Simplify your user interface images

How to enrich your wellbeing in the workplace

Read how ISO 27001 affects information developers

Information 4.0 — the future? What tools will be needed?

President's view

It's hard to believe I'm writing an article for the Summer issue of *Communicator* already. This year is flying by and the last few months have been as busy as ever in my household.

My husband is standing in the local elections here in the UK. (As with all publications, I am writing this article a few months ahead of its actual publication date so at the time of writing this in April, the election is yet to happen.) Since I'm on maternity leave, evidently I have been asked to help out with bits and pieces of the campaign. This has been an eye opener for me into how local political campaigns are run, but also in how much my background in technical communications can be used in a range of other situations. I've proofread a lot of campaign literature, asked for clarification on certain things and then rewritten sentences that just aren't quite right. As I don't know that much about politics, I've had to ask a lot of "what does that mean" questions on terminology that I'm not familiar with. At one point I did laugh when I realised my husband was the SME and I was the technical writer interviewing him to get the relevant information!

In addition to this activity, I've signed up to become a mentor with the ISTC. When I first joined the ISTC, I was new to the world of technical communications and I joined the mentoring scheme as a mentee to help me learn more about the profession from non-work colleagues. I was getting great help and advice from my work colleagues, but I felt it was important to learn from others in the profession who didn't work with me or even in the same area as me

as they may have alternative ways of looking at problems and solving them. Joining the scheme was one of the best things I ever did because it gave me confidence in my ability as a technical communicator and I have been a huge supporter of the mentoring scheme ever since. I knew I always wanted to rejoin it as a mentor and help other juniors coming into this profession. When the opportunity to become a mentor this year arose, I was extremely excited. Some questions I am being asked are ones I haven't asked myself in years and it's really made me think about the experience I have so far and what kind of knowledge I can pass onto my fellow technical communicators.

Friends of mine have been asking more questions about technical communications recently. There was one in particular who wanted to know more about the profession as they were contemplating a career change. It was really enjoyable going through their CV, assessing their various skills, and pointing out the relevance of most of these skills to the technical communications profession. They told me about an interview they had where one of the questions was to write instructions on how to use a calculator. I know it might be old school, but I thought this was a great question to ask. Why you ask, because there are so many ways to access a calculator nowadays. Handheld physical calculators were the only ones available when I was growing up, in fact I believe I still have two in the house somewhere. Nowadays, like most people, I use the calculator app on my phone or the one on my computer. It might have the same functionality as a handheld calculator, but instead of looking at a static object and finding the appropriate button on the device, you have to tap on different tabs to find the screen with the functionality you need. I thought this was a really good question to ask a candidate because you have to understand the user and what device they are using in order to write the correct instructions. I mentioned this question to another friend and their first reaction was, do people still use handheld calculators? As soon as I mentioned that you have calculator apps on your phone their face lit up and they admitted they didn't even think of that, and they could now see why it was a really good question to

ask as the starting point, and that the answer would be different depending on the device you were using.

ISTC news

I want to highlight the ISTC discussion forums in this article. Discussion forums in general are a great way to interact with those in your profession, and get answers to your questions. Whether you work on your own or within a team, sometimes a different perspective on a problem can be a much bigger help than you ever imagined. The ISTC discussion forum is only open to ISTC members. These forums are a great way for members to interact and learn from each other. We may be a small institute but we have a wealth of information between all members that is just waiting to be shared. Over the coming months, I encourage members to take a look at these forums and get involved with them as much as you can.

The annual UK Technical Communication Awards are open for entries. These awards recognise the value of clear and effective documentation whether printed or online. You can apply as an individual or a team and you do not have to be a member of the ISTC. The closing date is 31 July 2019. For information on the rules, and on past winners, see the UK Technical Communication Awards website.

Lastly, don't forget, this year's TCUK will be held at the Chesford Grange Hotel in Warwickshire from the 10-12 September 2019. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the conference and it promises to be an unmissable event. Tickets are now on sale via the TCUK website. **C**

References

ISTC Discussion Forum
www.istc.org.uk/our-community/discussion-forums (ISTC member login required)

ISTC Mentoring Scheme
www.istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/mentoring-scheme

TCUK
http://technicalcommunicationuk.com

UK Technical Communication Awards
https://uktcawards.com

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