northbay news

In This Issue

Our November Meeting
An Introduction to Telecommunications

Diana Abele, NBN Staff

John McNaught, currently the head of the Account Marketing group at Alcatel, introduced the NorthBay Chapter (and many visitors) to fundamental telecommunications concepts in a conference room at Golden Gate University (not at Parker Compumotor, where we normally meet). In addition to working at Alcatel, John also teaches courses for Golden Gate University's

Pizza, please!
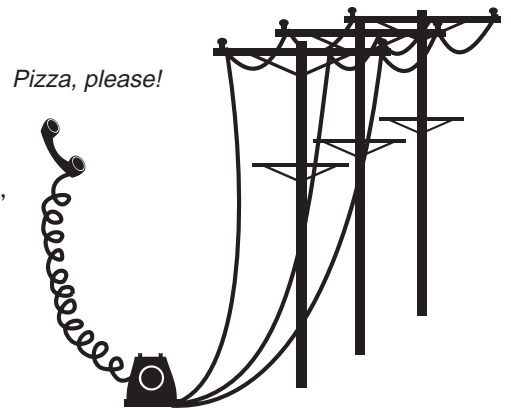
No Jive, It's GoLive

Ken Delpit, NBN Staff

Pronounced with a short "i," "GoLive" is an unclear imperative, or a terse fortune cookie admonition, though it is certainly more pleasant than "GoDie." Pronounced with a long "i," "GoLive" sounds like a television director's command. It conjures images of a busy scene, full of actors, props, and crew, with the director orchestrating the production masterfully.

As the name of its visual Web-site building tool, I'm pretty sure this latter image is the one Adobe had in mind. Operating without a beret and megaphone, Richard Capone of Adobe Systems, Inc. discussed and demonstrated this nifty tool at last August's meeting.

A Niche of Pros
GoLive is a visual design tool for Web site prototyping and building. Although GoLive can import an existing Web site, it's not meant for taking over the maintenance and development of a large existing site. It's ideal for creating a site that doesn't yet exist, though. For example, one can easily create a skeleton site, designing the structure and

submitting articles and ads

We welcome articles, advertising, and news about meetings, workshops, and courses that pertain to technical communication. Please email simple text to the editor at mmeyer@sonic.net.

For our current advertising rates, please email or phone the editor.

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This Month's Meeting

Delivering Value as a Writer:
How to Do It and Be Recognized

with Andrew Davis of Synergistech Communications

Andrew Davis, president and principal of Synergistech Communications, Inc., returns to our chapter once again to deliver another dose of reality. Synergistech (www.synergistech.com) provides "Recruiting and Coaching Services for Technical Communicators."

As a recruiter who has been a technical communicator himself (he was a tech writer for ten years), Andrew knows the industry well. He recruits tech writers for Bay Area companies, mostly of the software variety, and is eminently well-qualified to talk about the world as seen by employee and employer alike.

Join us for an entertaining and informative evening, and bring some questions with you.

Date:	Thursday, January 20	
Location::	Parker Compumotor, 5500 Labath Dr., Rohnert Park	
	(see map on back page)	
Time:	5:30–6:30	Networking, Show and Tell
	6:30–6:45	Introductions, Announcements
	6:45–7:45	Program
	8:00–8:30 …	More Conversation, Idea Swapping

Region 7/8 Pan-Pacific Conference—
Reserve a Room by January 25 for a Discount

Yes, it's time to get ready for another conference. Read Don Child's article (*Hawaii Calls*) later in this newsletter, and visit www.pan-pacific.org for the latest details. This could be a great opportunity to mix business with pleasure.
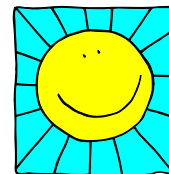
Last November

telecom program. John's 32 years at Pacific Bell make him an expert in his field, and he excellently presented basic telecom concepts and put them into historical perspective.

Elements of a Telephony Subscriber Circuit

A basic element of a telephony subscriber circuit (that's our phone, folks) is the local loop, an electronic pathway between a residence or business and a local switch that serves those connections. Together this constitutes what is known as the local exchange. The local loop begins at the central office, with its switches and cable vaults, and exits the central office underground. The underground cabling can be accessed through manholes. The cabling then branches out (certainly in the case of older neighborhoods) to above-ground cables supported by telephone poles. The wires on the poles eventually hit DLC (digital loop carrier) nodes that convert digital signals into analog signals. Once the signals are converted, individual dropwires carry them down to small gray boxes on the side of each individual house. Those boxes, known as network interface devices, or NIDs, are designed to prevent lightning from entering the dwelling. The cabling inside the house runs to the jacks, into which telephone customers plug their phones.

The type of cabling used by the local exchange varies. Copper cabling was historically used. However, telephone companies have been upgrading to fiber optic cable, allowing them to carry digital signals faster and better. The dropwire coming from the DLC node to the house most often consists of the older copper cable, suitable for carrying analog signals.

The local loop serves the local exchange. The local exchange encompasses all the areas serviced by the central office for which customers pay no toll charges. In Sonoma County, for example, central offices are located on Fourth Street in Santa Rosa, on Commerce Boulevard in Rohnert Park, and on C Street in Petaluma.

Central offices connect to each other over fiber optic cables, in networks referred to as trunking networks. The telephone companies estimate the amount of trunks needed based upon average customer use. These are the sections of the telecom network that become overloaded on Mother's Day, the busiest calling day of the year.

The toll network stretches across the country, going through multiple switches, microwave relays, and even over satellites. This network is used whenever callers place long-distance calls. Each time a customer places such a call, the network routes the call through the shortest available circuit to the final destination.

Regulations

Until 1989, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) based telephone rates on the investment the telephone company made in the business, giving the company no incentive to keep their costs low. In 1989, the PUC capped rates, forcing the telephone companies to change their business models. They started decreasing costs and increasing new services designed to generate revenue.

The Telecom Act of 1994 was enacted to break up the telelphone companies' monopoly. The act forced telephone companies to lease their infrastructure to Competitive Local Exhange Carriers (CLECs—pronounced "see-leck") at wholesale rates. At the same time, a public policy decision to establish universal service and rates was made. Each state established regulated rates for basic services, and the telephone companies were allowed to charge market rates for additional services such as long-distance calls.

"A close look at the break-ups and combinations of companies in the telecom industry brings about questions as to whether or not a monopoly still exists; the partners just seem to have switched."

Universal service decreed that every customer within the same local exchange would pay the same rates, although the reality is that the further the customer resides from the local exchange office, the higher the cost for the phone company to provide service. CLECs leased lines and provided services to the closest customers, leaving Pacific Bell, for example, with the outlying, higher-cost customers. Pacific Bell had to create additional, revenue-generating services to cover its costs— hence call-waiting, three-way calling, and automatic call-back services.

CLECs currently do not bear any infrastructure building costs, but new regulations require them to expand to 30

cities in which they currently do not operate, forcing them to take on some of the higher-cost areas that the more established phone companies are currently servicing.

Changes in Telecom

Telecommunications (as we know it; semaphores have been around for a while) began in 1837 with the invention of the telegraph. ATT formed in 1885, and the Bell system began in 1911. Divestiture began in 1994. A close look at the break-ups and combinations of companies in the

You rang?

telecom industry brings about questions as to whether or not a monopoly still exists; the partners just seem to have switched. By 1969, computers were talking to each other. By 1997, data traffic over telecom lines exceeded voice traffic.

Currently telecom companies use Quality of Service (QOS) factors to rate themselves. QOS factors include services provided, price, and perceived quality. Using the past as a guide to predict the future is difficult; more major changes have occurred in the industry in the past 15 years than in the last 150 years.

The Future

Although none in the audience raised their hands when asked whether they had DSL (digital subscriber line) service, the telecom industry predicts that by the end of 2000, DSL will comprise 20% of the market.

Other predictions include the following:
- By 2002, optical fiber will come to every home, instead of the cable that now exists.
- Basic phone service will be free.
- Long distance rates will be as low as one cent per minute, all the time!
- Eleven-digit dialing will be in effect everywhere.
- Single screens will provide Internet access, telephony, movies on demand, and home monitoring.
- Wireless communication may be cheaper than pizza!

Just think—soon we may be able to order that pizza from our computers!

Hawaii Calls!

Don Child, Senior Member, Aloha Chapter

Do you already have that aloha shirt or muumuu packed for the STC Region 7 and 8 Pan-Pacific Conference in Waikiki Beach, Honolulu, Hawaii?

Do you find yourself staying up late to watch reruns of "Hawaii Five-0" and wishing it was already October 2000? If so, the next time you watch "Hawaii Five-0," notice the hotel in the opening shot: it is the Ilikai Hotel, the hotel where the Pan-Pacific conference is being held.

The conference committee is very excited that we were able to reserve this famous Hawaiian landmark. The Ilikai Hotel is situated at the gateway to Waikiki: In one direction you can stroll the length of Waikiki Beach all the way to the famous Diamond Head crater. In the other direction, a short walk takes you to Magic Island (one of Honolulu's most popular local beaches) and the Ala Moana Shopping Center (one of the state's largest and most cosmopolitan malls).

You can also look out of your hotel window and see the Ala Wai Yacht Harbor, the harbor from which the passengers on the Minnow of "Gilligan's Island" fame left on their fateful three-hour tour.

You can also start (or end) your day with a game of tennis, by working out in the hotel's gym, swimming in one of the two guest pools, playing laser tag in an arcade just off the lobby, or enjoying any of the watersports available on the beach outside.

But you're coming to the conference to work, to learn, and to communicate, right?

The Ilikai has excellent conference facilities and many of the staff are bilingual to better serve attendees from the Pacific-rim countries. We have reserved plenty of conference space for the opening and breakout sessions, the vendor and job fair exhibits, and the hands-on afternoon workshops. The hotel has a business center, and every guest room has a data port and cable modem so you can handle your email traffic and get back to the conference at lightning speed!

The Ilikai Hotel is not only a great conference venue, it's also a great value. Reserve your hotel room by January 25th and get an ocean view room for the city view rate—that's only $57.50 a night double occupancy!

So download the hotel reservation form from the conference web site (www.pan-pacific.org), fax it by January the 25th, and make a difference in your career!

"Book 'em, Danno!"

If you would like to help produce the conference or would like more information, contact the conference chair Jack Molisani <jack@ClarityTechnical.com>. If your company would like to reserve a booth in the job fair or exhibit halls, contact Michelle Maurer <michelle@tecstandards.com>.

GoLive

Continued from page 1

hierarchy, while GoLive automatically creates blank pages and appropriate HTML code and placeholders.

GoLive is positioned by Adobe to occupy a high-end niche in the Web design tool market, aimed at professionals with extensive needs. "Lighter" packages, such as Adobe's own PageMill and Microsoft's FrontPage, are aimed at consumers. Similar to the marketing distinction between PageMaker and InDesign, PageMaker and GoLive will continue to be developed and marketed separately by Adobe. "PageMill will probably evolve to the GoLive code base eventually, but will keep the PageMill name," said Capone.

GoLive has an ancestry of visual orientation. Since its inception, "GoLive has been big on not having dialog boxes," said Capone. Its graphical interface, visual tools, and drag-and-drop convenience put an impressive amount of Web power in the hands of its users. "GoLive was a very good acquisition by Adobe," Capone said.

The Eyes Have It

It may not be immediately apparent, but GoLive is not just a special-purpose desktop publishing application. In that it generates and recognizes HTML and XML coding, it is also a software development tool. For some time now, software development tools in general have been slanting toward visual paradigms. GoLive is no exception. For most purposes, GoLive authors need never get their hands dirty with HTML coding.

Lots of applications can do "drag and drop." What's special about GoLive's implementation, though, is that the links are dynamic. In other words, if you move linked items to other locations on your Web server, the links are updated automatically! "GoLive offers total file management" to Web authors, said

A programmer . . . or a designer???

Capone.

In the market of professional-level Web authoring tools, GoLive's main competitor is MacroMedia's Dreamweaver. Whereas GoLive and Dreamweaver are comparable in overall capability, according to Capone, "Dreamweaver comes from a programmer's emphasis, and GoLive comes from a designer's emphasis." Seasoned Web programmers may prefer Dreamweaver, for its flexibility of development and greater control over results.

GoLive's main work area is a visual Page Layout window, with a grid and rulers. Pixel-level control can be exercised in positioning and sizing images, tables and text boxes. Pages can be designed to accommodate both PC and Macintosh formats. "The layout grid makes layout trivial," said Capone.

Inspectors and Palettes and Views— Oh My

Context-sensitive inspector windows let users view and edit the attributes of virtually any Web site element, including QuickTime movies, without opening a dialog box. Point and shoot tools are used to add links and setup button and mouse operations.

GoLive's palettes enable drag-and-drop ease for creating images, frames, buttons, tables, backgrounds, URLs, JavaScript actions, and so on, again without opening dialog boxes. Furthermore, you can drag and drop objects in reverse, from the layout window

to a palette, to create custom palette objects—a handy way of giving your site a consistent look and feel.

Even if you are not an HTML programmer, opening GoLive's HTML Outline View is interesting. If nothing else, one is impressed with the amount of HTML code that is generated from one's GUI actions. The HTML code is not a static, look-but-don't-touch display, however. One can drag and drop items from palettes to the Outline View, adjust links and attributes, and manipulate XML code. A built-in HTML syntax editor helps keep you on track when rolling your own code. Awesome.

Web Site Management

Creating individual Web pages is one thing, but creating an entire site is another. Perhaps GoLive's main distinction when compared to "lighter" Web packages is its abilities in site development and management. GoLive's main tool for this purpose is its Site window, in which you "manage the assets of your Web site," says Adobe. The Site window shows a graphical, expandable diagram of your Web site and server.

Just as individual pages can be built from components with GUI simplicity, whole structures can be created and revised from pages. You can drag pages from palettes to the Site window. Pages can be rearranged easily, with GoLive automatically updating links. GoLive can

GoLive

Continued from page 5

generate a table of contents for a site from its links, a boon for quality assurance.

The Easy Cascades

Cascading Style Sheets (CSSs) provide Web authors with stylesheet-like capabilities. Using CSSs, authors can be both more creative and more consistent in designing pages. For example, CSSs are commonly used to display special typefaces, corporate logos, letterhead designs, headline styles, and so on.

External CSSs, that is CSSs that exist separately from a Web page, can be shared among pages for ease of development and for a consistent look. Another benefit of external CSSs is ease of maintenance. Changes to an external CSS are propagated automatically to all online documents that link the CSS.

GoLive jumps on CSSs with both feet, allowing the author to create and edit internal and external CSSs in a WYSIWYG, drag-and-drop environment. CSSs can be made with pixel-level control such that Web pages appear identically on both Macintoshes and PCs. Capone.

GoLive also rallies behind JavaScript, allowing a visual way to add JavaScripts to pages. GoLive's JavaScript Editor and Button Inspector provide easy implementation of sophisticated Web page operations. A JavaScript Library allows for convenient reuse of JavaScripts. GoLive also includes several of the most common JavaScripts in use today.

GoLive hitches on to XML coattails, too, allowing authors to write, save and edit XML code. For example, authors can link multiple pages to a single source page using GoLive's XML features. These features are "defined by XML, and thus are database driven," said Capone.

As the Web Turns

As the speed of Internet communications increases, more and more bandwidth hungry applications will inevitably appear. Video and sound, for example, will become more and more prevalent. Adobe has tried to position GoLive for multimedia Web development. Sound tracks can be synchronized with motion video and edited individually. Key frames provide frame-level control over video sequences. Capone suggested that sophisticated training videos, with pause and motion controls, could be developed with GoLive.

GoLive is available now for both the PC and the Mac. It retails for $299. Upgrades from PageMill to GoLive are $99. Capone advised members to check Adobe's Web site (www.adobe.com) for possible GoLive promotions or competitive upgrades. ✐

From the President

Into the (sortakinda) Millenium

Michael Meyer

Dear colleagues on the home front:

I hope your entry into the (commercially approved) Millenium™ wasn't as awful as mine was. I have spent my waking hours since 01/01/00, 00:00:01

Semper vigilans.

rebuilding my computer from the boards up, reinstalling all my software, and reconstructing every file bit by bit. All my zeros became ones, and all my ones became zeros. Everything in between became an indeterminate quantum state. It was truly a nightmare, just like TV said it would be. I should have hired the consultant, but I was too cheap.

Ah, but the worst part is having to eat all the freeze-dried food I laid up in my bunker, and reconstituting all the freeze-dried water. (It is just not as fresh as the real thing.) I am thinking of having a big party, so send me your recipes. (I need a new twist on jerky soup.) And now they tell me that this last exercise was only practice for the *Real* Millenium™, when things are really supposed to screw up big time. I feel awful just thinking about having to do this all over again.

On the brighter side, we can look forward to a new year for our chapter, having come out of a very successful 1999. We couldn't have done it without you. And we can't continue having successes without you, either.

Elections are coming up, and it will soon be time for a new generation of chapter leaders. I ask all of you to consider doing what you can to keep the energy of the NorthBay Chapter alive, especially during a time of considerable opportunity. Look around you at the businesses that keep sprouting up almost daily, and ask yourself how you can help stay involved in ensuring that they produce the best documentation and help for their customers that it is possible to provide. It is also possible to share tasks, talents, and skills, particularly with respect to the *NorthBay News* and the chapter's Web site. Look at these opportunities as further steps up a career ladder that your own job might not provide. It is not just the chapter or STC, but our information profession in general that is in need of as much fresh air and fresh talent as possible.

March will be election month, so if you don't volunteer, you might be nominated. If you know of someone who would like to be an officer or keep the newsletter or site alive, you might make subtle suggestions in the appropriate direction. ✐

Contractors' Web Site

Jim Gilliam, Arkansas STC Chapter

[Editor's note: The following information is provided for you to make your own judgment as to its applicability to your own needs. The NorthBay News *and the* NorthBay STC Chapter *do not endorse any services.]*

JobSwarm is a comprehensive, fast-growing service thta matches businesses with independent contractors. The process is efficient, beneficial to both parties, and membership is absolutely free of charge.

Contractors can avail themselves of the site by submitting bids on a variety of project proposals offered in their field. JobSwarm deals with a variety of job categories, from computer programming and graphics design, to marketing and translation services. The service is ideal for contractors seeking employment opportunities and increased marketability.

JobSwarm is also a useful tool for businesses that would like to outsource projects to competent professionals at a market-driven rate. Businesses need only submit a project proposal describing what it is they wish to outsource. Contractors will then make bids available to the business at the JobSwarm site for review. By providing business with a wealth of potential contractors and information in one place, JobSwarm makes outsourcing an efficient and wrinkle-free process.

In addition to providing these useful services, JobSwarm also gives its members the opportunity to share in its revenues. Anytime a member refers another business or contractor for membership, that member will earn a percentage of any revenue JobSwarm makes from that new member's transactions.

I encourage you to take advantage of JobSwarm. I am convinced that JobSwarm can benefit you, as it has benefited me. You can access their site at http://www.JobSwarm.com/806667496.

Coming Soon!

February
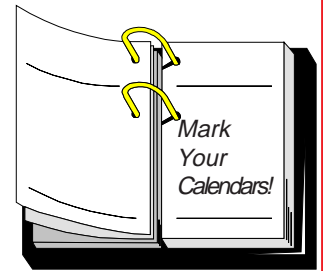
Show and Tell Again?

Our recent speakers have all been so wonderful that we have had scarce opportunity to talk to each other—the very reason for the chapter. Unless some golden opportunity shows up (say, J. K. Rowling appears for a signing party), let's plan on bringing some fantastic treasure we've uncovered, or simply talk about resources we have stumbled upon. This has always been a popular event, particularly when good food is available.

March

Election Time!

Yes, it's time for pundits, talking heads, soft money, and a change of the guard. It's all up for grabs, folks, so come with a mind to participate in another year of a great chapter.

Mark Your Calendars!

Employment Opportunities

Contractors' Web Site

You may wish to take a look at JobSwarm (www.JobSwarm.com/806667496). See article this page for details.
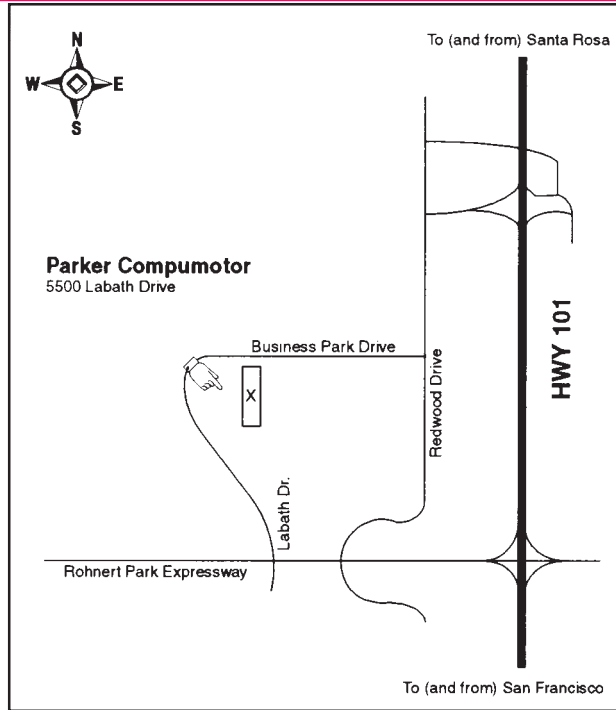
Help Wanted!!

We meet on the third Thursday of each month

Our next meeting

January 20

Parker Compumotor
5500 Labath Drive
Rohnert Park

stc.org/region8/nbc/www/

Parker Compumotor
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HWY 101

Business Park Drive

Redwood Drive

Labath Dr.

Rohnert Park Expressway

To (and from) San Francisco

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