

TCUK 2018: trepidation to elation

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President's view

2018 has been a busy and very exciting time for me and my husband. By the time this issue of *Communicator* is published, we will have welcomed a new addition to our family. Those of you who have kids know that the world of newborns is a minefield. Even before you figure out how to look after a baby, you need to figure out what kind of cot you should use, how to fix a baby car seat into the car, and let's not forget the buggy that you can never figure out how to open.

We have been extremely lucky to have been given a second hand buggy from my sister. It looks like the easiest buggy to work, but neither of us could figure it out. Thankfully, my sister decided to fly over and visit us before the birth. She took pity on our bewildered looks of how to operate the buggy and showed us how to open and close it. We have both decided the buggy, now opened, will stay that way forever!

Most of our free time has been spent buying and assembling furniture for the baby room. As many of you know, I am in my element assembling furniture. I have a system that works and I love it. I'd happily spend a Saturday morning unpacking the furniture, making sure all the materials and equipment are accounted for. I tick the steps off in the manual once they are complete so I don't lose where I am in the assembly process. I find this process very meditative and I get a sense of accomplishment with every tick I make in the manual. My husband does not have the same affinity for assembling flat-pack furniture. In fact, it's safe to say he feels the complete opposite to me about it. We have an unwritten

rule in the house; assembling flat-pack furniture is my domain. I'll assemble it, and he'll help out when needed. This has served us extremely well over the years. However, with an ever growing bump it has become difficult for me to carry out the usual assembly duties so we have switched roles this time. He is now the one assembling the furniture with me reading out the instructions. See Figure 1.



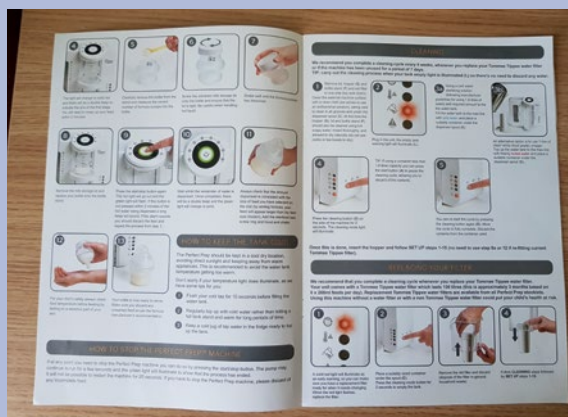
Figure 1. Assembling a cot

This has been interesting. Both of us have been at our wits end at times. For myself, I just want to get stuck in there and do it, for him not only does he hate doing this but he is also spending time trying to stop me from physically helping when I think I can do something. Because there has been so much to assemble, we have seen (and used) a variety of manuals. We have also had to assemble stuff without a manual; that has tested both our patience and interpretation skills to the limit.

I have been impressed by most of the manuals we have used and equally shocked by others. I was extremely impressed by the manuals for furniture that we purchased from Argos. Not only was a paper copy of the instructions included in the box (as usual), but they also emailed a digital copy 2 days before the furniture arrived. I was not so impressed by the manual that came with the Tommy Tippee milk preparation machine. This machine is the latest gadget for making life easier for new parents (reviews say it's the best thing ever, time will tell if we agree). The front page gives you a great picture of the machine and what all the various buttons do.

Unfortunately, when you turn the page you are immediately confused as to why the first image on the page is the 4th step of an unnamed procedure. It took me at least 10 minutes (this includes the time I spent ranting about proofreading and what a truly awful manual this was etc) to figure out that the first 1-3 steps were on the second to last page of the English part of the manual. (see Figure 2)

From a user point of view, it's worrying that no one spotted this error. I'm not sure what is worse, did they spot the error too late and just decide to go ahead with the publication anyway, or has that error been there since the machine first came out. I hope we were unfortunate in buying one from a bad batch and this isn't something that has been in every box since it first hit the shelves a few years ago. Given that none of the reviews we read said anything about this error, I will assume we were just unlucky. On the plus side,



Pages 2 to 3



Second to last page


Figure 2. Tommy Tippee manual, wrongly printed

the web copy does have the steps in chronological order, but I can't see many first time parents being aware that the manual can be found online let alone have the time to search for it.

Technical Communication news

TCUK 2018, which was held in September, was another success this year. Thanks to our conference chair Derek Cooper, and Claire Kelly and Elaine Cole from ASL for their work behind the scenes in planning and organising the conference over the last year, and for making sure the conference went smoothly over the 3 days. The conference was an extra special one for the ISTC this year as we celebrated our 70th birthday,

and *Communicator* celebrated its 50th birthday. For those of you who attended, I hope you enjoyed the cake and the drinks reception celebrating both of these birthdays.

To mark our 70th birthday, we launched the 4th edition of "The Presentation of Technical Information" by one of our founders Reginald Kapp. We were extremely honoured to have Elinor Kapp (Reginald Kapp's daughter) in attendance at the launch. This edition has been updated to include commentaries from some of today's experienced technical communicators, all sharing their reflections and insights with us. The book is now available for purchase from the ISTC office (istc@istc.org.uk). 

References

TCUK website:
<http://technicalcommunicationuk.com>

Tommy Tippee Milk prep machine online instructions
www.mothercare.com/on/demandware.static/-/Sites-MCENGB-Library/default/v835d93a2ebaf8975c0eeb07a70aec0caab96c5f4/pdfs/uk-perfect-prep-quick-start-guide_web.pdf

ISTC Books
www.istc.org.uk/publications-and-resources/istc-books

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UK Technical Communication awards 2018

The awards were presented at TCUK in September 2018. Congratulations to all the winners.

The Annual UK Technical Communication awards recognise best practices and outstanding contributions to technical communication.



Congratulations to 2018 award winners

The UK Technical Communication Awards 2018 ceremony took place on Wednesday 26 September during the Gala dinner at the annual TCUK 2018 conference at the De Vere Staverton, Daventry (www.technicalcommunicationuk.com).

This year, entries were judged and awarded against how well they met their own brief and industry best-practice.

Here are the judges' comments on the winning entries:

Winner: Raymarine for Lighthouse 3 Advanced Operation Instructions

The judges remarked: "For such a small team, this is an impressive amount of information, well curated and organised.

Good use of limited staff and budget; efficient design and execution."

Winner: dunnhumby for Performance Diagnosis UA

The judges said: "This is a great example of what you can achieve when all stakeholders (tech writers, UX teams, and users) work together to improve user information. It definitely has a more modern look and feel to it. 12 months is a very short timeframe in which to achieve something as big as this and the team has done extremely well in achieving this. Very impressive."



Overall winner dunnhumby collecting their award from Paul Ballard

Winner: Hoare Lea for TC Pod

The judges commented: "The podcasts make a strong addition to the range of ways the TC Group communicates

with the firm, responding to audience requests and encouraging collaboration with subject matter experts.

The podcast itself was well executed, the voice and tone of the interviewer was perfect. The information is clearly presented. Very well executed."

Winner: Zylinc for Zylinc Unified Help

The judges observed: "The Zylinc Unified Help site is a significant achievement. The site has an ambitious scope of products, user profiles, information types and business process integration.

This is an excellent example of a unified communications hub. It is easy to navigate around. The design is clear and consistent."

Awards 2019

Next year it could be you! The UK Technical Communication Awards are open to any individual or team, and you do not have to be a member of the ISTC.

Start planning your 2019 winning entry today. You could be a winner!

<https://uktcawards.com> 

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