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Finding, Funding, and Developing Opportunities for Continuing Education, Mentoring, and Professional Development

TypeWell Conference 2013, Portland Community College (Portland, OR)

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Saturday, April 27, 2013

Janet: I think this is us. Let's get started. Our presentation is on finding, funding, and developing opportunities for continuing education, mentoring, and professional development. I lost some of my notes, so bear with me.

There are eight discussion questions I want to talk about, so let me know if any particular thing sparks your brain. We'll come back to them all at the end. [On screen.]

Male Speaker: You wanted us to read them?

Janet: Yes, you can glance through them. I want to let you know what's out there, and we'll come back to them. [List of 8 professional development and continuing education questions, on screen.]

I'll briefly go over some of the opportunities available for continuing education. Turbo I is the TypeWell courselet that's available now. There's another one in the works as well.

Chanel: Can you tell us what the topic of the new one is?

Janet: No. It's in the works, and I don't know what it is. Turbo I has been a huge hit with everyone who has taken it. It's easy to do. We recommend you take it over a longer period of time even though it's only 4-6 hours of actual instruction. After completing each lesson, you should transcribe to practice the skills you learned. It's more successful that way.

Female Speaker: Can you talk about continuing credits?

Janet: If you complete the Turbo course, it will go onto your account as a continuing education credit.

Female Speaker: Is there a certificate?

Janet: Yes. It also goes on your online transcript. If you're interviewing, you can request to have that information sent to the company so they can look at your link and see that you've completed it.

Female Speaker: Are they keeping track of who attends the classes?

Janet: Pepnet sponsored some classes, and I think they're keeping track of those.

Female Speaker: But are they going on the Typewell education transcript?

Janet: I'll find out.

Female Speaker: If you have any connections with Pepnet, that would be great.

Janet: Pepnet was American-funded, and there was a Canadian quick class that TypeWell was going to offer.

Here are some conferences that have been and will be offered. [On screen.]

Male Speaker: Is this on the website?

Janet: Yes.

The top one is the Newbies QuickClass, which we recommend for transcribers with less than 2 years of experience. There were many topics ranging from practical skills to ethics. Some of the best feedback we received from students was the discussion questions forum. Every week, the students would have an assignment. They would practice transcribing and evaluating themselves, and there would also be two discussion questions per week on Moodle. Everyone related to that. It really got everyone involved, and it was a good sharing experience.

The next one coming up is in June or July, which is a Venture to Mentor QuickClass. In the works are some more classes for coordinators and transcribers.

There are other opportunities through Pepnet. They offer their own QuickClass to learn about offline captioning. You can also learn about E-learning, for people just getting into

the business.

I think many people are not aware of how much is available. There are many different exercises at Typewell.com, under continuing education.

I used to be the comma splice queen of the world, and these exercise programs really help break bad habits.

There's also a blog called Kyp's Tips. There's a discussion forum for issues that come up.

Female Speaker: What's the website for that?

Janet: <http://www.typewell.com/continued.html> The math and science tutorials are also there. You can go into the math tutorial as well as the PowerPoint that Kate did at the TypeWell symposium. There are some YouTube lectures that you can use for practice as well. It's very helpful.

Why do we want professional development? Everyone here is aware of how important it is. Not only does it make your employability better, but there is also so much changing in careers and technology. Because technology changes so fast, it's important to stay up to date and be aware of your options.

It's also a great way to meet your coworkers and colleagues who want the same things you do.

Here are the important websites. [On screen.] One is for TypeWell, and two are for Pepnet.

I think we just have questions now. Let's go through these and see if you have any input.

How many sites provide professional development opportunities? I know you guys do! How do you manage it? A lot of places can't, with budget cuts.

Kim: We don't tell anybody. [Joke/joking.] It's built into the budget. In the summer when there are very few classes, we do weekly professional development sessions, with a different topic every week. We also do in-house testing. We have a skill level rubric, and we test twice a year, to see where the skill levels are. Raises are based on that. Everybody does that twice a year. We also have a pretty large mentoring program for the new transcribers, as far as professional development.

Janet: The mentors are the experienced transcribers on staff?

Kim: Yes.

Female Speaker: Did you say you hold these sessions weekly in the summer?

Kim: Yes.

Female Speaker: So, they get paid to attend?

Kim: Yes. It's a couple hours a week, and we have different presenters. It depends what we can set up.

Female Speaker: Would somebody feasibly come to half of them, or is it mandatory?

Kim: It's strongly encouraged. Most people come to all of them unless they're on vacation. They want to keep up their skills over the summer. It helps people keep their hands warm.

Female Speaker: Where do you pull the material from?

Kim: All over. We can talk.

Janet: Do you include courselets?

Kim: We haven't, because a lot of people do them separately, on their own. They get paid to do those, too.

Female Speaker: Can we continue?

Janet: Absolutely. It's all open.

Female Speaker: What are the mechanics of the skill testing?

Kim: It's usually a lecture that has been recorded from a professor on campus. They type and edit it, and then we have a rubric that we score from.

Janet: Do they do self-evaluation of their transcript first?

Kim: No, not for those. We do that for the professional development sessions. For the testing, they type and copy it, and they delete it immediately. We have a committee that does the scoring.

Janet: You're very advanced!

Tshombe: Do they have a copy of the rubric prior to the testing? I guess it's similar every year. Is the rubric the same every time?

Kim: They don't get a rubric of the test, no. They have to go in and type the lecture cold. They've never heard it before.

Tshombe: I guess I was imagining that the rubric would be on specific skills.

Kim: We go through the lecture line by line and figure out what the concepts are, and they get points based on how many concepts they capture. It's not subjective. Either they have each point or not.

Tshombe: So it's pass or no pass?

Janet: Is it similar to basic training in TypeWell, where they get graded on a percentage of words captured?

Kim: No. We go through the lecture. Let's say the first point was about professional development. Do they have that point? If not, they get zero. If they have the entire thing, they get three points. If they have it partially, they get 1 or 2 points. If they have it but incorrectly, they get negative points. If it's murky and not clear, they would probably get 1 point. The meaning has to be there. It can't just be the words, but the meaning that is captured.

Female Speaker: So, you add up all the points and that equates to how much of a raise you get?

Kim: Yes. We do a percentage. How many points did they get out of a total possible? We have a rubric based on levels, and if they go up a level, it's a pay increase.

Janet: That's a great incentive.

Well, you pretty much covered all the points!

Tshombe: Number 3 is interesting. [On screen.] I don't know if you do that, but it's interesting to think about how people network and share.

Janet: There's very little of that done. Transcribers tend to be on their own for

resources. If you're working with a team and you realize they're not abbreviating something they could be, you can tell them. But you tend to be on your own a lot. Some places have staff meetings where ideas are shared, but a lot of transcribers are isolated.

Female Speaker: I think some of the first steps to building up to Kim's program are to have regular meetings. The chance to get together is huge. Once transcribers get together, it takes off. Those best practices start to take off.

Janet: Sharing experiences is huge.

Female Speaker: It's been very successful for us. We've implemented those meetings. Then, they get back to work and they have new inspiration, like when you leave a conference.

Tshombe: We realize we're not all by ourselves!

Female Speaker: Right. We realize we're in this together.

Janet: When we leave and go home, everybody is charged up and energized! It reminds people why they love this job. It's a great way to foster all those feelings.

Female Speaker: It also reminds you what you don't know!

Janet: Yes, and it reminds you that you're not alone. We share common experiences.

Female Speaker: I'm not a service coordinator, but I thought this was interesting. At BYU, as a transcriber we get paid for no-shows and cancellations, but there's a main office that we go to, when we need to run errands and other things. We also sit in that office if there's down time and talk about our experiences. With the professor relationship, there's a lot of shared knowledge. We sit and brainstorm.

It's funny that you mention comma splices because my educational background is in English. I'm the grammar person, and I give people pep talks about comma splices! It's nice to get together as transcribers.

Janet: I trained in 2003, and some things were taught then that are not taught anymore. We used to type fragments if the professor was speaking in fragments. But, research has shown that the deaf students prefer full sentences. That's a learning curve. But it makes for a better transcript. A lot of transcribers didn't have that information, so it helps to share those experiences.

Tshombe: Has anyone done a remote Google hangout session in real time?

Janet: We have the Google Group.

Tshombe: But, you could set up a meeting that happened every Friday at 3 or something.

Female Speaker: That's a great idea.

Female Speaker: Not on Fridays, though!

Female Speaker: We could do it from a bar! [Joke/joking.]

Female Speaker: I work with my husband, and we were talking this morning about setting up a website forum for independent contractors, about availability. I'll write down the idea of coordinating internet staff meetings. It would be nice to have discussions like that.

Janet: The QuickClasses have a small online component. It's not all live, but people weigh in on the discussion questions. It's timed, in that you have until the end of the day tomorrow to give feedback. But the idea of live communication is nice. You'd have to work out the time zone differences.

What about future QuickClasses? Are there specific topics of interest? Are there things worth suggesting for QuickClasses? It takes some time commitment, but it's not huge. There's also no charge for the Pepnet QuickClass. The Canadian one that we'll be offering we hope will be free as well, if it can be.

Tshombe: Here in Portland, there are a lot of different accents. That must be true in BC as well. I wonder if there could be a class on accents.

Female Speaker: I'm horrible at understanding accents.

Janet: Sometimes, instructors will have very strong accents. That can be challenging. I was in a team and a substitute came in one day. She kept typing SSI because she couldn't understand the professor. He was saying "exercise!"

Female Speaker: You almost have to team those. One person has to concentrate on listening and feeding the strange words to the transcriber.

Female Speaker: Sometimes, you just can't switch. That's your role for the day.

Tshombe: We could have a Google chat about this. This makes me think of linguistics. We could bring in someone to talk about understanding people with different accents. English is so varied.

Female Speaker: It's nice to hear about difficult situations that people face. One of the transcribers talked about a student who was complaining about noises. We all know that professors can have large egos. There are all sorts of things we deal with. I don't know how you'd do a class on that, but it would be nice to know how people handle that.

Janet: It could be a roundtable discussion or Google talk. Feedback is sometimes the best way to learn to handle things.

Female Speaker: That's a good reason to have a forum. You can ask questions about difficulties you're facing. You can say "a student keeps giving me dirty looks because I type loudly. What do I do?"

Tshombe: It's loud for someone who's not used to it. You can get those dampers.

Female Speaker: We would've bought different laptops if we'd known.

Janet: That's a great topic for a forum.

Female Speaker: What were the laptops?

Female Speaker: Let me see. It's an HP Elitebook 8460P. Our school has them because that's what the school gets. They're not for us. They weigh 6 pounds. They're cumbersome. Also, having this sharp edge is exceptionally uncomfortable. But, we just do what we can. Don't buy these laptops!

Janet: Kim? [referring to a question on screen, about sharing.]

Kim: Yes. The answer is yes. I'm willing to share. I don't know . . . [Joke/joking.]

Janet: I think if we could get something to share between different sites that would be fabulous.

Male Speaker: We could link directly to it.

Janet: It might need to be tailored.

Female Speaker: You developed it?

Janet: It's been years now, hasn't it? I've been to some of your summer sessions, years ago.

Female Speaker: What would sharing look like for you?

Kim: That's a good question. I don't know. I'd have to think about it. We have a lot of different kinds of things. Some things are not in a "material" format. It would probably take a lot of time to get stuff together.

Janet: You could even make directions to send.

Male Speaker: Or other resources.

Kim: The easiest thing would be if you're interested in something specific, just call me.

Janet: What are people's preferences? It's an individual thing. Are you a person who learns better in person or at distance? It's an individual preference.

Female Speaker: Going back to an earlier topic, I think it's important to give people time to study up on material. The coordinators deal with all disabilities. They're overloaded. There are time issues. There is a problem getting the coordinators to read something. They just don't have time. For most of our coordinators, transcribing is a tiny part of their job.

Janet: So, maybe the focus is more on mentoring. Maybe there is a lead transcriber who is a mentor.

Female Speaker: I don't know if this answers the question about formats, but I have a thought. It depends on how universal something is. Not everything applies to every site. There are specific applications for each site. As far as time goes, whenever our coordinator was going to be out of town, she would assign someone to put together a presentation. One of our team put together a presentation about ergonomics because she had to take time off work for ergonomic issues.

I always jokingly volunteered to give a presentation about English issues. We talk about how to do better. We already have that time, that's work time, to keep learning. The standby of leadership is delegation. You have to delegate that work out. Every transcriber has different background knowledge and strengths.

Janet: Any other questions or comments or thoughts? I think we're done.

[End of presentation.]