Visually improve your content

How introverts can become leaders and influencers

Reduce customer questions with social media
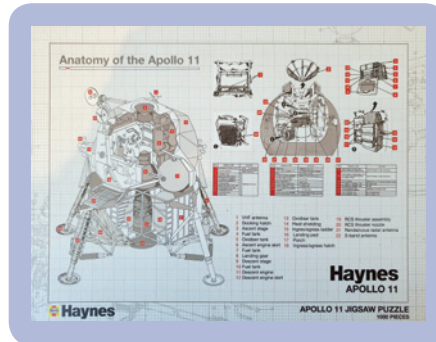
Learn about Paligo

President's view

In October, I rejoined the workforce after a year long maternity leave. People asked was I nervous going back and my honest answer was no. In fact, I was really looking forward to it. I was excited to see my team again and engage in adult conversation for most of the day. The only apprehension I had was that I would have forgotten so much information on how to do my job that it would take me weeks to get back into the game. To make it more challenging, I returned part way through our product cycle so not only did I have to remember how to do my job, how to access the correct systems etc, I also had to get up to speed pretty quickly on what was happening in this cycle. The first few weeks back were tough, but I was surprised at how quickly information came back to me.

On the weeks leading up to my return, I tackled returning my home office to a more work-friendly environment. For the past year it has become a dumping ground for everything, so it needed some decluttering. As I went through bookcases and pile of paper, I stumbled across a jigsaw that I had purchased a few years back. It's a technical illustration of Apollo 11. The plan had been to make it, frame it on the wall, and use it as inspiration on the days I was working from home, creating images for documentation.

Technical images are not my strong point. I can find them a challenge at times. It can often take me a few days to get a relatively simple image just right. I am always looking for ways of improving my technique, but so far nothing has helped. I hope that looking at this jigsaw may actually inspire me to do better with images for our documentation. Of course, this will only have a chance of working if I actually manage to complete the jigsaw. The intricate detail on the image of Apollo 11 is just incredible and I found myself online looking for other technical illustrations.

A quick Twitter search with the hashtag #technicalillustration returned a wealthy of amazing images. Some were the blow out graphs, similar to my jigsaw and some were those you would see on airplanes explaining what to do in an emergency. Scrolling through the search field uncovered more and more incredible work. It's easy to forget that technical illustrations are present in our everyday lives and how we can take them for granted. Even looking through a recent issue of Develop 3D magazine, I found an image of a Vax vacuum broken down into its components and spread out so you could see how the pieces fit together.

Our job as technical communicators is to communicate complex information and though we know how powerful an image can be in explaining a difficult concept, there are situations where there isn't enough time to devote to creating such an image. More often than not, you choose to write the text because there are some elements that need a written explanation. I always feel a slight pang of guilt when I find myself in this situation as I really feel I'm doing an injustice to the world of technical illustrations. I'm sure we have all fallen foul of this at times and it's such a shame especially when you see the incredible illustrations that can be achieved.

ISTC news

As you know, the ISTC is managed by the ISTC Council who are a team of member volunteers that have been elected by their fellow members. This year, David Farbey and Paul Ballard decided to step down from the ISTC Council. Both David and Paul have contributed so much to the ISTC during their time on Council and it is very sad to see them both leave Council.

My first interactions with David and Paul were at my first TCUK in 2011. As a newcomer to technical communications, I was nervous and felt extremely out of my depth attending a conference full of knowledgeable technical communication folks. Both were extremely nice, they made me feel very welcome, and made an effort to interact with me over those few days. On behalf of everyone on Council and the ISTC membership, I want to thank you both for your contributions to the ISTC and the world of technical communications.

On a personal note, I have come to know you both over the last eight years. I greatly admire what you both have achieved and I am forever grateful for the time you have taken to show me the ropes while being on Council. I hope our paths will cross professionally at some point in the future.

On a happier note, I'm delighted to welcome three new faces to the ISTC Council. Helen Harbord, who has over 23 years' of experience in technical communication for software development. Liz Gregory, a regular contributor to our discussion forums and community pages. Mike Mee, who is probably best known for his regular Word VBA macro articles in *Communicator*. All of you are going to be great assets to Council and I look forward to working with you all.

Hope you all have a lovely Christmas and I look forward to talking to you in the New Year.

Nollaig Shona **C**

References

Develop 3D
www.develop3d.com

TCUK
http://technicalcommunicationuk.com

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