

Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators

Spring 2025

Writing and Engineering

- Artificial Intelligence
- Events, books and course reviews
- Technical drawings



President's View

Guest writer Carol Leahy shares some thoughts on continuous learning and goal setting for the year ahead.



I am truly honoured to have been asked to be a guest writer for the President's View article of this issue. Springtime for me is a time of reflection, resting, and setting professional goals for the year ahead.

Personally, taking this time at the start of a New Year to take a breath and properly reflect on the previous year better prepares me for the year ahead and provides perspective for what I need to focus on in the coming year. This year has been no exception and over the last few months I have taken stock of where I am professionally and where I want to be at the end of 2025.

Buzzwords

Continuous learning, upskilling, goal setting, and establishing a growth mindset have all become buzzwords in the last few years. The growth mindset in particular, is a term that I am hearing more people talk about or refer to when it comes to learning. Although it's a term that has been around for a while, it came to my attention a few years ago when a teacher friend told me about the book *Mindset* by Dr. Carol Dweck. In the book, she talks about having a fixed or growth mindset to describe the underlying beliefs people have about learning and their intelligence. In a nutshell a growth mindset can drive motivation and achievements. If you haven't read the book but you are interested in the mindset theory, I would recommend you read it.

As you all know, our President Linda Robins passed away in late January. Linda was a huge part of the ISTC and was involved in numerous activities for all of this time. Linda was an incredible person with a kind and compassionate heart and will be missed by all on Council and members who knew her.

Since hearing this term, I started to notice more and more people talking about mindset and the importance of having a growth mindset and being able to change it if necessary. This concept has been adopted by a lot of organisations in their push towards supporting continuous professional learning among their employees. Organisations are actively encouraging their staff to partake in continuous development by assigning each employee a number of learning days a year, paying for their access to learning applications like LinkedIn Learning, or even investing in creating a learning portal for their employees. As an advocate for lifelong learning, this has been music to my ears. With this approach, it has never been easier to build on your current skills or learn completely new skills that you may need at some point in the future. The wealth of learning material, courses, webinars, and books that most people now have access to is truly amazing.

However, there is a catch. With such a push towards upskilling and encouraging people to have a growth mindset, there is a downside in the form of information overload. When logging into any learning platform, you are hit by a wealth of information and glossy looking courses with very interesting descriptions. It's incredibly easy to start the dreaded doom scrolling. We have all been there and we all know how easy it is to fall into that trap. You log into a learning portal for a specific reason, and two hours later you find that you haven't actually started any course but you have added another twenty interesting looking ones that you might come back to at some point.

When you go to your wish list or favourites, you are then bombarded with a very big unmanageable list of training! It's overwhelming and that list quickly becomes pointless as there is so much on it, you can't actually see what you really need to be looking at. Worse still, you forget what you were meant to be learning in the first place!

This is where realistic goal setting comes into play.

Goal setting

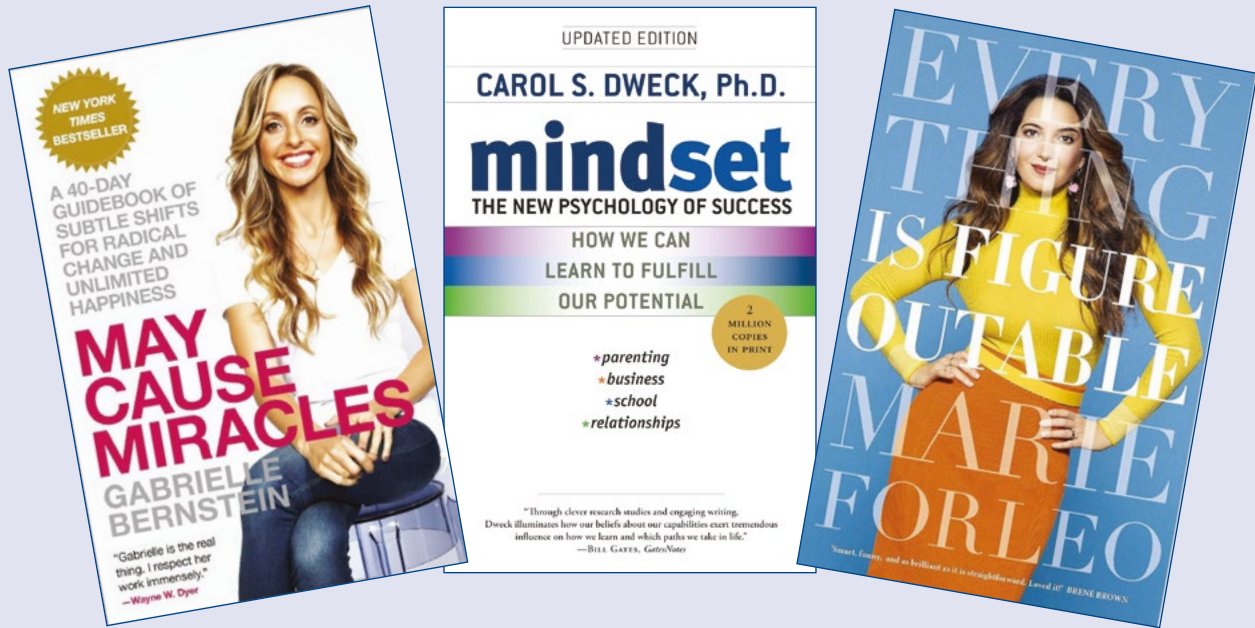
Goal setting can be daunting, especially at the start of a New Year where, after the Christmas break, you feel ready to take on the world! I fell foul of this many years ago when I first started goal setting at the start of a year.

But everything changed when I read two books. Neither book has anything to do with technical communication, but they changed my mind set on everything I had previously thought about goal-setting. I realised that the way I was defining goals wasn't working for me because I was going about it all wrong. I had the completely wrong mindset for it.

One mistake was trying to achieve too much without a realistic plan.

My goal setting these days is a lot simpler.

- January is spent reflecting on what I achieved in the previous year. I write it all down in a journal so I can truly see just how much I have achieved.
- I reflect on the long-term goals I set the previous year and assess if they need to change.
- I write down everything I would like to achieve in the coming year and beyond and then, pick my top one. (It is important to just pick one!),



- I write down every step needed to achieve this one goal.
- Once I have a rough number of steps to achieve, I then split them through the months of the year.

These steps become mini-goals to achieve every month. Having one big goal for the year helps me stay focused (something I was missing in my other attempts at goal setting), and breaking that big goal into much smaller steps makes it a lot more manageable to achieve that goal. Do I get side tracked? Yes, sometimes I steer off course but it tends to be a detour that brings me back onto the path at some point down the road.

Breakthrough

Changing my mindset on how I approach things has been a positive thing for me. Especially in 2024, as I had my first taste of learning about generative AI and what (if any) aspect of it I can use in my work.

Personally, I have found learning about this topic equally overwhelming and exciting. But taking the approach of breaking it into more manageable steps has helped. I'm still on the learning path for this topic, but I am enjoying learning more about it. Prompt engineering has particularly piqued my interest and having attended a few work-organised learning sessions I am slowly learning more about it. I can see the positives to having this skill in my toolkit.

The most important thing when setting goals is not to compare yourself to

others. Take some time to figure out what YOUR path is and what YOU are interested in learning and how it fits into YOUR career/professional development.

ISTC News

Awards

The UK Technical Communication Awards 2025 accepts entries from individuals and teams across all employment types and domains. Don't hesitate to enter—innovation and excellence come in many forms, and your work deserves to be recognised. All details for entry are online: (<https://istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/uk-technical-communication-awards/>)

Mentoring Programme

Our Mentoring Programme is now available to all grades of membership. All details for entry can be found on our website (<https://istc.org.uk/professional-development-and-recognition/mentoring-scheme/>). ■

References

Everything is Figureoutable: Marie Forleo
 May Cause Miracles: Gabrielle Bernstein
 Mindset: The Psychology of Success: Dr. Carol Dweck

Carol Leahy MISTC

president@istc.org.uk

ISTC Business Affiliates

Thank you for your continued support.
www.istc.org.uk/business-affiliates
 as of March 2025



Gold



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

Silver

3di Information Solutions

www.3di-info.com

MadCap Software

www.madcapsoftware.com

Technically Write IT (TWi)

www.technicallywriteit.com

Bronze

Author Services Technical

www.astauthors.co.uk

Cherryleaf

www.cherryleaf.com

ESTON Training

www.estontrg.com

Fantom Factory

www.fantomfactory.com

Firehead

firehead.net

Geo Language Services

www.geolanguages.co.uk

The i-Team

the-i-team.co.uk

Interactive Technical Solutions

www.its-i.co.uk

Omnilingua

www.omnilingua.co.uk

PSBT (Polish Association of Translation Agencies)

psbt.org.pl