

September 3, 2003

Letter from Linda: Priming the Pump

Ah! September is here and the STC juices are flowing. September programs have been planned and notices sent. We begin to think about how we will treat this new STC program year. Will we be active and offer some of ourselves to our profession? Will we attend occasionally and soak up the things we need to keep ourselves up to date and in the network? Or will we put all of it aside for other priorities, other interests, other pursuits?

My plans are to stay as active as I can. And although that level of activity might change from last year or the year before, I hope to meet my personal needs for fulfillment. That means I will work to keep in touch with the presidents, chapter members, and SIG members throughout Region 5. For, as some of you may know, I have joined the ranks of those who are unemployed! Or, as those in my outplacement agency insist we practice saying, "I am currently in a self-sales position with a deferred income."

OK, so along with attending workshops in how to look for a job and having occasional pity parties for a guest list of one, I have been applying for work and working my network. Everyone I meet says, "Oh, Linda, surely you won't have any trouble finding work, you have such a great network!" And I do. But that network doesn't work itself. It needs to be nurtured and activated. So, it takes work to work it.

The first thing I must do is to continue with all my STC plans. Yes, I'll still attend the Houston chapter meeting on September 9. Yes, I will still be in Portland, OR, for the STC board meeting, September 11-14. And YES, I will attend and present at the Region 5 STC Conference, the Tech Comm Stampede, October 9-12 (for registration information, visit <http://www.stcaustin.org/confregion5/index.html>).

In the 19th century, folks used a pitcher pump to lift water from a well. Because the pump relied on suction to lift water, the pump cylinder had to be filled with water. So, each time someone raised water, they had to remember to fill and keep an extra bucket of water. They would then use that water to "prime the pump" the next time they needed water. I am fully confident that my attendance at the Region 5 conference and fulfilling my other STC duties and connections is my bucket of water. I need it to get more water out of the pump and I am convinced that I couldn't proceed successfully with my career or professional development without it.

No matter who you are—student, teacher, manager, worker, or someone in self-sales with a deferred income—making the sacrifice to get to Austin in October could make a difference in your professional life. If you need to put 2 or 3 people in a room to save money, call the conference organizers for help. If you need to carpool to save transportation costs, make a road trip out of it! The only cost you can't share is the conference registration itself. And that's a cost that will bring you great return.

That return takes the form of networking opportunities, professional development, a chance to visit one of Texas' most beautiful and active cities, and the camaraderie of folks just like you who want to share their knowledge, their concerns, their expertise, and their love.

The regional conferences meet a need nothing else can. They're small enough to be intimate and non-threatening; yet large enough to bring in folks you might not otherwise get to hear or learn from. Regional conferences are close enough to home that the ideas, industries, and outlook portrayed by the presenters are those you can easily identify with. And if you happen to be in a town that has some of the best music and restaurants in the country for your evening entertainment, well, how can you resist?

Sure, I want to land that perfect job in a perfect company, but "To live only for some future goal is shallow. It's the sides of the mountain that sustain life, not the top."* So, if you're striving for a goal, and have concerns about reaching it, focus on the journey. The upcoming STC year, most specifically, the Region 5 conference in Austin, October 9-12, might just be the water you need to prime your pump and sustain your professional life.

I'll be looking for you at the Region 5 conference!

Blessings,
Linda

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