New look, new Web!

Now that the newsletter has a new look, how about a new Web site?

We are in the process of reviewing the SIG’s Web site, making changes and incorporating your feedback.

Check out the current site at www.stc.org/pics/ppsig/www/index.htm, and give us your suggestions, ideas or comments.

We would love to hear from you.

Email the editor: lrrowsmith@usg.com

Steps & Specs

by Ralph R. Robinson

Changes in Scope

As I indicated in the previous article, ISO 9002 and ISO 9003 will cease to exist with the release of the ISO 9000:2000 series of quality standards. Companies will now register to a single conformance standard, ISO 9001. The new registration certificate will indicate any activities defined in ISO 9001:2000 that do not take place in the organization as part of its scope of registration.

Changes in Terminology

ISO 9001:2000 uses words that are familiar to most of us in business today. This shift to more common business-oriented language will make it easier for users to understand the requirements of the standard.

Increased Focus on Management Responsibility and Assurance of Resources

While this isn’t so much a change as a clarification of intent, the new wording helps to clarify top management’s responsibility to establish an effective quality management system leading to customer satisfaction and ISO 9001:2000, cont. on page 4
P&P SIG Members’ Areas of Expertise, Interests Cover Wide Spectrum

by Joy Osaka-Lu and Audrey Cielinski Kessler

If the SIG’s membership can be considered an accurate measure, then the “typical” technical communicator is someone with expertise in producing user manuals and an interest in documentation in general.

An “atypical” technical communicator, on the other hand, is likely to have expertise in either marketing or ISO 9000 documentation and an interest in matters related to SIG membership or chapter-level SIG liaison activities. In between is an array of other areas of expertise and interests.

According to data collected from members of the Policies and Procedures SIG from August 1999 through July 2000, 14 percent (68 members) of the SIG’s 460 members chose user manuals as their area of expertise.

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In a clear minority are the 10 members (2.1 percent) who cited marketing and the 14 members (3.4 percent) who cited ISO 9000 documentation as their area of expertise.

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In terms of the SIG members’ interests, no single category was a clear winner. Cited most frequently was documentation, accounting for 83 members or 18 percent. Close behind were professional development and information technology, cited by 14.7 percent (68 members) and 13.4 percent (62 members), respectively.

At the bottom of the rankings hierarchy were membership (1.3 percent, or 7 members), chapter-level SIG liaison (1.7 percent, or 8 members) and new-member relations (1.9 percent, or 9 members).

Other areas of expertise, cited by too few of the SIG’s members to be classified as a separate category included loss prevention, communications, marketing and the migratory birds, or the more seasoned P&P communicator is likely to have expertise in general.

No other area of expertise came close to this number, with only slightly more than half as many members (37, or 8 percent) citing instruction design/training as their area of expertise. Close behind in a tie for third place are system manuals and online documentation, with a total of 34 members (7.3 percent) in each category.

From the P&P SIG Manager

by Audrey Cielinski Kessler

As many of us take our cars for a tune-up or ourselves to the doctor’s office for a checkup once a year, the Society’s SIGs also undergo an annual inspection of sorts. And the news is good. Excellent, in fact.

For perhaps the first time in its history, the SIG program has achieved a status of “Excellent,” with 82 percent of the Society’s 17 SIGs (including the Policies and Procedures SIG) having done so. This compares with 64 percent of SIGs in 1999.

One person can make a difference.

How did we get there? And, perhaps more importantly, how do we stay there? In short, the answer is “you.” It is the members who make the SIG what it is or, in the reverse, what it is not or what it fails to be.

You might think that you, as an individual P&P SIG member among a total of several hundred others, you can’t make much of a difference, or that you don’t have time to get involved beyond checking off the P&P SIG on your annual dues statement, or that you’re not expert enough in P&P communication to make a meaningful contribution. But on each and every score, you would be mistaken. One person can make a difference.

Active involvement in the SIG, however, doesn’t have to mean a long-term, time-consuming commitment. And you do have an element of expertise to contribute to the group. It’s not likely that any of us would be where we are today in our careers if we totally lacked any knowledge of policies and procedures communication. Even persons new to the field have something to contribute. They can, for example, offer a perspective that for the more seasoned P&P communicator is but a distant memory.

So how can you make a contribution to your SIG? By volunteering either on a long- or short-term basis. For the latter, you could write an article for the SIG’s quarterly newsletter. We’re not taking here about a voluminous scholarly tome that will require weeks or months of your time. Anything from one to several paragraphs will suffice. Perhaps you have a tip or two related to the craft of P&P communication that you could share with your fellow members. Or a case study on how you or your organization dealt with a cantankerous subject-matter expert or a printing snafu or the migration of your storehouse of P&P documents from hardcopy to online. The list of possible topics is virtually endless.

Other volunteer opportunities are also available, such as helping in earlier stages of preparing the SIG’s proposal for presentations at the Society’s annual conference the following year. Or you could volunteer to be a conference speaker or moderator for a P&P panel, workshop or progression.

You may think you don’t have anything of value to contribute, but I would venture to guess that you really do. So I urge you to get involved. It’s not hard. You already have the knowledge and the skills to make it happen, to ensure that the health of the P&P SIG remains robust and vital to its members—to you.

Who Should be on the Team?

W hen you get ready to take your company’s policies and procedures online you will want to have the right team in place to ensure that your policies and procedures are usable. Don’t try to take the information and just place it on the corporate intranet if you want your employees to use it.

Be sure to have a Human Resources representative as well as a technical communicator on the team to ensure proper chunking of information.

Want to write a book review?

D o you have a specific book you’d like to see reviewed in this newsletter?

If you answered “yes” to either question, please e-mail the editor at larrowsmith@usg.com and give her your ideas.

Without your input, the newsletter can’t evolve to meet your needs. We want to hear from you, so please, send us your comments and suggestions. We’d like to know what you’re thinking.