

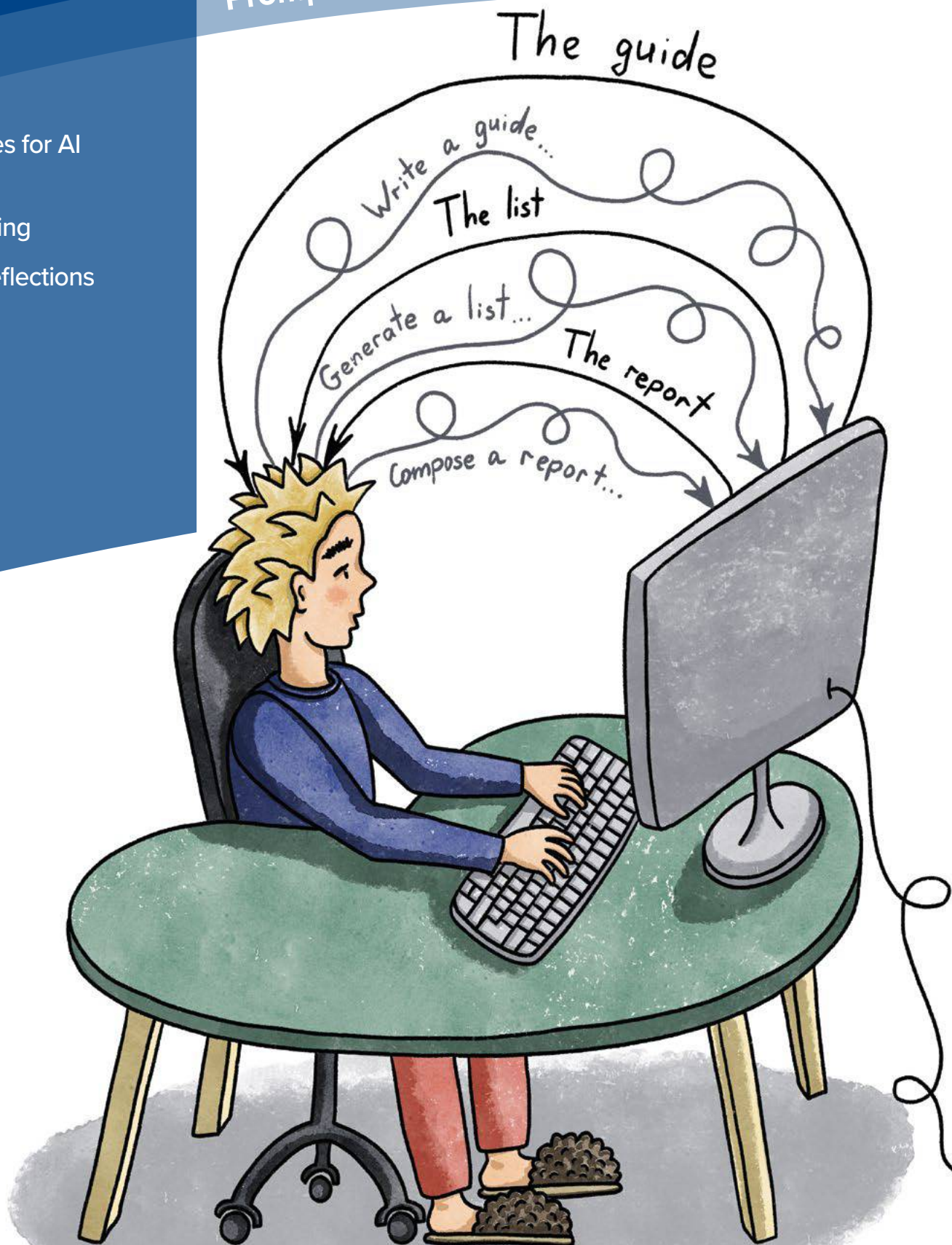
# Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

Autumn 2024

- Use Cases for AI
- Prompt Engineering
- Career reflections

## Prompting



# President's View

Linda Robins shares the latest ISTC news.



This year has continued to raise challenges concerning the way we work and the tools and methodologies in use. Because I don't have a clear idea of the way our working lives will be transformed longer term, I kept tracking new methods and tools.

## Working methods - home and away

### Managing change

This time of year (at the time of writing) the big employers are thinking about location of workers at work and on vacation. The possibility of remote working usually now allows for working 'poolside'.

### At work

Although there is growing pressure to be in the office at least part of the week, the acceptance of some remote working has introduced the option to 'work from the beach'. The prices comparison website

MoneySupermarket recently published the results of a survey into workers' priorities. Flexible options are crucial to many job seekers in deciding whether to take a job and remain in a role. The chance to travel and sightsee while 'working' is seen as a reasonable requirement. Hours of work done are what counts, not location of worker.

### On vacation

Where some employers have cause to be concerned that workers are holidaying while working, others worry

that workers are not 'switching off' while on vacation. The need to know what is going on in their absence combined with the stress of a huge inbox on return drives some to 'keep in touch' with work even on leave.

### What's to be done?

Ultimately this is all part of the manager's brief; a tightrope to walk for an employee's productivity and well-being. There may not be absolute right answers, but employment law and team morale must be considered.

### And the executives

This is in some ways more critical for the executive on holiday, who cannot or dare not step away from their responsibilities for fear of potentially allowing the firm to collapse or be seen as shirking duties. Executive coach Janet Harvey (author of 'From Tension to Transformation') cites this as disrespectful to the staff who remain to cover; surely, they were hired in the expectation they were competent to cope?

## Leadership lessons

My latest source of inspiration is 'The Leader's Guide to Influence, how to use soft skills to get hard results' by Mike Brent and Fiona Elsa Dent (Reference 1). The authors propose, "You simply cannot be an effective leader or manager if you cannot effectively relate to and influence others." Appointment as a manager through having been competent in a technical role is still common. The new manager needs to understand how to develop working relationships and most importantly initially, to develop self-awareness to make this possible. There are sound practical examples based on workplace situations. The guidance holds good for developing and maintaining working relationships at all levels.

## AI – who or what is benefitting?

### So many instances in the media each day; conflicting messages for the layman

In the New Scientist (27 July 2024) Chris Stokel-Walker points out that the problem for many people is the hype

surrounding the latest AI models. This convinces many that they are sentient; in the US 30% think that artificial general intelligences already exist that can perform any task a human can. About 10% think ChatGPT is sentient. Partly this is because the media have played up the idea, but also because the term 'artificial intelligence' encourages the view. But this was always a misleading term and a careless use of language. The AIs don't 'know' anything; they simply supply answers found in their training data.

### AI wins a silver medal

Not at the Olympics, but at this year's International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). This is first time on the podium for an AI. But the AI took three days to come up with the solution to three questions that the humans were required to find in 4.5 hours. So, it isn't yet 'all over' for man.

### Predicting the tipping point

There are of course many positive applications of AI; one exciting discovery is that AI can predict when dangerous tipping points will occur. This identification can help avert catastrophes where complex systems are involved. This can apply to systems as diverse as stock markets, the power grid and forest ecosystems. The work done at Tongji University in China by Gang Yan and colleagues entailed development of two neural networks: one to understand functions of and connections across systems structured like large networks with many nodes. The second network analyses how systems change over time. Hence recurring patterns are detected, and future tipping points predicted.

### AI for the people

Finally, I have invested in a magazine (of 100 or so pages) from the 'popular' stand entitled 'Improve your life with ChatGPT'. Intriguingly it carries the disclaimer, '100% Unofficial'. I have no idea how sound or useful the content will be. It claims to offer 'Life-changing AI advice'. I am looking forward to discovering the approach and the level of information provided.

## ISTC News

### TCUK24

At the time of writing, we are preparing for this year's TCUK. As advised previously our online conference for TCUK24 is planned for Tuesday 24 September.

- ISTC AGM (for members)
- UKTC Awards
- Speakers' presentations followed by Q&A sessions.

### UKTC Awards

The judges are in the process of reviewing the entries for 2024. As TCUK is online this year, the UKTC Awards for 2024 will be presented at the TCUK online event on Tuesday 24 September.

### ISTC website

This year we have continued the expansion of the Website Team, made up of volunteers from Council and the wider membership. The team is using user experience (UX) principles and methods to ensure that the work we do is appropriate, relevant, useful, and accessible. This has meant focusing on ensuring a deep and thorough understanding of the strategic underpinnings of our website, the problems we currently face, and what our members and visitors need.

### Mentoring Programme

Over the years, we have often been asked if the mentoring scheme can be extended to include those beyond an Entry-Level member. This year we are launching a new mentoring programme that will be open to all members of the ISTC, regardless of their membership level.

We are aiming to launch the programme and start accepting entries in September/October 2024 with a start date in November. The programme will last 4 months, at the end of which both mentors and mentees will be asked to submit a completion record to show they have participated in and completed this programme. This record can also form part of the member's CPD for the year and will be used to evidence the awarding of a certificate of completion in support of this.

Initially we will be running this programme once a year, but if there is

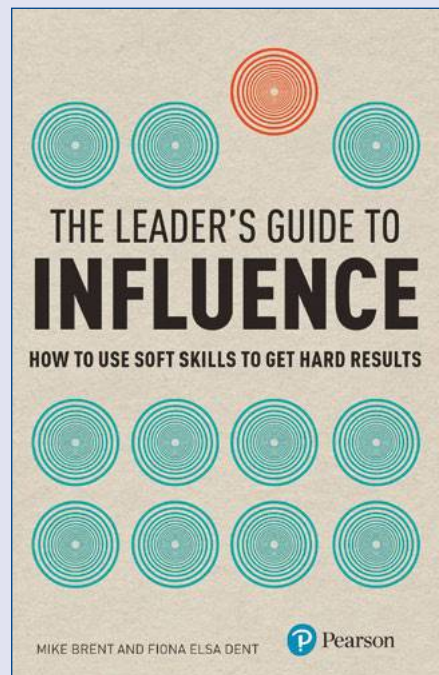
enough demand we will consider opening it up for a second term in the same year.

### ISTC Meets

'ISTC Meets' provides expert speakers on very relevant subjects with a range of topics to reflect our members' varied interests.

### Continuing Professional Development

We are looking to extend the CPD programme to all members, tying this in with the exciting development of the new mentoring programme starting in September. Our Entry-Level members will continue to be guided towards full membership and members of all grades can participate and benefit from our members' considerable pool of knowledge and experience. ■



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## ISTC Business Affiliates

Thank you for your continued support.  
[www.istc.org.uk/business-affiliates](http://www.istc.org.uk/business-affiliates)  
 as of October 2024



### Gold



<https://morson-projects.co.uk>

### Silver

#### 3di Information Solutions

[www.3di-info.com](http://www.3di-info.com)

#### MadCap Software

[www.madcapsoftware.com](http://www.madcapsoftware.com)

#### Technically Write IT (TWi)

[www.technicallywriteit.com](http://www.technicallywriteit.com)

### Bronze

#### Author Services Technical

[www.astauthors.co.uk](http://www.astauthors.co.uk)

#### Cherryleaf

[www.cherryleaf.com](http://www.cherryleaf.com)

#### ESTON Training

[www.estontrg.com](http://www.estontrg.com)

#### Fantom Factory

[www.fantomfactory.com](http://www.fantomfactory.com)

#### Firehead

[firehead.net](http://firehead.net)

#### Geo Language Services

[www.geolanguages.co.uk](http://www.geolanguages.co.uk)

#### The i-Team

[the-i-team.co.uk](http://the-i-team.co.uk)

#### Interactive Technical Solutions

[www.its-l.co.uk](http://www.its-l.co.uk)

#### Omnilingua

[www.omnilingua.co.uk](http://www.omnilingua.co.uk)

#### PSBT (Polish Association of Translation Agencies)

[psbt.org.pl](http://psbt.org.pl)