
The President's Message



By Jeff Cox, President

Halloween came early this year, but so did Christmas.

Near the end of September, a co-worker and I looked up one morning to see the president of our company and an HR representative walking down the hall. They had made an impromptu visit from their offices in Washington, D.C. and San Antonio, respectively, to inform us that our local office was being shut down.

We were given the option of relocating or being laid off. Since I did not want to relocate, I lost my position and was back in job search mode almost immediately. Early trick or treat!

You may wonder what the above story has to do with this issue's focus on networking in general, or yourself in particular. It is this: in today's business world, many of us are a merger, buy-out or other business decision away from a scenario such as this. I loved my former job (something I can say with the utmost honesty)

and treasure the relationships with the people I worked with. I had no desire to ever leave.

As I write this in early December, I am as happy as a child unwrapping presents under the Christmas tree. I luckily met a fellow STC member at an event and we began talking. I discussed my writing experience and career goals with the member. This led to my resume being forwarded to someone looking for a writer, which in turn resulted in a wonderful new job. Early merry Christmas!

How do we prepare for the unknown? Here are a few things that every technical writer can do:

- **Keep your resume current** – Even if you are secure and content in your current position, it is a good idea to keep your resume up to date. If you ever need it, you will be prepared for any position to which you may wish to apply.
- **Network (of course)** – You can never know enough people. It is easy to get discouraged while searching for jobs if the market is tight. Building professional and personal relationships with other writers now can be personally and professionally fulfilling, but also provide the added benefit of an inside track with your contacts.

- **Branch out** – In today's business world, technology becomes obsolete at an ever-increasing rate. Your skills are your technology. Are you knowledgeable on the latest and/or emerging tools of the profession? The STC and local universities offer a wealth of information. Perhaps there are opportunities to work outside your area of expertise. Take them. You will become more valuable in your present job and have more to offer potential employers if you need to look for a new job.

- **Inventory your skills** – Your skills are your value to a company. Do you know what they are? Think creatively and evaluate all you have to offer. Could your experience be applied to another functional area, such as software certification, interface design, marketing, etc.?

- **Do it now** – Finally, do not wait until you need to do any of the above. Everything takes time, and your bills won't wait for you.

I never dreamed I'd be giving an example of using networking to find a job when I wrote the first president's message of the year, but here I am. If networking can work for me, it can work for you.

