

TDI's Chat with . . .

1. What technologies do you use at home as well as "on the go"?

What I do not use is probably a better question. Even though I live far away from the hustle and bustle of the city, I utilize practically every type of technology available.

Since cable isn't available in this area, I receive high-speed Internet access via an antenna mounted on our roof, and we use a satellite dish for television. On my computer - I'm a diehard Mac user - I use whatever I can: instant messaging, e-mail, browsing the web, the works. I also use my Sidekick pager everywhere I go.

Of course, we use run-of-the-mill technology for daily needs: flashing lights, alarms, captions, and a rarely used TTY. One thing I wish I could have is Caller ID; it's not available in this area yet.

2. Which technology today captivates you the most?

True story: about five years ago, I was at a mall with a friend, discussing how fast technology had evolved over the recent years. I've always been technology-savvy, having used computers since 1982 as a seven-year-old. I asked her, "Imagine if we could send e-mail or IM as we walk around in malls?" We laughed hysterically at the ridiculous nature of that idea and came up with funny ways of how we could use that to our advantage. Who would have ever thought that this would have become reality only a few years later?

I definitely think the ability to send e-mail and have IMs on a pager is an amazing step. I have hearing people stop me all the time, anywhere I go, asking me what "that thing" is.

I also marvel at the many uses of videoconferencing.

3. Which technology irritates you today? How can we improve it?

The pager. Mind you, I'm guilty of this - but I get irritated by how people will



Trudy Suggs

Trudy Suggs, born Deaf to Deaf parents in Illinois, earned her B.A. in communication arts and government from Gallaudet University, and her M.P.A. in public administration from the University of Illinois-Chicago. Upon graduation, she went to work as director of programs for a \$2 million non-profit agency in Minnesota. She also maintained a freelance writing career, including breaking a well-publicized story that exposed an automobile ad campaign led by Saturn where a hearing woman faked her deafness in a television commercial.

After taking a year off to travel, Trudy came back to be the editor in chief of Silent News. After nearly two years, she left and formed T.S. Writing Services, which she works with full-time today. Trudy's first book was released in December 2003, with two more books being written. She teaches non-fiction writing courses, and as an ASLTA-certified instructor, she travels often to provide ASL workshops.

Trudy has long been involved with community organizations. Some of her past involvement includes serving as the chair of RID's (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) Certified Deaf Interpreter National Task Force and co-chairing the Illinois State Police's Communication Issues Committee.

interrupt (or even ignore) conversations to respond to messages on their pagers. I've written several columns and articles about how the pager has really distorted in-person conversations nowadays. I try to ignore my pager when I'm chatting with people. Easier said than done, though.

Oftentimes when I go to dinner with friends, I deliberately tell them that I'm turning off my pager. I can't count how many times their faces drop and they try to act as if it's no big deal as they turn off their pagers. But I know, and they know, that it's difficult for them to let go.

I'm also frustrated that my Internet access at home isn't perfect. It's high-speed, but not consistent, which create problems sometimes for videoconferencing. That's one of the tradeoffs for where I live, though.

And last, but not least, I'm annoyed by the lack of captions on many shows.

4. Are you happy with relay services today? What relay do you refer to use?

Yes and no. I tend to use Internet-based relay services, mainly because I can save my conversations and dictate exactly what words to use. I also can multitask while I'm online and copy/paste items. The drawbacks are, of course, the delays in the conversations, and people not knowing what relay is. I also wish Sprint and MCI would make their Internet relay services accessible for Mac users.

5. How has technology helped you launch your writing business, T.S. Writing Services?

I wouldn't be able to run T.S. Writing Services without technology. Almost all of my clients are from other states, and I communicate with them entirely via pager, fax, IM, and e-mail. I teach classes online to hearing students who have no idea that I'm Deaf; I talk with people from all over the world daily; and most of it is at no cost to me, other than paying monthly fees for Internet access.

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Technology has also allowed me to have hearing clients - both locally and world-wide, who I communicate with almost entirely online. It's just mind-boggling to think that ten years ago, I probably wouldn't be able to do this at all because of communication barriers, and because it would have been too costly in terms of marketing and operating.

6. Which captioned programs on TV do you watch? Which non-captioned programs do you wish to enjoy?

I watch comedies like SCRUBS (you have to have a warped sense of humor to enjoy that show, which I do!); dramas like ER and LAW & ORDER; and home decorating shows. I also like investigative-type news shows, like THE SYSTEM, and INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS.

What really frustrates me, though, is how some shows are not consistently captioned. TLC seems to be the problem channel: the hugely popular show, TRADING SPACES, is not consistently captioned, though it used to be). It's annoying to tune in, and suddenly find out that the show isn't captioned even if it's listed as being captioned.

7. If you had a magic wand, what gadgets would you like to have?

I'd love to have a gadget that'd caption non-captioned shows and commercials.

8. What are your most important accomplishments?

I'm most proud of where I am in life today. I wake up with the sun shining on gorgeous scenery, and go to bed under the stars and moon. That's what life is all about. Everything else becomes meaningless if you don't have your health, inner peace and happiness.

9. How long have you been a TDI member? How has TDI helped you?

I'm a new member, though I grew up always having the Blue Book somewhere in my house or office. TDI has made such



Trudy Suggs in her loft/office at home during a webcam meeting

great achievements in advocacy and this is where I admire TDI the most.

10. What advice would you give to today's deaf and hard of hearing entrepreneurs?

Enjoy what you do. Otherwise, get out quickly, find something that makes you happy, and do it for a living.

Trudy Suggs makes her home with Randy Shank and their two dogs in a log house just outside of Faribault, Minnesota.



Trudy Suggs' "family:" Randy Shank, Trudy, Malcolm (dark dog on left, who is deaf) and Isre (the only hearing member of household).