

Cars, culture and tactical technical communication



Cars, Culture, and Tactical Technical Communication - Miles A. Kimball

The article by Miles A. Kimball gives us an idea of how the role of users has changed from mere consumer of the products to the user-as-producer against the strategic institutional power structure. Kimball stresses the need for broadening our concepts of technical communication outside the organizations to our daily lives. My understanding of reading is that even though we, as technical communicators, try to focus on user-centered design and try to put users in our design process, we are still representing institutions. To incorporate de Certeaus concepts of the strategies of organization and tactics of users, we need something beyond that. We need to consider and put ourselves in the users place, focusing on relationships between technology and culture and creating more tactical technical communication of users as producers.

Kimball discusses the importance of broadening the scope of technical communication, by focusing on Johnsons concept of the user-as-producer, which states that users are not just consuming or practicing products, but rather that they are producing knowledge derived from their experience, their daily lives especially, in the form of technological narratives. Kimball believes that the " Narrativity allows the prospect of users not only through producing and engaging in tactics, but also sharing with them through tales of fooling, tricking, and taking advantage of the strategic system." Kimball writes about how institutional strategies and individual tactics are different. And he introduces to us the de Certeaus concepts of Bricolage (making and doing what you can with what you have.) and la perruque (involving a pleasure in making something for its own sake) as tactics wherein users

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make use of appropriate things against strategies to suit their circumstances and purposes. As far as I am concerned, I think that we need to understand how users want to create new experiences and express their knowledge outside of what we design, along with how users get through and try to remove cultural resistance against authority. To make this mutation and integrated position between the reader and the author, linking objects to narrative is crucial.

Kimball analyzed user communities with the help of two cases of Beetle and Locost. Muir and Champion, used a new way to talk about their manual, technological narratives, and people loved to make their own narratives beyond that. They focus on the Bricolage and la perruque ways of encouraging users to use and produce appropriate things as producer. I think the major feature of the story is that they come from the authors own experiences. This aspect influences peoples thoughts about culture and helps users to easily break through resistance to technocratic authority and to become producers, meeting their own needs and desires. For example, Muir talks about not only Volkswagen's repair and maintenance but also adopting tactical approaches of making use of whats available with technology. And Champion mentions both building and driving car with reappropriation and making-do. Both Beetle and Locost communities share common sense among users by escaping from the power systems of industrial societies, and finding individual power of freedom against technocracy.

Finally, Kimball suggests that technical communicators teach their students with broadened concepts of both strategic workplace communication and tactical technical communication. In addition, he illustrates about why the <https://assignbuster.com/carsculture-and-tactical-technical-communication/>

discussion of ethics is important to think about the relationship between tactical and strategic power.

I could not help but wonder about the reasons for the changing role of user as producer and the tendency of tactical narratives. Is this because of the human nature, which seeks freedom from constraints and power and has an impact on the users role of finding their own creative activity against authors? Do users feel more comfortable when the author talks on their behalf and appears to be against technological power and expertise? Or, are they under the rule of cost-benefit, because the Bricolage and la perruque are the ways of taking advantage of artifacts and involving a kind of tricky and illicit appropriation. Moreover, the Locost community web never develops their documents beyond a basic outline because it is said that "attempt to strategize too formally can meet resistance?"

Instantly, when I saw the title of this article, I thought, "this is something about the cultural aspect of technical communication, and it will help design TC to fit in the culture." However, the article shows us the way in which tactical narratives and carefully designed user-as-producer documents change the cultural recognition of users from power structure to freedom rather than how we fit our design to their existing cultural and social circumstances. Kimball says "Users are shaped by the larger cultural dynamics surrounding the manuals." What do you think?

Furthermore, what other ways could be useful to broaden our concepts of TC beyond autoethnography methods?