

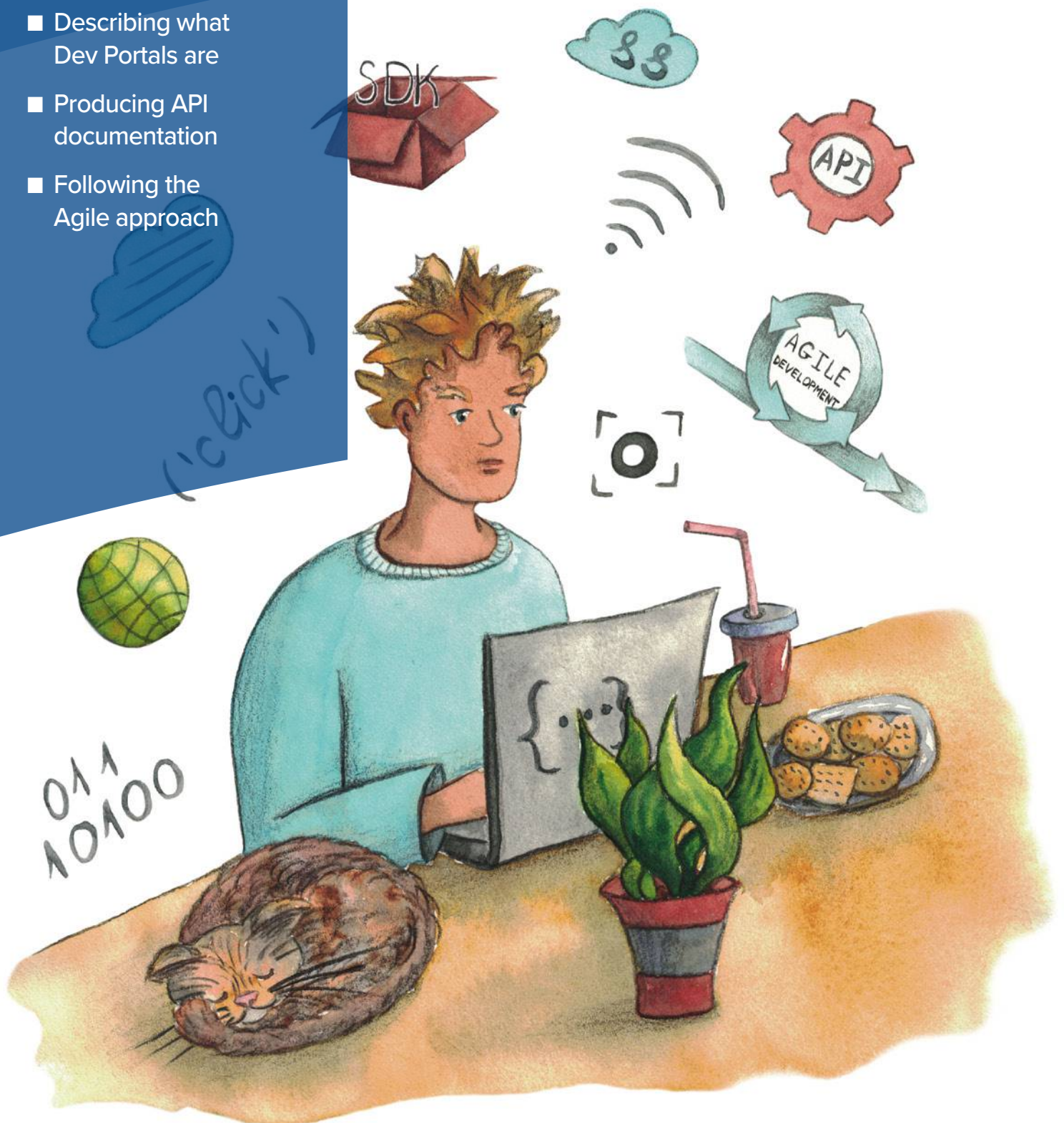
# Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

Summer 2022

Content and Developers

- Describing what Dev Portals are
- Producing API documentation
- Following the Agile approach



# President's View

Linda Robins shares the latest ISTC news.



The year seems to be speeding along with new ideas and initiatives, challenges and opportunities emerging regularly.

I have been reflecting further on managing the working day taking into account the changes to work patterns imposed during the pandemic. With changes to organisation of the working day come other opportunities to improve individual approaches to managing workload.

## Managing the working day

### Hybrid working

The pandemic altered the pattern of working for most, at least over the periods of lockdown and social distancing. For some, the change is now permanent with employers having taken the opportunity to close offices and reassign staff to home working full time. More common is a managed pattern of several days a week in the office; these are organised according to work priorities, the need for collaboration, cover or client in-person meetings. This is now commonly referred to as 'hybrid working'.

Hybrid working is now likely to be the usual way of working for many; this presents opportunities for improvement in conditions for staff and the prospect of flexibility. In turn this allows best use of resources available to improve productivity and efficiency. As a manager, I have sometimes had to deploy staff flexibly (from home or in

the office) and across different working hour 'bands' to cover the range of time zones that our clients operated within. When this flexibility was available I felt I had the best of all possible worlds. The 'larks' and 'owls' could work at their preferred times for greatest productivity. Also they could choose a home or office regime to suit their own locations and preferences.

I recently found a 'worker types' questionnaire which identified the following:

- Office based; collegiate – likes to bounce ideas around
- Home worker; lone worker – family grounded
- Nervous commuter - prefers to be cocooned
- Variety – welcomes options for on-site, office or home alone.

Ideally we should be able to accommodate all types.

I recognise that there are often constraints which make such flexibility impractical; but we can at least aspire to make best use of the talent available to improve the quality and value of our product. Recent articles in newspapers and journals have pointed out the challenge for Human Resources departments in managing changes to terms and conditions of employment. This is a fair observation, but I believe a challenge well worth taking on since the potential benefits are significant. During the pandemic, productivity has been shown to improve with changed working conditions.

We all have the opportunity to make the best of the new working landscape; as an individual to ensure a good work life balance; as a team leader or manager one can encourage co-workers to produce their best work and to develop as professionals.

### Working more effectively

Back on the constant quest to improve the way of working, I encountered an article in the Guardian newspaper (Guardian, 2022). This is entitled "The three-minute rule" and offers a strategy for overcoming procrastination. The assumption is that unless you get straight on with a task or project at the

earliest opportunity, you are likely to put off the start using delaying tactics sometimes of dubious validity. Before I encountered the three-minute rule my simple method was to get something done by putting it ahead of something I wished to put off; not very professional or reliable! The three-minute rule states: "If you wish to put off a chore, try doing it for three minutes." There is supporting evidence that this also works for tasks, fitness regimes, phobias and social anxiety. The first three minutes snaps you out of an avoidance mindset.

Procrastination is itself a significant source of stress. If you keep having the 'success experience' brought about by the three-minute rule, daunting tasks will soon feel more achievable. Trials have shown that three minutes is the optimal time, with 98% of participants persevering with its use. Psychologist Dr Jennifer Wild writes: "Three minutes rapidly becomes six minutes, or nine and before you know it, the task is done."

I followed up some (largely) successful practical attempts with the three-minute rule with a course (from the Great Courses series) entitled, "Do it Now: Overcoming Procrastination" by Fuschia Sirios. There is a wealth of material in this audio course of 10 lectures lasting some four hours. The support of results from studies and trials reinforces the position that procrastination is in itself a source of stress. Very encouraging is the presenter's emphatic statement that the brain can be rewired to overcome procrastination in much the same way as when we learn to adopt new habits and overcome other negative reflex responses.

*There was a footnote to the Guardian article: The three-minute rule is not to be confused with the five-minute rule. This is the amount of time you should refrain from talking about people who have just left your company – in case they come back and overhear!*

### Professional social media for all ages

My attention was caught by a headline in the social media section of the Observer newspaper (13/03/2022): *How gen Z learned to love LinkedIn,*

an article by James Ball. It is not always easy to know how the different age groups manage their use of different social media platforms for the purpose of their professional development. From the 200 new users attracted every minute, the proportion of 'gen Zers' is growing. LinkedIn is a serious platform for advertising one's professional status, exchanging ideas and promoting technical developments. Of course it is also a significant platform for job adverts, with around 4,500 job adverts a minute, and about six people a minute get a job through LinkedIn. It does not compete with TikTok, Facebook or Twitter for scale but it has a solid identity and can be trusted as a site for professionals used by professionals. James Ball points out that "LinkedIn doesn't need to track your activity across its site, app and the web in an openly invasive way as Facebook does in order to monetise your activity on its network." This seems to be the secret of its broad appeal to professionals of all ages. The recruiters provide the income, and messages can be exchanged between professionals, co-workers, experts, as well as recruiters and candidates in a safe and friendly manner. This is a refreshing outcome from an environment that often attracts misuse.

## ISTC News

### UK Technical Communication Awards again

Just a reminder that you could be preparing your entries for this year's awards **right now**.

Closing date for submissions is **31 July**. Please contact the office (at [istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk)) for details.

We are taking entries for UK Technical Communication Awards 2022. The established guidelines apply again this year. They are open to any individual or team, whether employed, self-employed, contracting, volunteering, permanent, temporary, full-time or part-time. We continue to encourage entries of all types, from traditional documentation to those demonstrating technical innovation.

There is a dedicated UKTC Awards website: <https://uktcawards.com/>.

Details of last year's entries and their authors are given on the website:

<https://uktcawards.com/past-years/winners-2021/>.

See the Winter 2021 issue of *Communicator* for articles written by last year's winners.

### Community (some feedback please)

Fortunately some Local Area Groups were able to meet in person during last year with others continuing online. We plan to encourage expansion of these groups, and to establish Special Interest Groups. Also we will capitalise further on the use of social media to publicise activities.

Please get in touch if you have ideas for starting a group – Local Area or Special Interest. Also it would be good to have views on other possible communities, in-person, virtual or a mixture.

### ISTC Meets 2022 – reminder

Since the start of 2022, the TCUK Online meetings are now called ISTC Meets. The presentations are short (half hour, plus questions), provided free of charge. It's a good opportunity for members to stay in touch, share knowledge, and practise presentation skills, as well as something to include in your CPD.

Details of previous events are available on the ISTC website at [istc.org.uk/events](http://istc.org.uk/events). Please follow ISTC Meets on our Eventbrite page to be notified of upcoming events.

### ISTC Podcasts – reminder

The ISTC podcasts are published on the last Friday of each month. Volunteers for interviews are welcomed. Please contact the office (at [istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk)) for details.

## TCUK

### A date for your diary

We can now confirm that the 2022 event will be held in the last week in September as is usual. The date is **Tuesday 27 September**. This will be an online event and will include the ISTC AGM and UKTC Awards) and presentations (as in the last two years). We will be publicising details in the near future.

### Looking ahead to 2023

As reported previously, the ISTC Council is planning to stage an in-person conference next year. **TCUK 2023** will be an in-person event. We will be seeking support from members interested in helping to make this

event happen. More information will be sent out separately; however you can contact us **now** via [istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk) if you would like to know more.

## Communicator changes

### Going closer to paperless

This Summer issue is the first to be digital only unless you have opted in to a printed copy. Just a reminder that the default is printed plus digital for Spring and Autumn with Summer and Winter as digital only with a printed copy as an on-demand extra. We reminded readers on Earth Day (22 April) that digital only was also an option; we had some takers for this choice.



### Issue size

As part of the review for 2022, the ISTC Council selected the 36–page format for *Communicator* as standard.

## Finally with no apologies for repetition

We are always keen to hear your opinions on how we are doing and on hearing your ideas for improvement. And as always we have opportunities for volunteers for projects great and small. Soon we will be advertising specific tasks and projects with clear scope and schedules as well.

Please contact the office if you would like to get involved (at [istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk)).

We always welcome suggestions from ISTC members and all readers of *Communicator*. Please contact me ([president@istc.org.uk](mailto:president@istc.org.uk)) or the ISTC office ([istc@istc.org.uk](mailto:istc@istc.org.uk)). ■

## Reference

Guardian, 2022 'The three-minute rule: the scientific way to tackle your most-hated chores' <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/14/three-minute-rule-scientific-way-tackle-most-hated-chores> (accessed 2 May 2022)

## Linda Robins FISTC

[president@istc.org.uk](mailto:president@istc.org.uk)