



STC-PSC Marketing Plan: Executive Summary

The Puget Sound Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication (STC-PSC) is a professional association dedicated to the advancement of technical communication. STC-PSC serves members in western, central, and eastern Washington. The southwestern region of Washington is covered by the Willamette Valley Chapter of the STC.

In recent years, STC-PSC has seen a decline in membership, so we conducted a survey to help us understand more about current members and what they want out of their memberships. The survey revealed:

- A vast majority of members are aged 35 and above
- Most members have a bachelor's degree or higher
- 83 percent of members want to have the option of attending meetings virtually
- A majority of members are direct employees of a company

After analyzing these results and performing additional market research, we arrived at these goals for the coming year:

1. Increase memberships, especially those aged 35 and under, by 10 percent by May 2016
2. Implement virtual chapter meetings by the end of the first quarter of 2016
3. Get five companies to give their employees 2016 memberships through STC's [Corporate Value Membership Program](#) by the end of the fourth quarter of 2015

The following plan explains how we will reach those goals.

STC-PSC Marketing Plan

Situation Analysis

STC-PSC provides learning and networking opportunities for technical communication professionals based in western, central, and eastern Washington and operates within the [vision and mission](#) set by the larger international STC organization.

Currently, we have 140 members, yet we have a list of 900 email subscribers who receive our mailings. Most of these individuals are not members. A decade ago, we had 800 members. We want to understand why membership numbers are down and have developed this plan to increase membership numbers over time.

STC International Vision

The Society for Technical Communication is recognized as an authority in the disciplines of designing and delivering content; and a leader in articulating the value of content and the value of those who develop it. Membership in STC is an internationally respected and desired complement to the study, teaching, and practice of technical communication.

STC International Mission

The Society for Technical Communication advances technical communication as the discipline of transforming complex information into usable content for products, processes, and services. STC serves its members by identifying and promoting best practices in the field and by demonstrating the economic value delivered by technical communicators. By providing lifelong learning opportunities, we help our members develop their skills and competencies so that they may advance in a variety of career paths.

STC-PSC Survey Results

A recent survey of the STC-PSC membership shows that:

- A vast majority of members are aged 35 and above
- Most members have a bachelor's degree or higher
- 83 percent of members want to have the option of attending meetings virtually
- A majority of members are direct employees of a company

This plan takes into account the current situation and the STC-PSC survey results, as well as the STC International vision and mission statements.

Our Market Advantages

- We have strong, dedicated leaders
- We hold competitions while many other chapters do not
- We offer volunteer opportunities for people regardless of experience (growth opportunities)
- We have a scholarship fund while many other chapters do not
- We have a solid financial foundation with \$19,000 in our budget

Our Market Challenges

- We do not have younger people joining the chapter, which threatens our long-term viability
- We are losing our relevance in the field because we are seen as too broad-brushed and old-school
- Our field is a moving target; it changes so quickly with technology developments that it is hard to keep up
- Membership costs are perceived as being too expensive for some (\$250 a year). Membership costs include international dues (\$225) and local chapter dues (\$25). Reduced rates are available for New TC Professionals, Students, and Retired members.

Threats Posed by Competing Professional Associations

- Some associations charge less for memberships and offer more than we do
- Many offer programs targeting a specific area of technical communication like user assistance or instructional design, whereas we broadly touch many areas of technical communication
- The [Association for Talent Development \(ATD\)](#) conducts their chapter meetings on the same Tuesday of the month that we do
- Five out of ten associations have active local chapters
- Four out of ten associations offer some kind of program that caters to students

Outside Forces that May Affect the Chapter

- We do not have enough volunteers to run the chapter:
 - We are lacking a Vice President, Education Manager (in December), Programs Manager (in January), Employment Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, and Sponsorship Manager
 - Some of the board and committee members are taking on additional tasks because we don't have enough volunteers, which increases the possibility of attrition
- Our website is out of date and inactive because we do not have enough volunteers to keep the pages fresh with current content

Target Audience

Our target audience is technical communication professionals who live and work in western, central, and eastern Washington. Most of our members are senior-level professionals. We are interested in keeping those members but, in addition, would like to recruit members from these groups:

- Students
- Entry-level professionals (0 to less than 2 years' professional experience)
- Mid-level professionals (2 to less than 7 years' professional experience)

Today, most of our members work directly for a company. Since our cost is perceived as high by some, particularly contractors, and we do not have control on setting the price, we will focus on recruiting members who work for companies that will likely pay for their employee's memberships through STC's [Corporate Value Program](#).

Goals

Our goals this coming year are to:

1. Increase memberships, especially those aged 35 and under, by 10 percent by May 2016
2. Implement a virtual option for chapter meetings by the end of the first quarter of 2016
3. Get five companies to give their employees 2016 memberships through STC's Corporate Value Membership Program by the end of the fourth quarter of 2015

Strategies to Reach Goals

The following sections describe our strategy for reaching these goals.

How to Increase Membership

Offer a free open house

We will offer an open house in October 2015. This will be a speed networking event where we will invite all of our members, subscribers (those on our *big email list*), students, and other technical communication professionals to attend.

Develop and market a tagline to set the direction of the chapter and communicate it to the members

Make the direction of our local chapter clear. Market research and the STC International vision and mission statements indicate that the chapter should focus on writing and editing and how that contributes to useful content. To send that message, we have developed a chapter tagline that sums up who we are and what we do. The tagline is: *Promoting effective communication*. Keeping our focus broad will set us apart from "our competition," that is, other professional associations, special interest groups, and communities of practice that have a more narrow focus. We want to encourage members to explore these specialized communities and should make it part of our service to refer and link to these communities as much as possible.

Doing so will allow us to focus on the broader scheme of promoting effective communication and will address members’ needs to communicate clearly in an ever-changing world of technologies and tools.

Plan programs that support the chapter’s direction

Based on survey responses and chapter direction, these are the programs we will focus on this year.

Program Category	Program Topic
	Writing API documentation
	Trends in mobile user assistance
	API documentation workshop
Out of the box	Open house and speed networking event
	?
	Competition Awards Banquet
Publishing “how to”	Review of award-winning <i>Go-To-See</i> project
Content organization	See if Jack can talk on one of these topics, although the topics listed in our survey for him were “Be The Captain Of Your Career” and “Honing Your Workplace Negotiation Skills” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content strategy • Content management • Content optimization
Tools of the trade	RoboHelp or MadCap Flare (He’s a certified trainer in both)
Emerging trends	Video documentation
The basics	Writer’s craft: Write tighter?
Career planning/transition	Professional certification program (in-work; rollout is scheduled for October 2015)

Keep in mind that where there’s mutual benefit we could invite members from a related professional association to join us. The [Association for Talent Development](#), for example, holds their chapter meetings at the same time we do. With virtual meetings, we could also consider combining events with other STC chapters. In this way, costs could be shared to bring in high-demand, high-powered speakers.

Target younger populations (35 and under) with an effective social media/communications strategy

Our theme for an effective social media/communications strategy is to “promote effective communication in western, central, and eastern Washington through life-long learning, professional development, robust referrals, and networking.”

With that theme in mind, we evaluated which communication channels to keep. We decided that we will use email, the STC-PSC website, and LinkedIn as our primary channels of communication for this year and that we will be discontinuing the blog, Facebook, and Twitter at this time. We also decided to hold off on starting a Meetup site for now.

Communication Channel	Target Audience	Purpose
Email	STC-PSC members STC-PSC subscribers	Invite email recipients to chapter meetings and events Relay chapter news to the membership Announce open volunteer positions
LinkedIn	628 LinkedIn members	Invite LinkedIn members to chapter meetings and events List local jobs Attract young professionals in the LinkedIn member list to become STC-PSC members
Website	STC-PSC members Potential members STC International	Invite website visitors to chapter meetings and events Link to STC’s Notebook Blog Link to STC’s Body of Knowledge Provide access to taped webinars Provide access to videos pertinent to the profession Provide access to slide presentations from chapter meetings Communicate general information about the chapter Use to recruit volunteers Use to refer to related associations and resources Recommend books to read List our favorite blogs (or content you’ll LOVE!)

This is a start at planning our communications strategy:

Item to Communicate	Communication Channel	Date or How Often?
Survey results and chapter plans	Email	8/15
Open house	Email to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STC-PSC members • STC-PSC subscribers • Professional associations • Recruiters LinkedIn Website Flyer (for students) Boeing digital screen	8/15-10/15
Events (chapter meetings)	Email to subscribers LinkedIn Website Email to STC International	Once a month
Events (workshops)	Email to subscribers LinkedIn Website Email to STC International	As needed
Events (webinars)	Email to subscribers LinkedIn Website Email to STC International	As needed
Competition	Email to subscribers LinkedIn Website Email to STC International	
STC-PSC leader biographies	Website	Once
Administrative information (e.g., reimbursement form)	Website (May involve building an Admin page)	Once
Education	Website	As needed
Scholarship award	Website	As needed
Sponsorship	Website	As changes occur
Referral and resource information	Website	As needed
Recommended reading	Website LinkedIn	Once a year
Job openings	LinkedIn STC International website	As needed
Membership	Website	As needed
STC-PSC monthly events	Email to STC International	Once a month
Professional certification	Email LinkedIn Website	Check to see if launch happens in October

This is the assignment of resources in managing our communication channels:

Communication Channel	Resource
Email	All Board members
LinkedIn	All Board members
Website	Content owners, by page: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home -- Stacey • Events -- Laura Lee • Membership -- Lana • Job Bank -- Stacey • Competition -- Toni • About (and Board Members subpage) -- Barbara • Resources – Leslie (with input from all Board members) • Education -- Sandy • Scholarships -- Teresa • Sponsorship – ? • Volunteer – Rick Content manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leslie Content updaters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leslie • John • Lana • Debbie Backend administrators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John • Nancy

How to Implement Virtual Meetings

Purchase Adobe Connect account from STC International

STC International has an Adobe Connect license that local chapters can use to run virtual meetings. The cost is \$100 per year, although some chapters paid the \$100 and have been using the software longer without paying more. With STC-PSC Board approval, Stacey is willing to order the software and run the meetings. By choosing an STC International tool, we have the support of other local chapters who have already implemented virtual meetings, as well as the Community Affairs Committee (CAC) at the International level should we encounter issues and need help. In terms of cost, we can ask other chapters what they charge for virtual attendance.

Conduct Board meetings virtually so we all become more familiar with the technology

Implement virtual Board meetings when we begin meeting in September. Initially, we will use Stacey's WebEx meetings. Once Adobe Connect is set up, we will switch to that.

Conduct pilot virtual chapter meeting

Conduct pilot virtual chapter meeting in February 2016. Sometime shortly after, ask for feedback from the meeting attendees. Make adjustments, as necessary. If successful, continue virtual chapter meetings from that point forward. We must move in this direction because 83 percent of the membership wants it, our membership is spread out over a wide geographic area and traffic is worsening. In addition, our Programs Manager is vacating her position in 2016, which leaves no one to book venues and order food. We will keep metrics on attendance to see if the virtual option attracts more participation in monthly chapter meetings. We will also track whether these types of meetings correlate with an increase in membership.

If volunteer coordinators come forward to handle logistics, we may be able to offer separate, informal, face-to-face networking dinners strategically located in Bellevue for those on the Eastside and Tukwila for those in the South and Westside. The Awards Banquet will continue to be an in-person event.

How to Gain Corporate Memberships

Take a grassroots approach at first

Among those of us on the Board, comb through our personal and professional contacts and determine which ones are tied to large companies that have staffs of technical communicators. Have individual Board members send personal emails to their company contacts inviting them and their colleagues to attend the open house in October. Also, let them know that STC offers corporate membership discounts and ask if they would be willing to pass that information along to their manager. We could appoint an STC-PSC Board member as the contact person for managers, should they have questions about corporate memberships or how to sign up their employees.

Print corporate membership flyers and distribute them to companies at job fairs

Create and print a flyer that talks about the Corporate Value Membership program available through STC. Once printed, distribute the flyers in person at job fairs where large employers will have booths.