



# IDEal

The Official Publication of the STC  
Instructional Design and Learning SIG

## Note from the editor

*By Melanie Murphy,  
IDEal Newsletter co-Editor*

When a new year begins, I like to take time to reflect on the past year and assess what the new year holds, setting a few goals for myself.

As you'll read in the Manager's Column, 2024 was an active year for me with the STC IDL SIG. In April I did an online presentation about creating portfolios, in May I attended Summit and was a speaker alongside Viqui and Maralee, and I took on this newsletter position. I'm also a success story from Summit! I'm an independent contractor and always on the lookout for my next gig. Talking with other attendees during a cocktail hour landed me my dream position and a longterm contract with a new client! I don't know if I'll be able to top the 2024 Summit, but it makes me really excited to see what 2025 holds for my career.

I'm so honored to be part of this wonderful group and in 2025 I look forward to writing more articles and creating more educational presentations. I'm

also excited about Janell's series of articles about the 12 principles of instructional design and how you can hone your skills in the new year. I think that series is going to help a lot of readers sharpen their instructional practices.

As this new year gets started, I would encourage all of you to take a look at where you are in your career. Are there areas where you want to grow? New things to learn? Do you want to get more involved with the STC and the IDL SIG? We're always looking for article writers, and those are great pieces for your portfolio.

For me, I think you'll see more of me in 2025. I'm shifting my focus from my quilting hobby to the STC and career building. Plans are underway for another portfolio presentation and perhaps a workshop where I can help you create your own online portfolio. Keep an eye out for those if you're also interested in career building.

Thank you all for a wonderful 2024. I hope to see you at our events in 2025! 💡

Q4 2024

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Best wishes for a  
wonderful 2025!



## Manager's Column Q4 2024

By Maralee Sautter, IDL SIG Manager

### 2024 in Retrospect

In keeping with the tradition of my past columns, I will recap "a few of my favorite things" from 2024. This tradition is based on my love of singing and the musical, *Sound of Music*. Just imagine Julie Andrews singing [\*My Favorite Things\*](#) as you read my 2024 IDL SIG list of favorite things:

- Summit experiences
- IDL SIG article
- Favorite session

### Favorite Summit Experiences

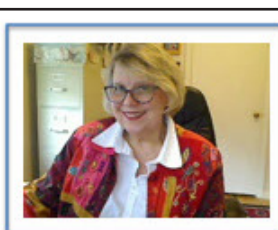
The 2024 Summit took place in Bloomington, Minnesota from May 16-19, and the theme was Tech Comm in Action. My favorite "general" experience at the Summit was enjoying the connection with other IDL SIG members. Since many experiences led to a host of connections, I was unable to choose only one favorite, so I will share several favorite Summit experiences.

The SIG's first social event was on Thursday, May 16 at the Rainforest Café. At the gathering, we enjoyed good conversation, laughter, and giving out rubber ducks. The rubber ducks coincided with the Instructional Design panel presentation on Saturday.

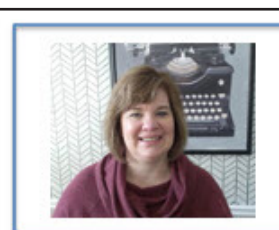
On Friday, May 17 we asked SIG members to join us for lunch. In preparation for the next day's presentation, we placed IDL SIG stickers on rubber duck bottoms while we enjoyed our lunch. It was a group experience that was fun and engaging.



VIQUI  
DILL



MARALEE  
SAUTTER



MELANIE  
MURPHY



On Saturday, May 18, Viqui Dill, Melanie Murphy, and I presented: Are You a Uni-Duck? The Intersection of Tech Comm and Instructional Design. We focused on showing and explaining to attendees how to use their technical communication skills to transition into instructional design. We didn't have any photos from the session, but the panel's headshots are smiling at you on the previous page, so just pretend Viqui is giving away rubber ducks and singing about ADDIE to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat.

Later that evening we met at the STC Awards reception, which was filled with fun, applause, and laughter. After the IDL SIG was awarded the Platinum CAA certificate, I held the certificate and posed for a photo with our fantastic IDL group attending the

instructional design using a tech comm background. At the end of the article, I provide some suggestions for making the leap to instructional design. The general steps are listed below, and detailed examples are in the article itself.

1. Research job descriptions
2. Leverage skills and tools on your resume
3. Determine gaps in your experience
4. Create an online portfolio
5. Use your STC and IDL SIG networks

You can read [the complete article](#) on the IDL SIG website.

### **Favorite IDL SIG Session**

The Virtual Open House was a hoot and certainly at the top of my list of favorite sessions in 2024. However, the winner of my favorite session was the April First

were pertinent because she provided many examples for creating sample documents and videos. The chat session was interactive and pleasantly informative and her suggestions applied to creating any type of portfolio.

To watch Melanie's session, visit our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7lhBNhGWOY&t=116s>.

### **Looking Forward to 2025**

I haven't succumbed to the pressure of setting resolutions for the New Year. Rather, I've created small realistic goals for myself in 2025. The future is always uncertain, but currently, the world seems especially topsy-turvy. To inspire myself, I have chosen the word HOPE as my mantra this year. My granddaughter and I created a very colorful friendship bracelet with HOPE enclosed in the loop. I wear the bracelet often as a reminder to seek hope in whatever situation comes my way. My HOPE bracelet reminds me to remain positive in a world of uncertainty.



reception.

### **Favorite Newsletter Article**

While it's not typically my nature to promote myself, I'll make an exception this year. My article *The Intersection of Instructional Design & Technical Communication* in the Q2 Newsletter (inspired by the IDL panel at Summit) is important because it provides guidelines on transitioning into

Fridays at 5 offering, Polishing Portfolios, an IDL chat with Melanie Murphy.

It is one of my favorites for its alignment with the theme of transitioning from tech comm to instructional design. During the session, Melanie showed us how she built her online portfolios spotlighting her tech comm and marketing experience. The presentation and chat session

So, whether you choose a word for inspiration or you have a method to keep your goals in alignment, I wish you the best of success on your journey through 2025. In the coming year, I HOPE your journey crosses paths with STC and the IDL SIG many times. May 2025 be your best year yet! 💡

## 2024 Volunteer Appreciation



*By Maralee Sautter, IDL SIG Manager*

The Instructional Design & Learning SIG had a robust year of accomplishments, made possible by our volunteers. As the manager of the SIG, it is my pleasure to acknowledge the following members for their volunteering spirit. Thank you for everything you do.

The SIG volunteers were recognized through the following citations:

BETH BAILEY	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Membership Manager and SIG Treasurer.
JENN BUCKLEY	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Website Manager and Survey Specialist.
VIQUI DILL	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Program Manager and Event Coordinator.
JANELLE KENNEDY	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Secretary and Newsletter Co-Editor.
LORI MEYER	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Member at Large.
MELANIE MURPHY	For your dedicated service to the SIG as the Newsletter Managing Editor.
MELISSA PAGNOTTA	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Social Media Manager.
KRIS ROYER COLLINS	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Newsletter Co-Editor.
MARCIA SHANNON	For your dedicated service to the SIG as Student Outreach Manager. ♡

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### One Question Survey

We want to think we can read your thoughts about our future newsletter topics, but our many talents do not include clairvoyance, so we need your help! Tell us what topics you'd like us to discuss throughout 2025 by filling out this one-question survey with your ideas. These could be broad topics or very specific ones, such as how to use certain applications to create great tech comm documents. No topic is a bad idea, so send us your ideas, and we will do our best to incorporate them all into our newsletters throughout the new year!

#### One Question Newsletter Topic Survey

Follow this link to the survey and add as many suggestions as you have:

[one question survey.](#)

The survey will be available through February 15, 2025. ♡



## Recipients of the 2024 IDL SIG Awards

The IDL SIG awards program was launched in 2019 to honor volunteers not eligible for STC's Distinguished SIG Service Award. These are SIG-specific awards to celebrate the contributions of our great volunteers and provide recognition opportunities within the reach of more SIG members. Awards are given to outstanding volunteers who work hard to make our SIG the amazing community that it is.

Two awards may be given for the calendar year:

- **SIG Volunteer Achievement Award** recognizes the services of a SIG volunteer over time. To be eligible, the recipient demonstrates consistent service to the SIG over a period of one or more years, either as a volunteer in a recurring role or as a volunteer who has served in many ways without having held an elected office or appointed position.
- **SIG New Volunteer Award** recognizes a SIG member who demonstrates consistent service in a short period of time. To be eligible, the recipient needs to be a SIG member for longer than one year, but who has offered significant volunteer activity for the first time in their membership history.

This year we have two recipients for each award category.

**The SIG Volunteer Achievement Award** goes to **Melanie Murphy**, a SIG member who filled in wherever she could help in the past year, and recently stepped up to the newsletter editor position.



Melanie's award citation reads:  
*For help on many ad hoc duties within the SIG, sharing your marketing and editing skills for our newsletter, and becoming a panelist, organizer, and supporter of the IDL SIG at Summit 2024.*

**The SIG Volunteer New Volunteer Achievement Award** goes to **Janell Kennedy** who was a major figure at the 2024 Summit this year. She volunteered as SIG secretary and brought many ideas and enthusiastic energy to us.



Janell's award citation reads:  
*For sharing ideas and enthusiasm at the STC Summit, for stepping up to the role of secretary, and for becoming an important part of the newsletter team.*

Congratulations to Melanie and Janell! You are extraordinary volunteers, and we appreciate your contributions to the SIG.

We are proud of all our STC and SIG awards. You can view our SIG awards and award recipients on the IDL SIG [website](https://www.stcidlsig.org). 🔗



# Resolutions for Technical Communicators (Part 1)

By Janell Kennedy, IDL SIG Secretary

Many people make New Year's resolutions every year, and every year they fall off the resolution wagon within a matter of weeks. Even with this high failure rate, there's no reason to be scared of New Year's resolutions; this is especially true for those technical communicators out there who want to elevate their instructional design skills. People often think that falling off the wagon in a matter of weeks is resolution failure, but when you think of a resolution as a goal with a deadline, it's really just taking a break on the path to achieving your goal. Setting an achievable date to accomplish your goal (or resolution) helps alleviate emotional turmoil when life happens and you miss a day of commitment. We have the perfect path forward that will be gradual and focused to keep you on the wagon for the whole year.

For the 12 months in a year, we will cover 12 principles of instructional design that you can use to hone your skills over the course of 2025. With four quarters of newsletters on the way, we will release three instructional design principles in each newsletter. These 12 principles comprise Robert Gagné's nine levels of instruction and the three psychological principles of instructional design. All 12 fit best in the context of an instructional environment like a live instructor-led class, but they can be applied to almost any situation in which you are trying to relay knowledge to another. Most of the examples in this series will revolve around

a more casual, on-the-job knowledge transfer rather than a formal classroom environment. At the end of each concept, look for the H2H (How to Hone) recommendations for applying these principles in practice. The first three principles are:

1. Master the art of gaining the attention or interest of learners
2. Provide the objectives or knowledge goals to learners
3. Use recall stimulation tactics to help learners retain information

While the concepts are labeled according to month, you can certainly jump ahead to the next two principles in the article and practice all three in this quarter until the next three are released. But if you want to focus on just one month's principle in pursuit of staying on the resolution wagon, we have made that easy for you!

## **Principle 1 (January)—Master the art of gaining the attention or interest of learners**

Whether you are the instructor in a class environment or a co-worker trying to train people on new software or processes, you have to know how to gain and keep the attention of learners. If you can't do that, it's likely that the information you share will not be retained. While on-the-job training means you have a captive audience, you should still strive to capture the attention of listeners through a short description of the software or process and its purpose. Engage them with a story about a time when the process wasn't followed and any

issues that ensued, which can serve to capture their attention simply because they don't want to cause a similar incident. During the course of the training, ask them questions to see if they can infer answers to the next step or topic through deduction; these questions should draw upon the knowledge you have already transferred. This helps them engage in the learning process, and when you can lead learners to the answers, they are much more likely to retain the information than if you just tell/show them.

**H2H**—Prepare your notes ahead of time before you train. Make sure you know the details of any previous incidents regarding this process that could serve as an attention getter and practice it so you can relay it casually without notes. Mark the process notes with colors or stars or other indicators to remind you when to ask a leading question to engage the learner (even write the question in the notes).

## **Principle 2 (February)—Provide the objectives or knowledge goals to learners**

When we hear the word objectives, we often think of bullet points that cover what you should understand by the end of the course. It feels very academic and dry to use in a casual on-the-job training environment, but the learner still needs to know what they are expected to understand. Use casual language during the introduction of your topic's purpose description. You can even conversationally weave what they'll learn into the end of your

## Resolutions for Technical Communicators (Part 1), continued

cautionary tale about sticking to the process to avoid a situation like “Bob” encountered several years ago. By attaching it to the end of the attention grabber, they will more likely retain the main points.

**H2H**—Keep it to no more than three basic objectives and word them in a conversational way. There’s nothing wrong with making them more formal but formal wording often puts people on edge and focus can be lost. Stick to simple language, and if you know your audience can handle mnemonic devices, acronyms, or other memory tricks, these can be great tools to help them retain the important main points. You want to keep it to no more than three and probably less than ten words, if possible, because most people just can’t retain that much without forgetting almost immediately. The shorter the objectives the better for easier recall throughout the training.

### **Principle 3 (March)—Use recall stimulation tactics to help learners retain information as the training progresses**

We all know that after hearing something once, it’s hard to remember the specifics. Having someone simply talk at you and point out things on a computer screen can easily cause people to daydream and forget transferred knowledge as soon as they hear it. For anyone who has learned something and then immediately done an exercise to reinforce that concept or performed the recently learned process, it was much easier to recall the specifics

again later outside the learning environment. Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience posits that people generally remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see, 50% of what they see and hear, 70% of what they say and write, and 90% of what they do. So if your learners watch you demonstrate a process while you narrate, and then you require them to perform the same process, they are much more likely to retain the given information.

**H2H**—Most people need constant repetition or other connecting concepts to help catalogue the information in their brain. This can be done in a variety of ways. In a classroom environment, this might look like exercises and quizzes learners complete to reinforce what they just learned and to tell the instructor if the majority of learners can recall the concepts. This type of formal recall practice is not conducive in an on-the-job training scenario, but you can stop at natural pause points in the process and ask them to summarize the first few steps you covered; if they can’t or get some things wrong, then you have the opportunity to gently remind them of the correct steps or suggest memory tricks to remember important aspects of the process. For click steps in a software application, start a new session and ask them to click through the steps you just covered. If they expect “pop quizzes” throughout the training, they are much more likely to pay attention the first time. While many software applications and company processes are

documented and can act as reference in the course of their job, save this information for the end of the training session. Learners may be less likely to pay close attention if they know there is a detailed reference document available.

### **Future Principles**


Instructional design principles all have a common foundation: technical communication. If you can effectively communicate, knowledge transfer activities will be easy and learners will have no problem retaining the information.

Stayed tuned for the Q2 newsletter for the next three instructional design principles:

4. Structure information to pave the way for understanding the next topic/concept
5. Provide guidance for deeper understanding
6. Supply opportunities for real-world performance

### **References:**

<https://www.devlinpeck.com/content/principles-of-instructional-design>

<https://www.td.org/content/atd-blog/debunk-this-people-remember-10-percent-of-what-they-read> 

## Mission Statement

Our mission is to help STC members identify and develop knowledge and practical skills for designing, developing, and implementing technical instruction in electronic and

traditional classroom settings. The SIG strives to promote sound design practices and provide information and education about instructional theory and research.

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## About IDL SIG

Formed in 2000, our mission is to help STC members identify and develop knowledge and practical skills for designing, developing, and implementing technical instruction in electronic and traditional classroom settings. The SIG strives to promote sound design practices, provide information, and educate about instructional theory and research.

The primary goals of the IDL SIG are to:

- Build the instructional design skills of members at all experience levels, leveraging the knowledge of experienced members to deliver formal and informal guidance to the community of practice.
- Build the IDL SIG through a proactive combination of activities that includes member recognition, internal and external partnerships, and awareness activities.
- Provide a forum and mechanism for the free exchange of knowledge, ideas, and skills.