
Making a Difference

By Jeff Cox

Some people come into our lives for a short time, provide us with something that brightens our days with them, and are then gone—like the fireflies that light up summer nights. Such people can be found in our career lives, as well as other areas of our lives. Eve Dravecky is such a person. She was my manager for two years when I worked at Intergraph in the mid-1990s, and she made a memorable, positive impact on my career. Through her example, I was exposed to a number of great leadership principles.

As I got to know Eve, I found that she had a high degree of professional knowledge, an easy-going demeanor, and a genuine concern for all of her writers. I quickly discovered that she was an excellent resource of information. When I had a documentation issue, she would likely have already researched it and would have a solution. If the issue was new, she would get it researched. All of these cases were thoroughly documented in the event someone in the group ran into the issue again.

Another aspect of Eve's management style that made a big impression on me was her non-hesitance to take up for her employees. Although it varies from company to company and even organization to organization, documenta-

tion is sometimes pushed aside to the last minute. Not on Eve's watch! She would also ensure that we were not unfairly blamed for issues related to external departments that impacted our document delivery schedule.

Eve always assigned tasks to her writers that challenged them and stretched their abilities, thus making them better technical commu-



nicators. She could see abilities in her writers that they might not. She had a knack for striking that delicate balance between challenging and overwhelming her writers. On one particularly high-profile project, she put me in charge of the online documentation component as well as the document control for the entire project. I did

not have much experience at the time, so this was a great responsibility. However, the skills I learned on this, and other projects, served me well in subsequent positions and prepared me for future responsibilities.

I think Eve's most important trait was taking a personal interest in her employees' goals by going the extra mile to help them with their achievement. For example, I was once considering returning to graduate school full-time to pursue a journalism graduate degree and discussed this with her. She happened to know a professional journalist and arranged for me to have lunch with him so that I could discuss the pros and cons of the

idea. As a result of this meeting, I discovered that mine was not a viable plan and instead decided to continue working and attain a master's degree that would augment my technical communication career.

Eve recently retired from Intergraph, and I run into her from time to time at STC luncheons. She remains a permanent fixture on my Christmas card list.

Although it was many summers ago, the lessons learned from that brief time with Eve, my career firefly, illuminated a path that still provides a guiding light through the twists and turns of the ever-changing world of technical communication.

Editor's note:

Since retiring, Eve has redone her screened porch and taken to traveling far and wide with her husband, visiting friends and family.

Save the Dates

Technical Communication Summit

STC's 55th Annual Conference
and EXPO

Pennsylvania Convention Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 1 – 4, 2008

Technical Communication Summit

STC's 56th Annual Conference
and EXPO

Atlanta, GA

2009