds unnecessary confusion. Under each department, I do plan to categorize procedures by type (i.e., cleaning, operating, washout, etc.). Each type will have a set of procedures with a unique numbering scheme. I believe this will allow us to move away from that "SOP" mindset. After all, isn't a procedure a procedure?

* * * * * * * * * *

Responses:

In the aerospace business, we do distinguish between SOPs and other procedures. SOPs are routine, everyday tasks, including maintenance and startup of equipment. Then there are procedures that are specific to a particular product or process. The main difference is in the approval chain. SOPs get approved by organization heads, while product managers, QA, and even customers get involved in the product-specific procedures. But then aerospace is a lot different from dairy products.

* * * * * * * * * *

At my company, we use the term "SOP" to refer to a specific type of procedure, used during normal operations. We also use others for other types of documents. For example, an "LOP" is a Lockout Procedure that identifies the proper method for locking out a piece of equipment. An "EOP" is an emergency operating procedure. We don't have any other categories, but may at some point. So what is the difference—very little in format, however making this distinction is an easy advanced organizer for our users. The key is making sure your users can find and follow your instructions. I can think of at least a dozen different names for SOPs, so I say choose one you and your organization are comfortable with.

Editor's Note: We hope to feature posts each quarter in Steps & Specs*, so keep those problems and solutions coming. If you aren't already a member of the SIG's Listserv, you can join by sending an e-mail to subscribe-stcppsig-l@lists.stc.org or to lyris@lists.stc.org*

In the body of the email, type the following: subscribe stcppsig-l <your name>. Note that the brackets around your name should not be included.

To post to the list, send an e-mail to stcppsig-l@lists.stc.org Type a subject title. In the body of the e-mail, type your message and then send.

Sharing Your Expertise With Others: Listserv Contributions

Editor's Note: Recent posts to the P&P SIG Listserv have asked members to share their expertise on skimming techniques and the difference between SOPs (standard operating procedures) and other procedures. The original verbatim post and responses received follow below.

Skimming Techniques

I'm a fairly new technical writer at a credit union in Eau Claire, WI. I am re-writing procedures that have a lot of steps and am finding it difficult to balance between keeping everything simple for the new employees yet still getting the core content across (without being too wordy). Training loves the detail and flow, but employees on the floor find it difficult to skim procedures to make sure they have covered all their bases. Does anyone have any tried and true techniques in procedure format that they can share with me? I'd appreciate any help I can get.

Responses:

I write policy and procedure manuals, among other things, for a bank holding company in Minneapolis. Through trial and error, we have come up with some general guidelines, which I hope will help you. To complicate things, we have banks in five states, and some details of their policies and procedures vary. They have one main reference manual which includes all of the variations for all of the states.

1. Separate policy from procedure. We typically start each chapter with an overview which explains the policies, restrictions, as many of the state differences as possible, etc. This is in narrative and table format. We find that tables are an excellent way to present information.

2. When you get into the procedure, use lots of headings. You'll probably find that, even in one procedure, such as setting up a stop payment, you can insert headings as navigation aids.

3. Try to keep each numbered or lettered step to one action:

1. Fill out the ABC form:
   A. Check number
   B. Amount
   C. Reason for stop payment
2. Have the customer sign the form...
3. Initial and date the form...

4. Speak directly to the reader in simple, declarative sentences. Use the imperative voice:

- Key this...
- Tell the customer this
- Run the service charge entry
- Send the form here.

5. Include whatever graphics you can, particularly screen shots and form samples.

6. Use tables in the procedures when appropriate. Again, the more visual you can make things, the more easily they will be grasped. We present keying instructions in the form of a two-column table.

7. Understand, and try to make Training understand, that training materials and day-to-day procedures are different animals. They require different approaches. They can share material, but they should really be constructed and formatted differently. If you don't have that luxury, do your best to separate the narrative from the step-by-step procedures.

8. Format your procedures so as to give your readers as many navigation aids as possible. Besides headings, use running headings that repeat the level 1 or level 2 heading so that as people flip through the pages, they know at a glance which part of the procedure is being given. Use a consistent format for tips, warnings, etc.

9. Think about using a different character format for keystrokes, and perhaps one for fields. We use Helvetica Narrow Bold, upper and lower case, for keystrokes (key names as well as a value to key in a specific field.) We use the same font, all uppercase, to identify fields and messages. This helps people pick out specific types of information from a page. Don't use too many fonts and character styles, though. You'll lose your reader.

* * * * * * * * * *

How about trying to reduce the number of steps and put them into a meaningful graph either veritically or horizontally so the main steps can be easily skimmed. Each main point can then be visually represented with text below which might explain some of the minor associated points.

* * * * * * * * * *

Our reference material is online, and we've come up with a process that seems to work quite well for procedural information at expert vs. novice level.

The procedure is written at a task level—just the steps, in order, needed to accomplish the task. At each step, we have links to subprocedures that actually get into the detailed processing work—what to complete in each field on a screen, etc. This way, the experienced person can just make sure they don't skip anything—skim the procedure—and the less experienced can just click on a link to get the detailed processing information they need at any point in the process.

Listserv Contributions, continued on page 7

Vol. 8/ No.3/ Fall 2002

Member Profile: Ralph Robinson

Editor's Note: This quarter Steps & Specs *is pleased to introduce Ralph Robinson. Robinson has been an active participant in STC since 1988.*

***S&S*:** Can you briefly describe your background for our readers?

***RR*:** I graduated from Ryerson Institute of Technology (now Ryerson Polytechnical University) in Toronto in 1964 with a diploma in retail merchandising administration, a field in which I only spent approximately eight months. I've worked at a number of different jobs, being employed by companies such as General Motors of Canada, IBM Canada, General Foods Canada and many small firms. I also was a partner in a business venture, but I never found a position that was really a good "fit."

In 1984 I joined the Security Department at Garrett Manufacturing Limited in Toronto as a supervisor and transferred from that department to the Engineering Publications Department in 1987. The Supervisor of this department took a chance on hiring someone who knew how to use the English language, was mechanically inclined and thought logically. He was prepared to train me on the technical elements of the job. The department was responsible for producing engineering test procedures and test reports supporting the design and development activities of a major manufacturer of aircraft avionics found on 90 percent of the world's commercial aircraft. We also generated any responses the site received on requests for quotations.

In late 1993 the company began its implementation of the ISO 9001 quality management standard, and I became involved with the documentation efforts required to support that goal. In 1994 the company decided to centralize the administration and management of its P&P documentation activities, and I was given the opportunity to oversee this effort.

During all of this time the company's name changed from Garrett Manufacturing Limited to AlliedSignal Aerospace Canada to its current name, Honeywell Engines, Systems, & Services Toronto.

S&S: Tell us about your responsibilities at Honeywell Engines, Systems, & Services Toronto.

RR: As the only member of the Document Management Group at Honeywell, I am basically the chief cook and bottle-washer. I am a department of one! The Document Management Group is responsible for the administration and management of all P&P documentation required in support of the site's ISO 9001 registration. This group also is involved in the documentation efforts of the site's implementation of ISO 14001, the environmental management system standard.

Some of my responsibilities include:

- Establishing standards for P&P documentation generated at the site
- Editing and formatting draft documentation to ensure that it meets the company's needs and objectives
- Providing guidance and training to functional area staff on the writing of draft procedures and/or changes to procedures
- Ensuring that revisions to P&P documentation are issued promptly and delivered to all points of need at the site
- Developing, establishing and revising the processes for creating and changing P&P documentation at the site
- Acting as the point of contact for all audit activities pertaining to P&P documentation and its processes
- Providing functional management in areas not impacted by ISO 9001 or 14001 with guidance and training in the development of P&P documentation for areas under their jurisdiction
- Ensuring that new trends and/or requirements in P&P documentation are brought to the attention of management
- Driving the implementation of electronic delivery of the company's P&P documentation across the site

S&S: What do you like most about your job?

RR: This can be summed up in one word: freedom. I have been given the freedom to establish standards, develop and implement processes, advise people in power on company needs and requirements, and pursue personal improvement in the areas of P&P documentation without hindrance. This freedom has enabled me to grow professionally in ways I would never have dreamed and develop skills in areas I might never have considered. This freedom, and the support management has given me, has allowed me to have a positive and direct impact on how the company behaves and how it does its work and to acquire knowledge that has been useful to me outside of the work environment.

S&S: What are some of your major achievements in P&P communication?

RR: At the risk of patting myself on my back too much, I'll try to list only those that provided me the greatest personal satisfaction. These include:

- I have been able to write two books on P&P documentation for ISO 9000 that have been well received, and I hope to have helped others be successful in this area of work.

Member Profile, continued on page 4

Member Profile, continued from page 3

- I have had the opportunity to conduct full-day workshops at STC conferences on documenting ISO 9000 and share my knowledge with my peers.
- I have had the opportunity to teach at a community college in its post-graduate program every spring since 1999 and share my knowledge with people preparing for careers in quality systems management.
- I have had the opportunity to establish and promote the value of effective P&P documentation at my employer to the benefit of current and future employees.

S&S: How did you become involved in P&P communication? Was it by design or by default (by accident)?

RR: Well, it was a little bit of both. During a course in technical writing at a local community college, the subject of ISO 9000 and its potential for career opportunities for technical writers was discussed. For some reason, this subject intrigued me, and I began to read more on the subject. The more I read, the more interested I became. Unknown to me, my employer was embarking on an initiative to implement an ISO 9000-compliant quality management system across its aerospace division at the same time.

A timely query of my immediate manager led to a search to see if anything was happening at our faciility and ended in my talking with the person coordinating the implementation efforts in Toronto. With my manager's permission, I volunteered my services as a technical writer and soon found myself being drawn ever deeper into the world of quality and documenting quality systems and away from engineering publications. By mid-1994 I was working full time in this area and, when the company decided to centralize the administration and management of the ISO P&P documentation activity, my manager gave me the opportunity to oversee these efforts.

As other departments not impacted by ISO 9000 began to see the value of having documented policies and procedures in place I was given the opportunity to assist them and ended up being asked to add the administration and management of their documentation to my responsibilities.

S&S: When someone asks you, "What do you do?" what do you say?

RR: I tell them that I am responsible for ensuring that the policies and procedures required by the company enable it to always do things the same way, time after time. It is my responsibility to make sure these documents are available where they are needed, effective in relaying the required information and applicable to the work being done.

S&S: How do you define P&P?

RR: Policies and procedures are the documents that define the company's intentions, establish the processes for meeting those goals and provide the details that enable employees to consistently perform their tasks to the satisfaction of the organization and its management.

S&S: What makes you a good P&P communicator?

RR: Well, obviously an ability to use the English language properly is of critical importance. I also think my understanding of how business operates based on my exposure to a broad range of businesses and occupations within them over the years gives me the ability to see the larger picture. My willingness to dig out the required information, whether it's how a process operates or what a standard requires, provides me with a depth of knowledge in my area of specialty: international standards.

I find it easy to relate to people at all levels of business, from the president to the shipping clerk, and I really enjoy working with people, especially helping them overcome problems they may be encountering.

S&S: What are the key talents, interests, education and personality characteristics of a successful P&P communicator?

RR: Speaking only of documenting international standards, it is imperative that you fully understand the requirements of the standard. While that may sound simplistic, there are many people writing ISO documentation who have a poor understanding of just what the standards really require. In today's world, a strong background of education in technical or business writing coupled with the ability to think in a logical manner also are keys to success in P&P documentation.

You have to like working with people. I don't think a loner or introverted person could be successful in this field, but I could be wrong. A key trait also is the ability to listen, digest and regenerate the information given you by people intimately involved in the process. You have to be able to see the forest, not just the trees.

You have to be good at dealing with frustration. Many times you will deal with people who just don't care, can't see the value of your work and may not be very cooperative. But you must push on and get the job completed.

S&S: What advice would you give someone who wanted to get into P&P documentation?

RR: Learn everything you can about the company, how it really operates, who really does the work and who is really in the know. Learn everything you can about your craft. If you're documenting international standards or regulatory requirements, become intimately familiar with their requirements.

Member Profile, continued on page 5

Member Profile, continued from page 4

Be confident, but not cocky. Often you will be the expert in your field, but you must use that expertise wisely.

S&S: Tell us about your role in STC and how that has changed in the last few years.

RR: When I joined in 1988, my chapter was relatively small, and I was just a member at large. Since I became involved in documenting ISO, I began speaking at STC conferences and have worked behind the scenes at the chapter level helping with the little things that make it successful. Our chapter had the opportunity to host the STC Annual Conference in 1997, and I served on the host chapter committee. This was a great opportunity to grow both personally and professionally, and I would do it all again.

In 1999 to 2000, I had the opportunity to serve STC as manager of the Quality SIG, but I must admit to having been a little over my head in this endeavor. SIG activities stagnated, and I was unsuccessful in generating the enthusiasm among the membership that the SIG deserved. I am pleased to see Lori Fisher return to help reactivate the SIG. I was asked to help establish a SIG recognition program in 2000, and I'm pleased to say that the program came into being, and the first awards were given in 2002.

S&S: What do you like to do outside of P&P?

RR: Along with my teaching and book writing, I serve on the Canadian Advisory Council (CAC) to the Standards Council of Canada. This is our national standards body, and I'm involved with a group that is providing input into the drafting of international guidelines for systems and software engineering. Within the CAC, I have just become the prime, or leader, of the working group concentrating on guidelines for documenting systems and software.

I recently developed an e-learning course based around documenting ISO 9001:2000 and am involved with the company Celerity Learning Solutions Inc. that is making the course available over the Internet.

I also am an avid motor racing fan with an interest in GT and GTP races and try to get to see as many races as possible throughout the summer.

Ralph E. Robinson can be reached at rrobin@celeritylearning.com or 905/507-5857.

Reminder

Steps & Specs will no longer be published in hardcopy. Beginning with the winter quarter issue *Steps & Specs* will be delivered in an e-mail as a PDF file.

If your e-mail address has changed, please notify the Society office as soon as possible.

The contact information is:

901 N. Stuart Street, Suite 904
Arlington, VA 22203-1822
703/522-4114 (office)
703/522-2075 (fax)
http://www.stc.org

Get Involved

There are lots of ways to be involved in the sharing of information within the P&P SIG.

One way is to submit your bio. This would be a good place to introduce yourself, describe your expertise, and share your specific interests in policies and procedures. We will use your bio on the SIG's Web site and will feature a P&P member each quarter in the SIG's newsletter. Just a few lines are necessary: your name, position, background, experience and any special challenges you face.

Another way is to submit questions and their answers for the FAQ feature of the SIG's redesigned and soon-to-be-completed Web site.

Both of these are easy ways to be involved and will also serve as a great way to share your knowledge with others and network.

Interested? Contact Audrey C. Kessler at audck@aol.com or 330/677-8598 or Kathy Craddock at dizsuitsme@aol.com or 919/966-7904 for more information or to submit your bio or FAQ.