

# AIN'T NO STOPPING US NOW!

## *STC India Chapter Conference Newsletter*



## **STC INDIA CHAPTER 21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

*CHENNAI DEC 6-7*

### **President's Address**

Dear Friends,

STC India Chapter plays a big role in the advancement of learning. For more than a decade, the community has been organizing learning events and regional conferences in many cities of India. This is possible due to the dedication from our members, volunteers, and sponsors. These events are an extremely good platform for us to learn, network, and be a part of our community. We make sure that these events cover the most trending topics.

The speakers are from the industry and they usually present from their experiences. Many a times, we have veterans from the industry presenting during these sessions. I consider it a privilege to learn from them. To be relevant as technical communicators in the long run, we need to keep learning! I get an opportunity to network at these events! I meet people from my industry, which is extremely important for my career growth. I saw a video recently on Jobs and Careers by Mak. Do you want to move from a "wage earner" to a "sincere doer" or a "career builder"?

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To build a career, we need to sustain ourselves in our organization. Sometimes, as a recruiter, I notice that writers make quick moves from one job to the other. By doing this, we don't do justice to the organization nor to ourselves. To learn and to make the most of the opportunities from an organization, we need to stay there long enough. In addition, if your resume has many non-contract, full-time jobs that did not last a year, it's a bad sign regardless of why you left. STC India Chapter is inclusive and accepts any technical communicator who wants to contribute - as a volunteer, member, or sponsor. This is your community and you can help build the community by being a part of it.

The next two days are designed for each one of you! The days will see you learning, meeting new people, reminiscing with your old acquaintances and friends. Each one of you will go back enriched with knowledge, new friendships, new experiences. The last two decades have seen the Technical Communication industry evolve in leaps and bounds. There have been many hurdles in our way...many failures and successes but yes, we have overcome those with our positive mindset, and.... ain't no stopping us now!

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### GOLD SPONSOR

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## Behind the Scenes...

*By: Kiranmayee Pamarthy (Conference Program Manager)*

Organizing any event is an overwhelming task, but, with very good plan, a set of like-minded volunteers, a wonderful vision of the final result and support from the leadership, it is possible to pull off an event. That is exactly what happened for the past 10 months of this year. Once the city was selected for hosting the STC India Chapter's annual conference, the race began. Identifying a conference program manager with the approval from the Admin Council is the first crucial step to plan for such a huge event. The core conference team of volunteers are then selected from the city, the local gals and lads, to help in the various activities which follow in the next few months. Basically, we are planning months ahead; the path is strewn with a lot of challenges as well as opportunities.

**Setting milestones** – Listing the goals that we had to accomplish in a phased manner – Identifying tasks and delegating to volunteers, identifying the theme, spotting a good venue for hosting the conference, setting up the conference website (the Webmaster is the king here), writing the content for the website, calling for paper proposals, identifying the judges and getting their consent (Gopalkrishna Tharoor has written a wonderful article in this issue about the judges' experience this year, very insightful), creating a Google Drive to upload all the incoming traffic. Planning ahead for competitions, registrations, conference newsletter, scouting for venue sponsors for the pre-conference. Preparing the final list of speakers, conference agenda, orientation process for the speakers, dry run, slide decks organization, uploading the abstract, speaker profile, photo, 2-minute video links to the agenda page for ease of use. A big task is talk to various vendors to supply for the welcome kit and other aspects. The final task is to create the logo of the conference and backdrop for the stage. As I said earlier, all these can happen only if all the elements fall neatly into place. Certainly, it was a pleasure working with a great group of conference volunteers who were passionate about what they were doing; they plunged and forged ahead to complete tasks as quickly as possible. What with their respective day jobs, it was a pleasure to watch them work on tasks and take them to completion.

It is a year long adventure of chaos, excitement, success, endurance, patience, diligence, and finally the passion to do something for the community!!! We were excited and thrilled to be a part of this wonderful journey and looking forward to hosting all of you in Chennai this year. Wishing us a great conference and wonderful year ahead.

## We Make It Happen!!

## What is in it for me?

We call it the “LEND” effect; **LEND** – Learn, Expand, Network, and Discuss

**Learn** – intense learning for two days and beyond

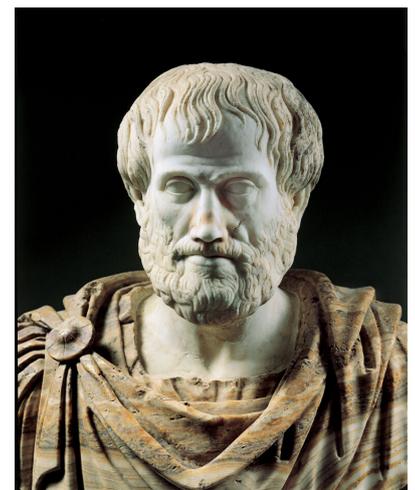
**Expand** – expand your knowledge by sharing; knowledge shared is knowledge gained

**Network** – meet friends, colleagues, peers, make new friends

**Discuss** – the latest trends, the benefits, the impact in an informal setting.

## Did you know?

**The earliest examples of technical writing belong to Aristotle (384–322 BC). Archaeologists managed to retrieve short examples of his technical writings, including a dictionary of philosophic terms and a summary of the “Doctrines of Pythagoras”. Aristotle’s works are considered the earliest forms of technical writing.**





## How Attending a Conference can benefit your Career!!

*By: Makarand Pandit (Fellow, STC India Chapter)*

Attending conference enhances your knowledge and enables networking to develop your career. Professionals attend conferences for several reasons. These include meeting people, exchanging ideas, finding solutions to our problems, being updated of the latest developments, and so on.

In the last 20 years, I have not missed even a single STC India Conference. And I am glad to mention that every time I participated; the learning has justified the investment. I recommend everyone in the Technical Communication community in India to attend the STC India conference.

Here are some points that can influence your decision to participate.

- **Get Powerful Thoughts:** By attending the conference, you get many powerful thoughts and ideas. Every conference gives you 2-3 powerful thoughts that can change your thinking. At the same time, you may also get 7-10 ideas about how you can improve your productivity. These could be about tools, processes, and so on.
- **Expand your Network:** Conference is like a cluster of inter-related events. A lot of things happen there at the same time. There is something useful in a conference for everyone. Professionals attend conferences to present papers, speak, listen, participate in workshops, look at software demonstrations, interact with thought-leaders, and make friends. STC India conference helps you to expand your network nationally as well as internationally. Naturally, your LinkedIn network will also grow and mature. This helps you in the long term.
- **Combine Business with Fun:** Conference gives you a break from your daily work life. It brings a welcome change to your daily routine and breaks the monotony. If possible, you may attend the conference with your family. So, while attending the conference, your family gets a break, and you get some family time after the conference is over.
- **Observe the Speakers:** It allows you to note how good (or bad) others are. Many times, after seeing someone else's presentation, you may realize yours would have been much better. Or you may attend a speaker's presentation who will mesmerize you to such an extent that you decide to never miss any session of that speaker in future. You would become an evangelist of the topic and recommend everyone to take an interest in it.

**Let your Company Pay:** Many companies have a separate budget for conference participation and training. It is mandatory to consume that budget. Many companies pay your conference expenses (especially if you are a speaker.) This makes your company's presence felt in the conference/event. Check with your HR if conference expenses are a part of your CTC.

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- **Conference Expenses are Tax-Deductible:** Spending money to attend or participate in a conference is considered to be a part of professional development. You may be able to claim an income tax benefit on this expense. This means when you attend, the entire amount is not paid from your pocket. A part of it is coming from your tax payments. To know more about this, talk to your Chartered Accountant/Tax Consultant. **Visit Exhibitor Booths:** Learning does not happen only inside the presentation rooms. It also takes place at the exhibitor booths. There is so much that you can learn about the latest tools, their features, versions, bug-fixes, and processes.
- **Be a Speaker:** Share your knowledge as a speaker. It gives you visibility and provides feedback from experts. I got a lot of recognition as a thought leader and a trainer through my presentations and workshops. This could be an essential value-addition (in fact a highlight) to your resume. STC India reserves slots for first-time speakers (called debutant sessions) and even for topics that do not need full sessions (called PowerTalk).
- **Be a Volunteer:** I always felt that I learnt more as a volunteer than I learnt as a participant. Being a volunteer gave me an opportunity to work with and learn from others. We made winning teams and delivered together. I faced many situations that I otherwise would have never faced. As a leader of the community, I had to coordinate with many guests, speakers, sponsors, participants, senior managers, and so on. All that has helped me to develop people-skills.
- **Attend as a Group:** Like all other national and international-level conferences, STC India conferences have multiple presentation tracks. No one person can cover everything. It makes sense to participate as a group. The group members can attend different sessions and later inform each other about what they learnt. Participating as a group gives you the opportunity to learn more. Attending as a group may also help you to get discounted deals for traveling, lodging, food, and other expenses.

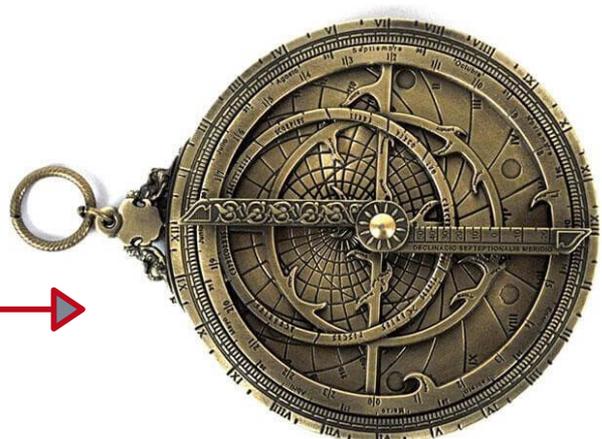
### Tips for Participants

- Before the conference, identify the sessions you want to attend.
- Send a formal email asking company sponsorship for the conference expenses. Include a list of benefits to you and the company.
- Check for group discount rates and early bird registration discounts.
- Confirm your participation at least 2 months in advance.
- Book your travel ticket & hotel in time to get the best deals.
- Try to share the hotel expenses.
- Avoid long travels to the conference venue. Book your stay at the same or nearby hotel. This gives you more time to learn.
- Check if you want to attend any workshops (conducted as pre-conference workshops).
- When asking questions, or making a comment restrict yourself to less than 20 seconds.
- Network with people you do not know.
- Get connected to the people you got introduced through a professional network like LinkedIn.
- Find out more about the conference city and try to visit some popular locations in the city.
- After the conference is over, you can follow speakers on Twitter. Check if they have published articles or videos.

Whenever I come back from a conference, I can recount the benefits to be much more than the investments. A new entrant to Technical Communication should definitely attend the STC India conference. It will open your mind to a world of possibilities. Knowingly or unknowingly the smartness and the intelligence rub on to your personality. Very soon, you will find that you are a speaker yourself. Good luck.

### Did you know?

**Geoffrey Chaucer's Treatise on the Astrolabe describes the form and use of the Astrolabe in detail and is sometimes cited as the first example of technical writing in the English language, and it indicates that Chaucer was versed in science in addition to his literary talents.**





## Sponsoring **STC India Annual Conference**

By: *Rajib Borkataki (Sponsorship Manager)*

Why should you be a Sponsor at the STC India Annual conference?

**The answer would be visibility, accessibility, and inclusiveness!**

The STC India Annual Conference is the biggest conclave in India for user assistance professionals that include technical communicators, instructional designers, UX professionals, localization professionals and the like. The participants are from across the world. Thus, it is the only platform of its kind in the country that facilitates interaction with such a variety of users. Based on the sponsorship category you opt for, you are entitled to:

- Getting exclusive and unlimited access to 350+ attendees over 2 days
- Setting up booths to display your products and interact with your users directly
- Branding through display of logo and ads through the conference setup and promotions
- Nurturing prospects for your business
- Creating your brand ambassadors
- Scouting for your future employees
- Handing out freebies to market your products

The benefits of sponsoring the conference can provide sustaining and long-term results for your organization and help in your branding positioning, if you put your efforts to forge relationships.

### **Take center stage with your brand**

Sponsoring the conference gives your business an authority in your industry and boosts your credibility. Your brand will be visible through various elements of the conference; attendees curious to know more about your products or business will reach out to you.

You can take advantage of the speaker slots to showcase your expertise to an engaged audience. But be careful about boasting too much about your product or services in your presentation, as deliberate sales pitches are a real audience turn off.

### **Create your customers and brand ambassadors for tomorrow**

According to a recent study by Events Marketing Institute, 72% of consumers view brands more positively that provide quality event experiences and engaging content. 74% of the attendees are more likely to buy or advocate products of a brand that create memorable moments for them. The numbers point us to the fact that being the right kind of sponsor means much more to your target audience than being just an advertiser.

At the STC India Annual Conference, approximately 60% of the attendees are in the experience range of 2 to 5 years. Most of them are still figuring out how to be effective in their work, how best to take advantage of the latest products, technologies, and tools. This is a great opportunity for you to educate your users, who in turn will advocate your product in their respective organizations and other forums in their network. It is also an excellent opportunity for the users to meet the folks behind the products they use on a daily-basis— that is you! Take this opportunity to interact with your users to seek feedback on your product or services or educate them about their future enhancements.

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**Scout for prospective employees**

Being a sponsor also gets you access to the job seekers. In the past, several sponsors have recruited at the conference. The best of the professionals attends the conference every year. Conference participation is a part of the outreach of all the multinational organizations.

**Create exclusive and enhanced consumer perception**

Your consumers form positive opinions about your brand when they see you associate with the conference. They will assume that your product and service are reliable and reputable if you can sponsor events of such scale and more. You can take advantage of the exclusive Platinum Sponsorship category at the conference to create an impression. Being a sponsor, especially in the exclusive category, sets you apart from your competitors (who might also be sponsors at the conference) by tying you to something positive in the consumers minds.

**Take advantage of the most cost-effective way to reach your audience**

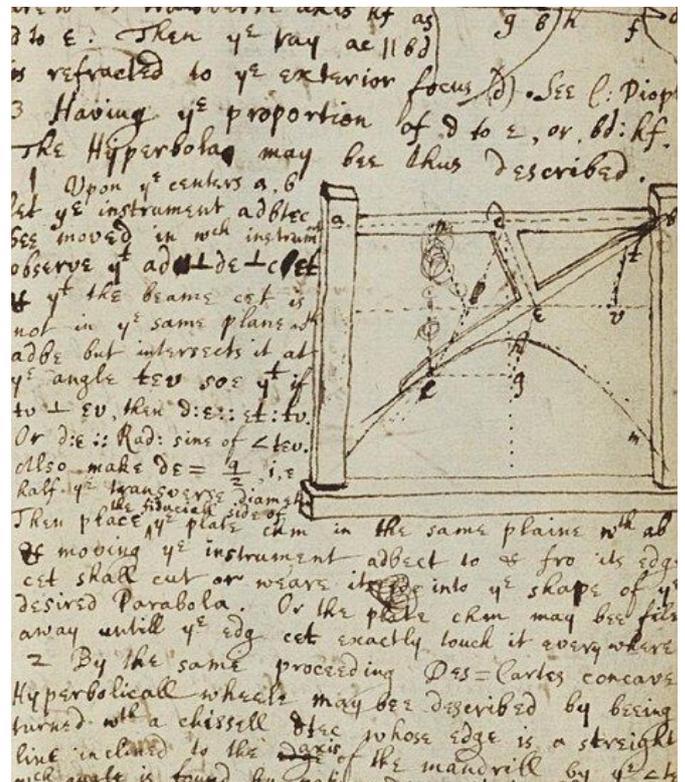
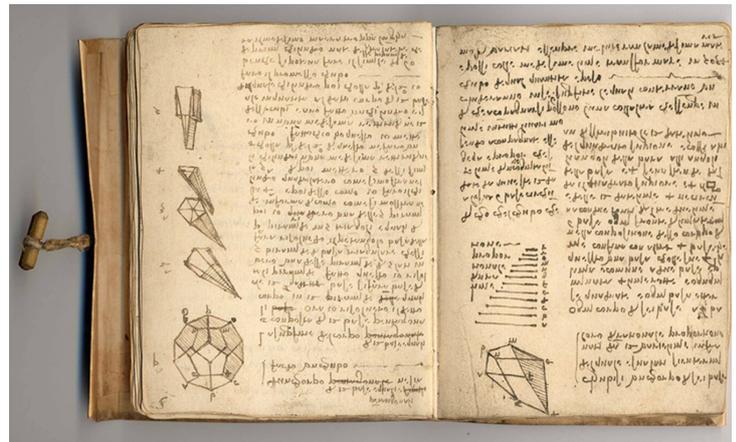
Imagine the amount of time you would normally spend to generate 50 or 100 qualified leads. Not only do events bring you a host of compatible customers, but they also show the human side of your business. Forming an emotional connection is half the battle of building brand loyalty. By attending in person, you get to learn about your customers, promote your products, and build a mailing list. 85% of the attendees create social content during events. When attendees share photos, quotes, videos, and blogs, you get exposure to much larger networks. User-generated content has a greater impact on consumers, so make it easy for people to tag your business on social media

The conference is not just about the audience at the venue. STC India promotes the conference through all media platforms. As a sponsor, your name and logo will be used during these outreach campaigns. STC India events are closely followed by the international community of Technical Communicators. Being a sponsor automatically gives international visibility to your brand..

STC India provides multiple sponsorship options to make your brand visible and accessible based on your budget and business goals. Do reach out to the conference committee to have a sponsorship package tailor-made for your needs.

**Did you know?**

Famous inventors and scientists like Leonardo da Vinci (1452 – 1519) and Isaac Newton (1642–1727) maintained notes and documents with comments written in margins of their inventions. These documents helped in breaking down complicated concepts and paved the way in developing modern forms of technical communication. The first image is the famous notebook of Da Vinci. The second image is Newton's notes on laws of motion and gravity.





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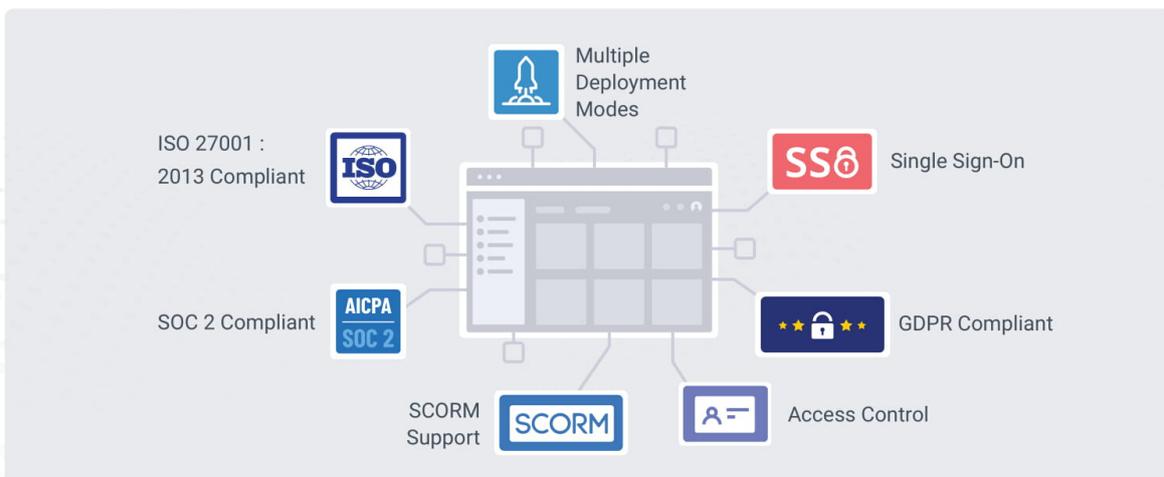
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## My journey as a STC Pune City Representative

By: *Mugdha Achalkar*

When I started my technical writing journey, I was a novice in the field and very nervous about treading the path. Back then, I did not know many people from this profession and my only acquaintances were my colleagues. So, after I was done pestering them with my questions, doubts, and insecurities—I was still seeking comfort. The fear of harassing my colleagues for too long was taking a toll and I used to long to discuss and share something more, something that was to a point weird!! At this odd juncture in my life, I came across STC.

With a lot of trepidation, I joined the STC community and realized that this was not a “closed community,” as I had originally thought. I signed up for the newsletter, mailing lists so that I could explore the field. Typically, most organizations back then did not have a big team (or even a team in some cases) of technical writers. So, becoming a part of the bigger picture helped change my perspective and get acquainted with like-minded folks – both professionally and personally.

As days passed, we would convene once in two months and share our experiences, our misgivings, as well as our triumphs. My stint as a volunteer began much later when we started hosting learning sessions in our organization. That’s when it dawned on me that it was so much easier to be on the other side of the table – as a participant, life was much simpler. But then, why settle for less when you can get more and do more...

Over a period of years, I became an active STC member and volunteered for Annual Conference in Pune. I have been the Pune City Representative for the last 2 years. There are a lot of people who ask me – Why? Why do you do this? What’s the benefit? Is there any compensation for the time invested? I have been on the receiving end of many such questions.

If you google the benefits of being a volunteer, you would get the stereotypical answers or results which range from the “feel good factor” to “enhancing your CV” or even “improving job prospects.” Though much of this is true, I would emphasize on some of the constructive changes in my aptitude and competencies:

- **Make a difference** – STC is an excellent platform to work for the larger population and make a positive difference irrespective of the location, role, designation.
- **Learn and Grow** – An opportunity to share your experiences and best practices. A “go-to place” where the ideas you present are not ridiculed and dismissed.
- **Gain knowledge, new skills, and connect with people** – One such place where your soft skills are polished, making you a confident individual who can articulate well whilst connecting with people from varied technical domains.

1.

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- **Build a brand value for yourself** – Yes, this is most crucial. Within your individual work spaces, you only get to be a part of the team; out here—you stand out. Your value isn't based on who you work for or your position/role at a job. It's based on what you're able to bring to the table.
- **Enhance organizing, coordinating and networking skills** – Sky is the limit here. There's just so much to learn and imbibe. This is when you realize that not all is rosy.

This role came with its own set of challenges. I have, at times, struggled with organizing and conducting the sessions, worried about the attendees for the events, fretted whether there will be too many or too less. I am glad to say that I have always found support from within the community when I was looking for it.

Now when I look back on my journey, I feel elated and sated that I made a difference!

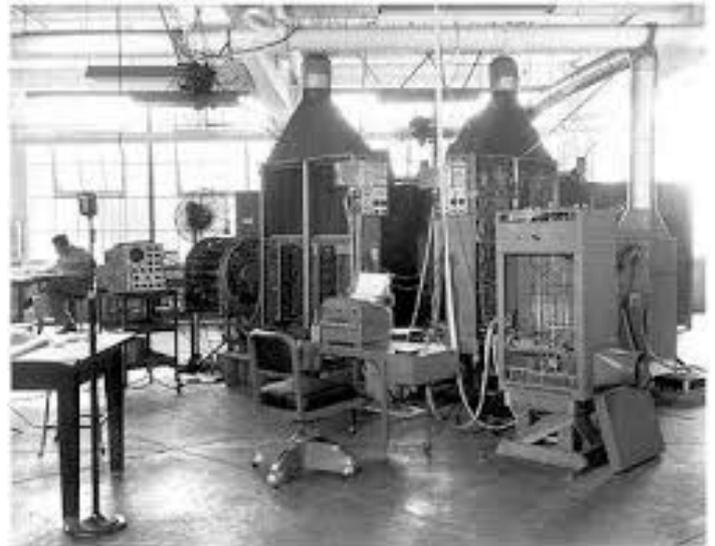
I would like to leave you with a thought – “Volunteers do not necessarily have the time, they just have the heart, and that's all it takes for an extra mile”.

I urge every single one of you to come forward and contribute to each other's success, with a smile on your face knowing that what you did helped someone. At the end of the day, it's a sense of accomplishment that drives each one of us, isn't it!

## Did you know?

The World War I and II played crucial roles in technological advancements and subsequently the need for technical writing.

The first technical writer in the computer industry is Joseph D. Chapline. In 1949, he wrote the first known technical document which was an instruction manual for the Binary Automatic Computer, BINAC.



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## Our Other Sponsors



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## STC Proposal Evaluation 2019 – Selection Process

*By: Gopalkrishna Tharoor*

Kavitha Shinde, Sam George, and Gopalkrishna Tharoor were given the baton to adjudicate and select the paper proposals for STC Conference 2019 to be held at Chennai.

The 33 shortlisted proposal topics around the conference theme, “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now. We make it happen”

The Conference Team carefully chose the panelists, with the approval of the Admin Council, and we were pleasantly surprised when we met in the conference calls. We were presenters in previous STC conferences and each one of us had the necessary expertise to carry out the meticulous evaluation.

**The objective: Select the conference speakers to make it happen.**

### **Proposal Components**

The paper proposals were evaluated on three components shared with the proposal. A video presentation for 2 minutes, the session abstract and the paper proposal in about 300 words. Each component helped us understand a different aspect of the presenter. The video told us how effective the speaker would be in front of an audience, the abstract helped understand the proposal in a nutshell and the paper proposal showcased the overall theme, the innovation the paper brought to the theme of the proposal and its overall applicability to Technical Writing domain.

### **Proposal Participants**

The proposals were sent in from different panel of participants across the country. Topics chosen ranged from the obvious to the obscure (Example: Infinity Stones) and participants had judiciously related them to the theme of the conference.

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## Evaluation Methodology

The STC conference paper selection goes through a rigorous selection process. Your paper submission does not automatically assure you a slot at the conference. We had a tough evaluation process to ensure that selection is fair and the best slots are available to the deserving candidate. The papers were ranked on a scale of 1 to 8, 1 being the lowest and 8 being the highest. An impressive paper that found common merit amongst the three judges was further recommended to represent the Indian sub-continent at the STC International Conference during early January 2020. The Judges Guidelines document helped us make the decision.

## Selection Criteria

Phase 1 – Pre work by the content team who consolidated the papers, the rating sheet and provided the judges' access to the Google Drive. We were additionally connected through a WhatsApp group.

Phase 2 – The judges got together for an orientation call and the evaluation methodology was briefed to us.

A 7 point selection criteria for each paper ensured that we had a fair evaluation process. The proposals had to abide the following mandatory criteria:

1. Adhering to the conference theme
2. Originality
3. R&D and Innovation
4. Method of Approach

Besides the above the following were deemed good to have:

1. Novelty of application
2. International impact and significance
3. Audience insight and take-away

Phase 3 – The evaluation process, and the deadline for the judges along with 33 proposals were made available to the judges for their individual reviews. This was followed by discussions on the first draft of the list, fine tuning based on our respective comments and the verdict is out for you to read. It is be noted that all papers did not make the final list but, that does not mean that the remaining papers were not of high quality; they did not meet a few of the mandatory criteria. Commendable effort and thought process, maybe next time we can see a few of them at the podium.

**28 Papers, 39 Speakers, 14 First-time speakers, and 45 person hours from each individual judge have ensured once again that you are reading the final outcome, “Ain’t No Stopping Us Now. We make it happen”**

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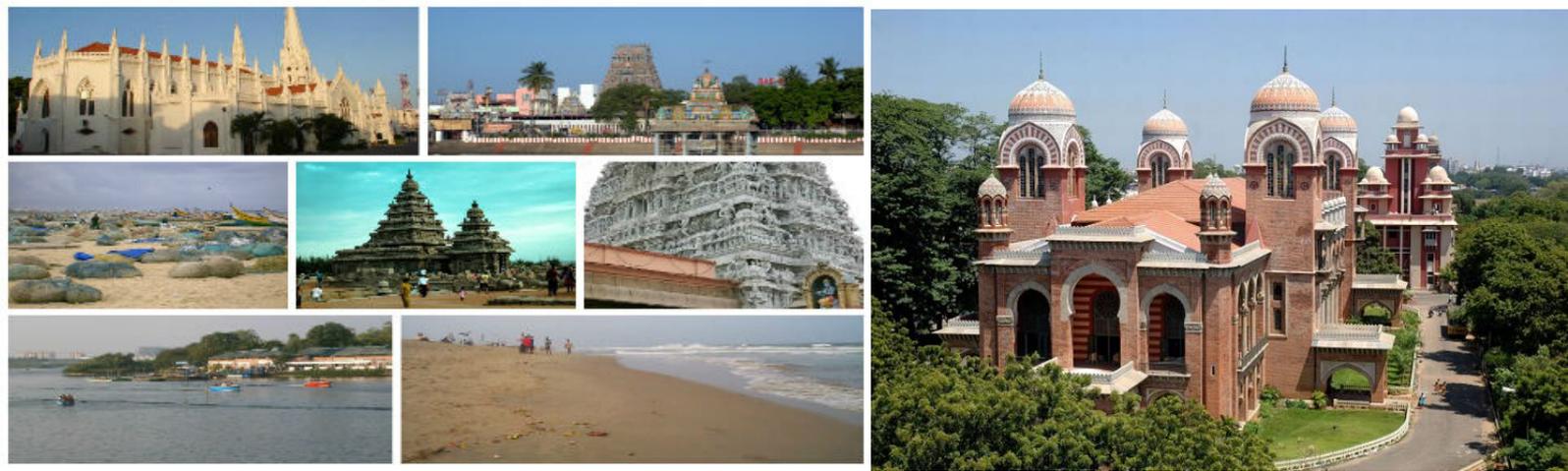
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## Conference Volunteer Experience VoX

*By: Gayathri Jaishankar*

When Kiran offered the role of a volunteer for the conference, I jumped off my chair and said, ‘YES, YES, YES!!’; and that’s what most of us did. As volunteers, with zero experience in working for a conference of this scale, I must say we started on a blank slate – and often times, it’s a good place to start. Simply trust the process and dive in.

We started with a nifty excel sheet with our roles and responsibilities chalked out. And we religiously stuck to the sheet and delivered per the deadlines, only to be off the track sooner than later. The volunteers were divided into teams, each in-charge of competitions, proposals, logistics, newsletter, conference site entry creation, and everything else. As days rolled by, there were unknowns cropping up, dependencies increasing, unforeseen challenges saying hello to us, and deadlines staring at us...Yet, it was all exciting. With Kiran at the helm of affairs, we had her on speed dial, often calling her at ungodly hours asking for suggestions and seeking help. But being the cheerful and a competent manager that she is, she took them all with élan.

Each volunteer had their individual strength and came in with rich experience. Interacting and sharing perspectives gave us a whole new insight into our own idea. And over the process of discussion, as concepts and thoughts evolved, we sometimes found our own ideas alien and embraced the other view point. The conference planning showed us the art of ‘Thoughtful Disagreement’. In ‘Thoughtful Disagreement’, the goal is to explore which view is correct and to find mechanisms to handle the result. The motivation to investigate the disagreement is the ‘fear of missing out’ on perspectives that may be more appropriate in the given scenario. At the end of this entire backstage planning, yes, most of us have become pros on the art of thoughtful disagreement.

Starting with the streak of non-tech writing talent that we all possessed, we found ourselves doing newer things and learning newer tricks: meeting with new people, discussing new subjects, negotiating deals, creating posters, promoting the event, deciding on logistics and so on. The volunteers had their full-time jobs throwing their share of challenges at them at all the wrong times. And, as healthy and mature teams would function, the other volunteers chipped in gladly.

If Café Coffee Day could have it their way, either we would be banned from entering their outlets for the remainder of our nine cat lives, or betterstill, they would shut shop. Poring over coffee, endless laughter and useless banter, sometimes bordering around insanity, we would go over and over the details, sometimes revisiting our own decisions. We forged newer friendships, learnt newer skills, surmounted newer challenges and emerged enriched with the elusive halo surrounding our heads. If we are popped the same question again, ‘Will you be a volunteer...’ I’d bet my money on all volunteers jumping off their chairs with the same enthusiasm...



## **Admin Council Members 2019**

President - Nidhi Kotriwala Luharuwala  
Vice President - Raghuram Pandurangan  
Treasurer - Saravanan Manoharan  
Secretary - Mugdha Achalkar

## **STC India Chapter Volunteers 2019**

### **City Representatives**

Bengaluru - Megha Das, Sufyan Shaik  
Chennai - Saravanan Manoharan  
Mumbai - Sangeeta Kataria  
Pune - Mugdha Achalkar

### **Webmaster**

Vimal Chhutani

## **Annual Conference Volunteers 2019**

Conference Website, Competitions, Posters, Illustrations

Gayathri Jaishankar  
Shweta Agrawal  
Abrar Ahmed Syed

### **Content Committee**

Vidya Srivatsan  
Nancy Petricia  
Beatrice Issac

### **Sponsorship Manager**

Rajib Borkataki

### **Finance and Reviewer**

Saravanan Manoharan

### **Conference Program Manager**

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