



Winter 2016 e-Newsletter edition

President's Message - STARCON16 Arizona

By Linda Fifield



Taking the helm as STAR president, I first want to thank the nominating committee for having the faith in me to lead this amazing organization. I also want to thank Shelly Hunter for being such a great mentor. May I be as knowledgeable and gracious a leader as she is. I'd also like to acknowledge STAR's outstanding Board members, past and present; STAR's many volunteers; Irv Starkman who couldn't join us in Scottsdale; and many thanks to Tina Kautter, Dave Wenhold, and their amazing staff for the outstanding work they do for us all year long.

I have been involved in the court reporting industry for almost 40 years. I got involved with court reporting through my aunt, Doris Wong. Gainfully unemployed with a degree in psychology, I started out as her fill-in computer manager until she could find someone qualified for the job. Not qualified but willing to learn, I fell in love with computers, and here I am today. During my time in the computer room, I learned to read many court reporter theories and came to appreciate your unique skills and just how hard you all work. I have also seen firsthand the evolution and power of technology in court reporting.

The digital revolution in court reporting that we are experiencing today can, in part, be attributed to court reporting legends like Frank Nelson, Doris Wong, Forrest Brown, and Jack Hunt — to name a few — who were crazy enough to invest in \$80K computers back in 1977. In order to stay viable in today's world, we need to be like them. By that I don't mean "crazy." Like them, we need to **make an investment in ourselves and the technology** that puts us in the best possible position to compete in today's marketplace. STAR is the go-to association that pushes the envelope of innovation. Here we learn and share ideas with fellow colleagues and Stenograph. Here we are introduced to leading-edge technology and best practices as they relate to our profession and business through some pretty amazing seminars. I am proud to say that there is no other association that meets the needs of this profession like STAR does.

I don't have an RPR, RMR, CRR or RDR, but I do have an MBA. That being said, I view the business of the court reporting profession a bit differently. One of my goals this year is to help you find ways to market yourselves as a **rare gem versus a commodity**. Court reporters, you are more than a body. You are certified professionals performing a task that a very small percentage of the population can ever hope to achieve. You need to learn how to market yourself as a "business." Whether it's through certifications or offering new services, it's important to sell your worth to make yourself a necessity. **Part of that worth is earned when you embrace court reporter-related technology that makes you an indispensable part of the legal team.**

As a business, it is your job to attend seminars on software, technology, and best business practices. It is important that we strengthen the technology **culture** that this group is known for. Meet vendors who can provide you with leading-edge technology and services that make sense to you and your business. Why vendors? They have the products and services developed specifically for us and our business.

Whether you need their services now or not, know what's available in the marketplace. For example, when iCVNet Cloud was released, I got a close-up demo from Stenograph. Wouldn't you know that a client called the next week and needed over 40 hookups, many of which were around the country. Could our firm do it?? Absolutely. If I had not attended that convention, I would not have known that this service even existed.

Educate yourself and then educate your clients and be the local authority. Keep on improving yourself. With that in mind, **it's STAR's job to make sure we keep providing you with the seminars, tools, and resources to help you grow.**

In addition, you need to **network**. Networking isn't just meeting people to send work to or get work from. It's more than exchanging business cards. It's more than dollars and cents. **Networking** is finding that core group of people who share the same values and work ethic that you do. Collaborate, share ideas, and explore the possibilities of new or better business practices with people of like mind.

We've all heard about the challenges of networking with others. Concerns range from the skills of the reporter, quality of the transcript, timeliness, following instructions, pricing, payment, and the list goes on. Find those who raise the bar and bring you to the next level. Network with those who not only keep you happy, but, more importantly, keep your clients happy.

Additionally, **take what you learn at STAR and share it.** If we all proactively share our knowledge and motivate fellow reporters to improve, we will elevate the profession to the next level. I know that there are many firm owners in this group. Whether your firm happens to enjoy an employer/employee relationship or uses independent contractors, take the time to know your reporters, your representatives in the field. Help them, train them, and encourage them to be better reporters. Give them the tools to succeed. They are your best marketers. How do they market? Great transcripts and exceptional service.

How many of you are on Facebook or Twitter? How many of you have a social media presence? How many of you share information? Is your post informative, inflammatory, thoughtful? Every post is a reflection of you. Post wisely. Contribute only if it's helpful. People are seeing you. Do you think they like what they see? I have such great respect for *Cindi Lynch, Lisa Knight, Nancy Bistany, Donna Urlaub, and Jerry Kelley*. Talk about great contributors to the court reporting profession. They put themselves out there all the time. The information they share helps reporters better themselves. Their positive energy is such a motivator. Thank you for that.

For those of you who have websites, how many of you are posting worthwhile, helpful messages to fellow colleagues? I love reading posts and blogs from *Rosalie Kramm, Kim Neeson, and Todd Mobley*. They write educational pieces for fellow reporters, new services being offered to counsel, and, even better, they educate clients on how to use the new technology. My sister, *Connie*, writes a "*Student Corner*" blog each month for students. Breck Record has a great FB site for students. Everyone, regardless of software or theory, contributes to his FB page. There's great information out there. This is good business for the firm AND the profession when you contribute helpful articles and posts that promote learning.

To grow your business, embrace the digital age in its many forms. Whether it's providing realtime, digital transcripts and exhibits, cloud technology, PDF files, or marketing online via Facebook or your website, give yourself the competitive edge and **don't settle for mediocrity.**

Some things I've learned over the years...

- **Make decisions based on the profession before you base it on personal gain. Think of the global impact of your decisions. Take care of the profession, and the profession will take care of you.**
- **You're only as good as the reporters on your team.**
- **As our consultant once told us, "You're not a charitable organization" – Your transcripts and services have value. Charge accordingly. -and -**
- **Work smart. Make yourself an indispensable member of the legal community, and you'll always be gainfully employed.**

Happy Holidays to Everyone!

Thank you.

Come on, STARs... Let's Chat!

By: Angie Ballman Punton



For unto us a hashtag is born. #STARchatter

As we enter the holiday season, STARCON16 is a fond memory, and STARTECH17 is months away. But what if we want to bounce ideas off of each other or stay in touch in the interim? Fortunately, it's never been easier. #STARchatter has arrived to help keep the STAR conversations flowing all year round!

What's a hashtag again?

In the social media world, a hashtag groups ideas and topics together. Add a pound sign before a word or phrase you turn it into a searchable link across all platforms. Hashtags are commonly found on Twitter but can also be seen and tracked on Instagram and Facebook through open profiles, business accounts and friends' posts.

How do I use them?

Hashtags are truly remarkable in that you can observe and participate in conversations about any topic taking place realtime across the world. November 8, 2016, was an epically memorable, historic evening for Americans as well as for people across the globe. There were many Election Day hashtags, and through them, one was able to get up-to-the-minute stats from news outlets, an abundance of diverse reactions from friends and strangers alike, and occasionally commentary from the candidates themselves. Whether you were on the couch at home with a glass of wine (like me) or accessing the live feed via WiFi from Santiago, Chile, with a glass of wine (like @JanBallman), Twitter was arguably the best place to watch Election Night coverage.

Now, it's STAR's turn

Following STARCON16, the Board made it top priority to keep STAR connections and conversations alive! Please take to Twitter and use #STARchatter to discuss anything and everything #courtreporting and #technology-related. Or perhaps you have some great insights into the restaurant scene in #Houston for STARTECH17. Let's utilize this remarkable free resource – Twitter – to stay connected to our 700 STAR friends across the country until we meet again!

Enjoy the #holiday season! See you in the spring!



The Court Reporter's Brain: "A Miracle:



Here is an excerpt from a neuro-psychologist's deposition which we think you will find very interesting!

The neuropsychologist is describing the intricacies of the human brain.

Neuropsychologist: May I give an example of this?

Counsel: Sure.

Neuropsychologist: Okay. If you look — and the example is this: Our brains are a miracle. Okay. They're a miracle that needs to be protected. And if you look at the court reporter right now, as an example, okay, this is a miracle in progress happening right before your eyes.

Let me just explain what she needs to do. I am speaking, so the information has to come in through her ear into her temporal lobe, and it has to go log itself into the language center. She has to be able to comprehend what I'm saying.

Then it has to get rerouted to the prefrontal cortex where it has to hold — she has to be able to hold the information, because, you know, I continuously talk so she has to hold it. Right? Then she has to analyze it, integrate it and synthesize it. Then it has to go back to the cerebellum and she has to be able to execute this, and

she has to be able to then convert my words into those little squiggly marks. Have you ever seen court reporters have little squiggly language things?

So she has to convert it into a different language, and the white matter tracks allows her to reroute all of this information simultaneously without effort. Okay.

We take our brains for granted. She's sitting here. I'm probably talking too fast for her, but she's able to do this simultaneously. Seamlessly. Okay.

No animal on the planet can do this. All right. That's why I believe court reporters will never be replaced. Because no technical — no technology could replace the beauty of that brain and the miracle of that brain. And that's why your brain should always be protected and you should take care of it.

Engaging and Supporting Your Freelance Court Reporters

By: Kim Neeson

Agency owners – like many business owners – are faced with the task of keeping a highly skilled workforce at the ready in order to service their clients. This is a real challenge given the dwindling numbers of new reporters and captioners coming into the market, and the large number of court reporters who will retire over the next decade. Therefore, retention of your good court reporters is paramount to the survival of your business. The question then becomes: what can we as firm owners do to support and keep our current court reporters, and what can we do to attract new ones?

From my experience, I offer six suggestions:



1. Engage

Court reporting can be a lonely job. Reporters go to jobs at various locations; sometimes they are rarely in the office. While social media can provide a place for court reporters to meet and bond, nothing beats face-to-face interaction. Plan a couple of get-togethers over the course of the year, be it a backyard BBQ, a night of billiards, hosting a seminar, or dinner at a restaurant. I always make it a point to include office staff with court reporters and captioners so that they can get to know one another and learn from each other. Everyone has their own job stress, and engaging with others creates a connection that enforces co-operation and understanding among people.

2. Listen

More often than not, all anybody wants is someone to understand and sympathize with a difficult assignment. Being able to voice stress, anxiety, fear or frustration is important, and as an agency owner, I want my group to know that I understand their issues and will support them as much as possible. One's personal life can have far reaching implications into one's work life, and a firm owner cannot be blind to someone's troubles. Taking the time to listen will help you aid the reporter work through their stress and let them know that you've got their back.

3. Acknowledge

When someone goes the extra mile, say thank you! Those two small words can go such a long way. Yes, they get paid for their job, but who among us doesn't feel better when someone acknowledges our hard work? Don't be afraid to pick up the phone or write an email telling someone on your team that you've noticed how they've gone above and beyond.

4. Create a Team Environment

The more people know one another, the more willing they are to help one another. I feel very fortunate that my entire team steps forward when someone needs help—whether there's a sudden illness, a family crisis, or a transcript issue. Everyone pitches in, and we all win. Again, at many events I make sure to include both staff and reporters and captioners. By getting to know one another, they learn to appreciate each other's challenges – sometimes just by sharing war stories around the table – and mutual respect is the result. Feeling that you are part of a community is a key to success for reporter and agency owner alike.

5. Talk the Talk & Walk the Walk

Lead by example. Treat others the way you wish to be treated. Those are two tenets I live by. I once worked at a freelance firm that, after a great deal of success, treated their reporters with little to no respect. I learned a lot from that experience...and started my own firm as a result! If you want people to have your best interests at heart, have theirs too. While it is trite to say you won't have the same relationship with every single reporter that works with you, demonstrating how you treat others will speak volumes about the level of respect you give and expect to receive.

6. Prune When Necessary

When creating a positive firm culture, you'll always find someone who doesn't play well in your sandbox. Perhaps it's a reporter who drains your staff of their energy with constant questions, incomplete work, and never acknowledging errors or "owning" anything. Or maybe it's someone who causes a lot of dissent and agitation – mainly stemming from their own unhappiness. If you are truly trying to achieve workplace harmony, you must identify these people and work with them to create positive changes. However, as the saying goes, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink, and for the good of the company – and your sanity – you may need to release them from your agency and let them find the greener grass. I bet you'll find your entire team happier for it, and also willing to pick up the slack too!

Lastly, your freelance crew talk. We are a small industry. A good agency reputation will go a long way to enticing the best and brightest of new talent that is coming through the ranks.

Kim Neeson, FAPR, RPR, CRR, CSR, (RSA) is a working firm owner in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Talk Steno to Me

By: Donna Urlaub



During a recent three-hour expert doctor deposition in which "degree," "agree," and "disagree" figured prominently in questions, answers, and objections, it got me thinking: Is anyone still writing "agree" and "degree" in two strokes? Worse yet, "disagree" in three?

So I took a poll of several reporters, and, sure enough, they were. Some had gone so far as to define the conflicting outline as "agree," then change the word to "degree" when appropriate. While I understand the logic, this kind of thing causes me to examine my writing and ask myself what words have I been tolerating/replacing/word grouping/multi-stroking, instead of making one tiny change that was both freeing and exciting. Like, wow! And to think I had been doing this for 47 years:

Roof/radiograph – RAOF. Now I throw a "U" in, RAOUF/roof.

Higher/hire – HAOEUR. Drop the AO for "hire." HIR.

Bank/bang – BANG. Throw a "U" in for "bank." BAUNG. And tank, rank, sank, yank.

A COUPLE OF OTHER RANDOM DISCOVERIES:

If I've been writing comfortable K-FRBL, why am I still two-stroking uncomfortable? Why not KUFRBL or NUFRBL?

Which leads me to: Why am I writing EN/KOURJ, when I could write NOURJ, IN/KREBL when I could use NERBL? If supplement is SPLEMT; why not SPLEL for supplemental?

So what about the degree/agree/disagree, you ask me?

Degree GRE/agree GRAE/disagree SGRAE

In phrases:

I agree – IRG

do you agree – DOURG

if you agree – FURG

can you agree – KURG

you agree – URG

so I agree – SOIRG

I don't agree – YORG

will you agree – LURG

we agree – WERG

so you agree – SOURG

would you agree - WOURG

I do not agree – DOINT/GRAE

If any of you have some of these outlines that made you smack your head, I invite you to share them with us. Email me at: donna@urlaubbowen.com.

Case CATalyst® Indexing—There's a Wizard for That!

By: Vickie M. Main, Stenograph

After reporting the proceedings with interrupting attorneys, soft talkers, mumblers and the like, is creating the transcript's index page your most time consuming task? Are you going through the transcript and writing down where examinations occurred and where exhibits were marked and/or received in evidence and then creating your index page manually? And then double or triple checking those indexed items again to make sure they didn't change locations because of editing? If so, then it is time to invest a little time and effort so your next index page is created with the click of the mouse!

I hear the groans ... *"indexing is too complicated."* While CATalyst has a couple of sample index templates located in your System Files Index Templates folder, the best news is that Case CATalyst has an Index Template Wizard feature that can walk you through creating your own custom index page (simple or complex) and even help you create your sworn statement and exhibit blurbs with the appropriate indexing format symbols. There is even an Index Template Wizard Self-Study Guide that provides additional information. (Self-Study guides are available under Help, Self-Study Guides.) Start with a new file in the Index Templates case and then go to Tools, Index, Index Template Wizard and give it a try!

Still hearing a few groans ... *"I just don't have time."* Another solution is to contact your local Stenograph Certified Independent Training Agent. Just sit back and relax and let an expert create the index template and modify your blurbs and dictionary definitions to match it. Spend a little time while the training agents goes over the what, how and "just in case" scenarios and when that is done, you just tell CATalyst to build an index and the rest is pretty much automatic. Well, you still need to write the job and fill in the exhibit information, but the building of the index is a snap!

The bottom line (that's what is important), is that indexing in Case CATalyst should not be labor intensive. Once you have your index template created and your examination and exhibit blurbs (and whatever might be needed) are set up, creating a transcript index is a matter of selecting Tools, Index, Build Index. Think of the time (and time is money) you will save!

John Wenclawski to Retire from Stenograph, Replacement Named

After a remarkable 33 year career at Stenograph, John Wenclawski has announced his intent to retire at the end of this year.

John joined Stenograph in 1983 as a salesman for the Chicago region. Over the years, he worked his way up through the organization and became president in 1994. Under his leadership, Stenograph made huge strides in the development of revolutionary court reporting technology, and became the industry leader in terms of quality, level of service and overall reputation.

"Participating in the advancement of technology and working with so many wonderful people throughout the court reporting profession and within Stenograph allowed me to exceed all of my professional expectations," said Wenclawski.

John Wenclawski will be succeeded by Jeremy Steele, who currently serves as Deputy General Counsel for Heico, Stenograph's parent company.

Stenograph anticipates a smooth transition as Jeremy has been involved with Stenograph for the last five years and has already worked on a number of projects with the company. With his managerial skills, strategic vision and analytical approach, Jeremy will bring a fresh perspective to the Stenograph team.



President Fifield's Tech Tip:



Have trouble hearing the testimony? Do you use earphones on the job? How many of you use one earpiece and leave the other one hanging so you don't miss outside chatter? Susan Miller introduced me to single in-ear **stereo** earphones. Check out the XDU Pathfinder Single Stereo-to-Mono Isolating Earphones on Amazon. Lots of other options are available online. Happy listening.