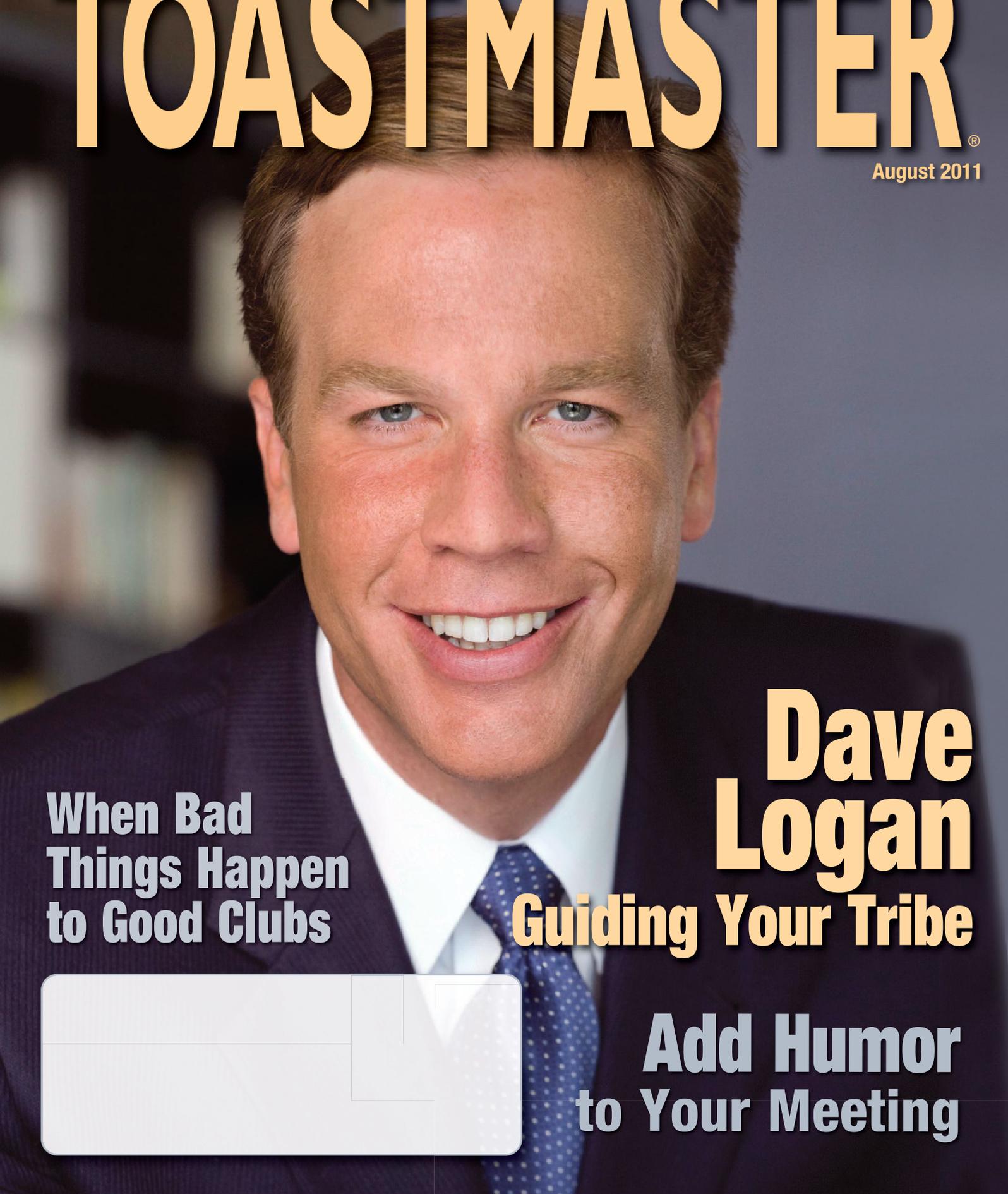


TOASTMASTER®

August 2011



**When Bad
Things Happen
to Good Clubs**

**Dave
Logan**
Guiding Your Tribe

**Add Humor
to Your Meeting**





What We Learn Through Service

The Indian poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore once wrote: *"I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy."*

These beautiful words clearly and simply articulate my experiences this past year serving as your International President. I have experienced great joy serving you. As I write my final column, I want to share what I have discovered on this journey. I have learned important lessons on serving and leadership – most importantly, that leadership and service go hand in hand. I learned that when I respond to learning opportunities in the spirit of service, I experience an abundance of joy and gratitude.

I know that some of you have also served as club, area, division, district or international officers this year. I hope that each one of you has had multiple opportunities throughout the year to learn through service to one another. I sincerely hope that you, too, have experienced abundant joy and gratitude.

The past twelve months have flown by. I've been very busy embracing the "curriculum" of International President. I have travelled the world. I've written monthly Viewpoint columns, prepared correspondence for district leadership teams and taped video messages for distribution. I was interviewed many times for radio, TV, podcasts and webcasts. I celebrated new club charters with you and sent anniversary and conference greetings when I could not attend. I delivered dozens of keynotes and conducted workshops at several conferences. I had the joy of participating in and chairing our 2010-11 Board of Directors and Executive Committee meetings. I had the privilege of speaking with World Headquarters staff frequently. I participated in conference calls and connected with my mentors and made all my classes with my coach. I answered emails and Facebook requests. And I loved every minute of it! Each experience has been fruitful and I thank all of you for being my teachers.

I look forward to "graduating" from International President training now and moving on to a new learning opportunity as "Chair of Strategic Planning" for the 2011-12 term.

I also look forward to seeing each of you again soon, wherever Toastmasters come together to celebrate our achievements. Let's continue to work together, to learn and serve together. Let us share the joy of serving.

Finally, let me just say Thank You from the bottom of my heart!

Pat Johnson, DTM
International President

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A Toastmaster's Promise

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise...

- To attend club meetings regularly;
- To prepare all of my speech and leadership projects to the best of my ability, basing them on projects in the *Competent Communication* manual, *Advanced Communication* manuals or *Competent Leadership* manual;
- To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments;
- To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations;
- To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow;
- To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so;
- To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy;
- To bring guests to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers;
- To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs;
- To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities.



The Sendai Toastmasters club in Sendai, Japan.

Sendai Club Stays Strong

Thank you for the article “Courage in Japan” by Beth Black (July). We appreciate all the concern and support shown for the people of Japan by fellow Toastmasters around the world, following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

We would also like to give you an update on our Sendai Toastmasters club. Although we were not able to meet for nearly two months after the disaster – because of damage to the building where we gathered – we are now holding our club meetings regularly again. We meet in a new location in Sendai. Our membership numbers remain healthy!

In true Toastmasters spirit, we are a resilient club still committed to our communication and leadership goals.

Sendai Toastmasters club • Sendai, Japan

Saluting a Centenarian

When I opened my April edition of the *Toastmaster*, I was delighted to read the two-page article about centenarian Dick Hendricks, by Arlyene Dews (“101-Year-Old Speaks of Life Lessons”). This article was loaded with examples of the successes you can achieve by being an active Toastmaster – for example, Hendricks’ explanation of how he was selected for a promotion over two other employees because of his speaking and leadership skills.

Thank you for recognizing a 101-year-old Toastmaster. The article is

motivating for everyone, especially for senior citizens who want to continue to learn and keep mentally active.

Barbara J. Baker, DTM • Next Step club • Chicago, Illinois

A Speedy Speech

The April issue caught my attention the minute I pulled it out of my mailbox, for it promised to teach how to write a speech in one hour (“Stress Test Your Speaking Skills” by Nathan Magnuson). I had been wanting to give a “hot” or impromptu speech at my club, a goal that was extremely challenging yet tantalizing for me.

I read the article and took notes from it. Just two days later, I was able to give a speech at my Toastmasters club with just 25 minutes of preparation! Before that, I would spend more than an hour of preparation time for each minute of speaking. Thanks to your article, I was able to set and achieve a breakthrough goal for myself.

Geeta Vittal Rao • Gator Toastmasters • Gainesville, Florida

An Inspiring Irishman

I wish to pay tribute to Joe Grehan, who was 93 on March 30.

To celebrate the occasion of his 93rd birthday, Joe Grehan gave a speech titled, “Now I’m 93,” in Buswells Hotel, Dublin, Ireland. His speech was excellent; it was motivational, inspirational and very moving. Grehan joined Dublin Club 28 years ago and has regularly attended our weekly meetings ever since.

I met Grehan 15 years ago when I was a nervous new member in the Dublin Club. I would like to show my appreciation and gratitude to Joe for all the years he has been my friend in Toastmasters and for the many years’ service he has given our club and the organization.

Francis McCabe, ACB • Dublin Club Toastmasters
Dublin, Ireland

From Ah-full to Awesome!

I enjoyed the February issue, in particular the article “Cutting Out Filler Words” by William H. Stevenson, III. It took me back to many years before I joined Toastmasters; I had just given a 20-minute briefing on international relations in a seminar and thought I’d spoken very well. A fellow student approached me after the class and asked, “By the way, do you know how many ‘ahs’ and ‘ums’ you said during your briefing?” Surprised, I had no idea, but thought, *Not many, that’s for sure*. So I replied, “Gee, no, how many?” He said flatly: “One hundred and seventy-eight.” Astounded, I knew he had no reason to lie to me. Too bad he didn’t also say, “But there’s a way for you to fix that.” I’d have joined Toastmasters on the spot!

At my club’s meeting last week, our Ah-Counter noted that I had chalked up zero “ahs” in my speech. And again, I thought back to my first “Ah-Counter” so long ago who forgot to “make the sale” with me. Then I thought, *Who else do I know who could use Toastmasters?*

Gerald Fleischmann, DTM • Orange Upon A Time club • Orange, California

*Do you have something to say?
Write it in 200 words or less, sign
it with your name, address and
club affiliation and send it to
letters@toastmasters.org.*

Tame your fears.

Love Them Alligators

What is an alligator? An alligator is anything that you fear. Why should you love it? Fear leads people in the direction they should go to achieve the freedom and happiness they desire.

Fear of public speaking is common. When asked to speak, many people mentally freeze and lose sight of what they would have said. Often the most brilliant ideas are never heard, because people with the greatest ideas are too afraid to speak.

How can people overcome this fear? They must attack it in the same manner as they would the fear of flying, skydiving or swimming – win the battle by working through the fears. Fear of flying is overcome by flying; fear of skydiving is overcome by skydiving. Likewise, fear of public speaking is overcome by public speaking.

In 1967, while selling for Burroughs Corporation, I was asked to present one of the first electronic calculators in Alaska to the Alaska Department of Highways. Someone had read about that amazing four-function monster with its row of nixie tubes. While driving to their building I assumed the meeting would include one engineer and one person from purchasing.

I walked through their door only to be ushered into an auditorium with 30 engineers and several people from purchasing. As I fumbled with the machine, my perspiration dripped on the keyboard, my knees felt weak and no words came out. All I managed to say was, “You are intelligent people. I will leave the manual and the machine. You have a week to play with it.”

After the initial wave of shame passed, I visited a Toastmasters

meeting and I joined after my first meeting.

The first time I spoke was in Table Topics. My knees wobbled and nothing I said made sense. The alligators won. But that didn't matter to my fellow members; they gave me tons of credit for standing up. Those people were so supportive they instantly became my new best friends.

Following my first attempt at speaking, I was assigned a mentor to guide me through the steps and handed a well-structured ladder to climb: a manual with short presen-

tations designed to help me master my fears. Toastmasters clubs provide a safe place where caring, experienced individuals help others deal with their fears.

How well did Toastmasters help me? Every time I spoke, my level of fear dropped a little. Then, one day, all of my fears were gone! Now I love to speak. These days, with less than five minutes' notice, I can deliver a one-hour keynote.

A Record-Setting Life

During my seven years with Burroughs I set national sales records. From there, I went to Communications Engineering, where I set more records selling equipment for General Electric – Mobile Radio Division. My exceptional results in selling and sales management opened doors to an extraordinary career helping firms build teams that set national sales records of their own. Had I not lost to the

alligators during my presentation at the Alaska Department of Highways – and had I missed Toastmasters – I would not have set any of my records.

Before my involvement with Toastmasters, I was good at selling, but not great. What gave me the strength to become great were those assignments where I was forced to listen. The more I did it, the better I became.

Toastmasters meetings, with their structured roles – such as evaluator, grammarian and Ah-Counter – create perfect paths to master the art of lis-

“My knees wobbled and nothing I said made sense. The alligators won.”

tening. I didn't know how poorly I listened until I began documenting what I thought other people had said.

A teacher, preacher, leader, salesperson, parent – anyone who must deal with people – is in the business of selling ideas. And the proven key to helping another person change her mind comes from understanding that person's needs, wants, desires and problems.

Nobody can simply think their way to effective listening and speaking. If you want to get there you must work your way up, the same as I did, and vanquish those alligators that hold you back. The most effective way to do that, at the least possible cost, is Toastmasters.

Nothing else compares. ▣

Dick Warn of Liberty Talkers in Beaverton, Oregon, is an author, speaker and trainer. Contact him at dickwarn@TheMiracleMinute.com.

Canadian Aboriginal woman pioneers support for indigenous people.

Claire Clark: Paying it Forward

In 1982, when Claire Clark's boss told her that she excelled as a manager but lacked speaking skills in the boardroom, the Canadian executive joined Toastmasters. She earned a DTM award and continued to climb the corporate ladder, eventually starting her own consulting company and a successful nonprofit. While thriving after becoming a Toastmaster is not unusual, Clark's background is. She is a Canadian Aboriginal who came of age during a difficult time for indigenous people – the 1940s and '50s.

Clark endured a childhood filled with challenges that started when she contracted tuberculosis at the age of six. Sent away to a sanatorium for three years, she left her family and the only home she had ever known: The Bigstone Cree Nation reserve in northern Alberta. During that difficult time Clark rarely saw her parents because they could not afford the trip to see her.

"My time in the sanatorium was particularly lonely because I felt abandoned by my parents," says Clark. "I didn't understand at the time that it was necessary to get treatment for the tuberculosis and that the condition was common because of the poor housing conditions often found on the reserves."

Developing Strength as an Aboriginal

Being an Aboriginal during that time was very difficult, explains Clark,

founder of the Aboriginal Women's Professional Association (AWPA). "We were seen as part of the flora and fauna – not as human beings. It wasn't until the 1960s that we were allowed to vote, and things finally began changing for the better in the 1970s. Prior to that, Aboriginals were confined to the reserves – they even had to get a permit to go to town or be seen anywhere outside of the reserve."

Clark's father managed to move the family from the reserve so they could be closer to her in the sanatorium, but living in the white community when she was released brought its own challenges. "There was still a lot of discrimination against us from the community. My siblings and I had to walk to school together to prevent bullying."

All of these challenges caused Clark to stand tall. "My experiences as a child strengthened me and taught me to make decisions for myself," she says. "I also learned to watch successful people and emulate them."

Education Provides a Path

Clark's mother was one of her role models. "My mother was raised in a mission for Aboriginal girls near the reserve, and the nuns instilled in her that education opens doors and hard work gets you places," says Clark, who skipped the second and fourth grades. When she was just 15, she lived on her own and supported herself by working at a hospital. She eventually took a position at Alberta Government Telephones

(AGT), where she stayed for 25 years, the last 15 in management.

When her boss at the phone company said she needed to improve her speaking skills, Clark joined the Sundowners Toastmasters club in Spruce Grove, Alberta. "Even though I was terrified, and I got sick to my stomach the night before meetings, I kept going and eventually saw that speaking wasn't so bad, and could actually help me considerably," she says.

Bob Schoepp witnessed Clark's transformation in the Sundowners club. "I don't think I've ever seen another person go as far as Claire in the organization," he says. "At her first meeting, she was extremely timid and almost covered in the corner of the room."

Helping Herself ... and Others

With the skills and confidence she built as a Toastmaster, Clark continued to progress in management positions at AGT until her retirement. At that point, she decided to earn a bachelor's degree in education. She also began a consulting company to address the concerns of Aboriginals.

Specifically, she noticed that many government programs assisted Aboriginal women financially and with raising children. But she found no programs offering mentorship or encouragement to help them become successful professionally. So in 2003, Clark responded by forming AWPA – a nonprofit mentoring organization with a mission

“to see all urban Aboriginal women trained, employed and self-sustaining.” Since its inception, the association has assisted hundreds of Aboriginal women.

Clark credits her Toastmasters experience for the group’s success. “When starting AWP, because I had gained confidence and was no longer shy, I could easily talk to government officials and businesses,” she says.

Eventually Clark formed a Toastmasters club, the Vision Speakers in Edmonton, Alberta, to further help Aboriginals. “The club became so successful that Aboriginal men also wanted in, so we allowed them to succeed with us,” she says.

For an Aboriginal woman, Clark is especially vibrant, friendly and outgoing, notes Jori Hunter, executive director of AWP, who is also Aboriginal. “Claire cares about the Aboriginal community, and she’s a very good public speaker who never shies away from a challenge or an opportunity.”

In many ways, Clark is a pioneer in the Aboriginal community, says Jane Woodward, a retired educator who is also an Aboriginal. “Claire got many Aboriginal women to change their mindset,” she says. “Most women in the Aboriginal community work in the area of social services, but Claire has illustrated that they can succeed in business and that they have valuable skills worth [more] monetary compensation.”

Into the Future

As part of her mission to help Aboriginals see their value and increase their self-confidence, Clark ran Youth Leadership programs for nine years while in the Sundowners club. “Most of my work was with Aboriginal students



Claire Clark

who had difficulties communicating,” she says. “I had found a way out of my shyness, and I wanted to share what self-esteem and confidence could do for others. After they completed the course, the students were more open, they were confident with their presentations and their essays improved.”

Clark intends to continue paving a path for all Aboriginals. “Although times have changed considerably since I was a child, there is still a lot more to do so that Aboriginals are accepted and self-sustaining,” she says. “I want Aboriginals to understand that we can adopt both cultures and succeed, and

“We were seen as part of the flora and fauna - not as human beings. It wasn’t until the 1960s that we were allowed to vote.”

Clark was also instrumental in starting the radio show “Ask Your Auntie,” which originally aired on University of Alberta’s CJSR Radio for six months. Recently, one of her summer students was hired by CBC radio, and she asked to air the show with AWP’s assistance. This one-hour program allows listeners to ask questions of Aboriginal “Aunties,” who traditionally served as teachers, healers and guidance counselors to the younger generation. Although the show started out targeting youth, it has become a popular family show.

that education opens doors. And on a deeper, more meaningful level, I wish for Aboriginals to understand themselves, which will help make them whole.”

For more information about the AWP, go to awpa.ca. To learn more about the “Ask Your Auntie” show on CBC, visit <http://bit.ly/askauntie>.

Julie Bawden Davis is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com.

How to Win Your Audience with

BOMBPROOF HUMOR



You don't have to be naturally funny to be entertaining.

"There is no sweeter sound to a speaker's ears than the sound of applause, and laughter." – Winston K. Pendleton

By Karl Richter, DTM

Humor is one of the most powerful skills you can employ as a public speaker, presenter or meeting chairperson. Humor warms up your audience, holds their attention, uplifts their spirits and makes your message more memorable. Funny stories or illustrations can also reinforce important points and make your audience more receptive to your ideas.

Despite its value, humor is one of the most intimidating skills to tackle as a novice speaker. I certainly bombed the first time I entered our club's Humorous Speech Contest.

Motivational speakers urge us to take risks and ask ourselves, *"What would you do if you knew you could not fail?"* I hope you learn the proven techniques of using bombproof humor to help you be more successful in your presentations.

When I propose this concept in my workshops, I get skeptical looks and resistance. The naysayers always remind me that highly paid comedians, such as American television hosts Jay Leno and David Letterman, bomb almost every night during their monologues.

So what are the odds, they ask, that we lesser mortals can deliver surefire humor? The answer is simple.

There is a big difference between the expectations audiences have for comedians delivering a stand-up act versus motivational speakers who use humor selectively and effectively to enhance their messages. The pressure is on the comedian to consistently deliver one zinger after another, and when a gag falls short, it is glaringly obvious. The motivational speaker, on the other hand, is not expected to deliver a steady stream of belly laughs. In other words, with the comedian, the focus is comedy. With the motivational speaker, the focus is the message, hopefully enhanced with humor. This is why the entertaining speaker is in demand.

Laughter Not Required

Bombproof humor is a speech-organization strategy in which important points are so skillfully reinforced with funny stories and analogies that the humor supports the premises of those points – regardless of whether it gets any laughs. When humor makes a point, it adds value

and has merit independent of its perception as funny. Accordingly, the premise of bombproof humor is simple: If your audience doesn't know you are telling a joke, how can it bomb? Keep in mind that an audience can be entertained without laughing out loud. Smiles are always welcome!

The Five Rules of Bombproof Humor

1 Don't announce. Telling the audience that you are reminded of a funny story, or that a funny thing happened to you on the way to the meeting, defuses humor's most powerful advantage – the element of surprise. It focuses attention on the joke rather than your message, increases the pressure to deliver and sets you up to possibly bomb. In the opening of my humor workshops, I recount my first disappointing foray into the arena of Toastmasters humorous speech competition. As evidence of that frustration, I pull out some early evaluation slips I received and read them without any build-up or fanfare. This always gets a laugh, because the audience doesn't see it coming.

2 Reinforce key points. Humor that reinforces an important point of your speech is an extension of the first rule, in that it seems like a logical continuation of your message and thus preserves the element of surprise. Such stories also contribute value, whether or not they get laughs. For example, sharing my early evaluation slips reinforces the important point that humor is challenging, and as a bonus, it also gets a laugh. Conversely, humor that serves no useful purpose in your speech detracts from your message and calls attention to itself...setting up the possibility of bombing.

3 Make it believable. Humor is more effective when it blends in and supports your message. Again, this premise is an extension of the first two rules, in that a believable story seems like a logical continuation of your speech and thus preserves the element of surprise. Conversely, if you resort to slapstick or obvious comedy, you've tipped your hand and increased the pressure to deliver a funny line. For example, let's say you want to make the point that the current economic situation is getting worse, and you use Jay Leno's joke that – I'm paraphrasing this – the economy is so bad, Snow White had to lay off six of her seven dwarfs. Since Snow White is a cartoon character, your audience immediately knows this is a joke, and the element of surprise is lost. It may get a laugh, but it could also bomb.

4 Avoid weak material. This may seem obvious, but there are many pitfalls when attempting humor. To improve your odds of success, you should avoid the following:

- Lengthy jokes
- Jokes about physical defects (bald jokes, etc.)
- Puns (they usually elicit groans)
- Off-color stories
- Ethnic/sexist jokes
- Put-down humor
- Inside jokes
- Politically incorrect humor

Self-deprecating humor is the highest form of levity, because it puts your audience at ease and signals that you are comfortable and secure, and don't take yourself too seriously. Plus, when you can laugh at yourself, you'll never run out of material. Personal stories seem authentic, helping preserve the element of surprise that makes humor effective.

“With the comedian, the focus is comedy. With the motivational speaker, the focus is the message.”

5 Practice, practice, practice. An unrehearsed joke can set you up to bomb, and you could also forget the punch line, further adding to your embarrassment. For example, a minister planned to use this joke in his Mother's Day sermon: “Some of the happiest moments of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife...my mother!” This is indeed a clever line, but the minister did not rehearse it, and on the occasion of his sermon he forgot the punch line – “my mother!” You can imagine the horrified look on his wife's face! Practice leads to smooth, confident delivery, and no blown punch lines!

What would you do if you knew you could not fail? I hope you would choose to spice up your presentations with humor. This five-step humor strategy eliminates bombing, and thus eliminates the fear of using humor, so what do you have to lose? When studied and applied, bombproof humor turns you from being someone who tells a few jokes into an entertaining speaker. Learn this proven humor formula and leave the joke-telling to the stand-up comedians. 

Karl Righter, DTM, a Toastmaster for more than 40 years, is a member of two clubs in Florida: the Orlando Conquerors and Winter Park Toastmasters. A professional speaker and corporate trainer, he is the author of the book *How To Win Your Audience With Bombproof Humor*. Reach him at karl@righter.com.

Tips for Humorous Speeches

Let's face it. Humor is hard! Even experienced speakers struggle with knowing how to (appropriately) tickle their audience's funny bones. That's why Toastmasters meetings are the perfect place to practice being funny.

Incorporating humor into your presentations has many benefits. It can:

- Help establish a bond with the audience
- Make your speech more engaging
- Win over a hostile audience
- Emphasize or illustrate a point in an entertaining way
- Help people remember you

With that in mind, here are some Toastmasters tips to keep you improving as a humorous speaker:

1. **Be yourself.** Think about what types of humor you appreciate, then create a library of such items. Don't like jokes? Try a humorous anecdote or a witty observation from your own life.
2. **It's okay to be mildly amusing rather than outlandishly funny.** Keep your expectations realistic and your style authentic.
3. **Use humor sparingly, like a spice.** At first, try using a humorous opener to your speech. A quote or offhand observation can be a good icebreaker.
4. **Keep it relevant to your speech topic.** Try to intertwine the humor with your subject matter.
5. **Keep it clean!** Humor is supposed to make people feel good – not embarrassed, insulted or offended.
6. **Make it clear that it's humor.** But in case no one laughs, prepare a comment in advance to use when you get that reaction, or just move on.
7. **Self-effacing humor is safe and effective.** Making fun of yourself bonds you with the audience. They would rather hear about the time you fell on your face than who won the race.
8. **Work on your delivery.** Practice using vocal variety and gestures.
9. **Timing is everything!** Remember to pause before the punch line.



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~ Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking



By John Kinde, DTM, AS

How to Add Humor to Your Club Meetings



If your Toastmasters club focuses on comedy – or even if it doesn't – here are some ideas that can help members develop their humor skills. You might want to include some of these elements at every meeting. Or you may occasionally add a few items simply to add variety.

- **Add a “HA Counter.”** This could replace or supplement the Ah-Counter role. Instead of counting filler words, this individual counts how many times each speaker generates laughter from the audience during a presentation. Some clubs award a ribbon for Most Laughs based on the HA Counter's report.
- **Humor tip.** This might be an educational moment or tip of the day where someone presents a short tip on how to find or use humor.
- **Improvisation exercises.** Games from an improv workshop – where people act out different scenes off the cuff – play well during a Table Topics session. Many exercises help develop skills applicable to public speaking. “I had no idea that by learning improv, I would start to become a more spontaneous speaker,” says Kim Clark of The Comedy Shack club in Plantation, Florida.
- **Warm-up session.** Professional speakers, entertainers, singers and actors usually have a warm-up routine to prepare them for their performances. Club members should also try to warm up before they speak, or to warm up in front of the audience as they start their speech.
- **Monologue.** Several humor clubs open their meetings with a humorous commentary on current events or with a topical monologue (following the examples of popular television talk-show hosts). As with all comments in the meeting, keep it clean. As a general rule, avoid references to sex, religion and politics.
- **Stand-up comedy.** A short set of stand-up material can be good practice for comedic timing.
- **A toast.** What better way to practice concise, customized humor? You'll be prepared the next time you need a toast for a wedding.
- **A roast.** This might best be scheduled for a special meeting, because the structure of a longer roast supports the type of humor lines that are often delivered. Some districts roast the outgoing district governor at the end of the spring conference. Your club could volunteer to coordinate and support this event.
- **Observational humor.** Incorporating a short session where one or more members share humorous observations about the meeting is a great way to develop the members' skill in creating spontaneous humor.
- **Member introductions.** At the start of the meeting, allow club members to introduce themselves by saying or doing something funny. Encourage people to create something new for each meeting and not repeat their jokes.
- **Speaker introductions.** Challenge members to make every introduction during the meeting include a touch of humor. When you provide a written introduction for your next speech, build in some humor to make the introducer look good and get your speech off to a good start.
- **Cartoon captions.** An effective way to introduce caption writing is to present it as a short, creative-thinking exercise or use it as a vehicle for Table Topics. You can also hold a caption-writing contest as part of your club newsletter. 📄

John Kinde, DTM, is an Accredited Speaker, humor specialist and member of the Powerhouse Pros Toastmasters club in Las Vegas, Nevada. Contact him through his website, humorpower.com.



Finding jokes that reach everyone.

By Uma Thakar

Building Bridges Across Cultures

I was once asked:

Do Indians fall in love?

I said: It can be arranged.

Those lines brought ripples of laughter in Australia last October when I used them in my comedy show, “Bollywood Boulevard.” Humor like this helped me reach across cultural boundaries and find the laughs during a string of performances in Melbourne that included the Indian Consulate and Australia’s landmark cultural and entertainment center, Federation Square.

To create this joke, I took a stereotype that people have regarding Indians and arranged marriages and made a play on it. People liked that I took the stuffing out of a traditional image and made it funny.

Later in my show, I expanded my discussion to the foibles of other cultures. The audience was able to accept

those cross-cultural jokes because I had laid the foundation for them earlier. They had already seen that I was willing to laugh at myself first.

Faye Dunn, a Toastmaster in the Tuesday Chatters club in Rosanna, Victoria, let me know that she enjoyed my brand of humor. Faye is of Chinese origin and now calls Australia home. She gave me this feedback: “You tapped into the pop culture of our world, combined all the things that are relevant to society... with wisdom and humor.”

A Nod to Smart Jokes

Cross-cultural humor works best when you use a wider canvas, taking on subjects that are global and adding eccentricities of a particular culture. I had a bit of fun with the Indian habit of headshaking during my show. The audience liked that I could laugh at my own culture and they could laugh with me. I taught

them a few headshakes and they went away learning something new and amusing about another culture.

Cross-cultural humor works best when it’s not hurtful or taunting. Gentle self-mockery breaks down barriers and reaches out to different cultures. With the world becoming one global village and people moving around so much, cross-cultural humor is a way of building bridges between cultures.

In the show, I’ve introduced two characters, my Grandma Gina and my cousin Rita. Both moved from India to Australia a year ago and their attempts to become “Aussie Indians” and assimilate both cultures result in comic misadventures. They’re a hit!

One reason for this is because my characters go against the established images people have of Indian women. For example, Rita becomes a fan of Australian football after

arriving in Australia. People don't expect an Indian woman to be interested in football. I turned a stereotype on its head and in the process, found one of the keys to effective comedy.

Grandma Gina is 70 going on 17, sings Abba songs while driving Mumbai-style on Melbourne roads and creates chaos and mayhem. Along the way, she's sassy and funky – images that are unlike Bollywood and popular portrayals of older Indian women. I've drawn from my own experience of Indian women because in real life, I find they are bolder and stronger than the media portrays them.

The characters work because they're larger than life and I've created a story about them that takes the audience along on a rollicking romp. It also allows me a range for *performance* and *visual gags*, which are major factors in cross-cultural comedy. In addition, I've used situations and characters that mixed audiences can relate to, such as football, Marilyn Monroe, Abba and Bollywood. Cross-cultural humor works better when the audience can relate to characters and situations.

The Courage to Cross Cultures

Not everyone is comfortable using cross-cultural humor, because it can be hit-and-miss if you don't get it right. Geoff Morrissey, DTM, a photographer and member of the Tuesday Chatters club, draws gingerly on his mixed Irish, Aussie, English and Swedish background.

"I'm a bit sensitive to using cross-cultural humor," he says. "If I'm comfortable with the background, I do make reference to the more obvious targets. I also like to parody the Aussie bloke."

Morrissey notes, "What goes down well in Australia may fall flat elsewhere. A good example is [popular Australian TV series] *Kath and Kim*. When sent to the United States, it had to be changed; when returned to Australia, the U.S. version was a total flop."

Avoid Crossing Wires

An important key to effective cross-cultural humor is to use references that are internationally known. That's why my Shakespeare comedy routine is popular. I always get laughs when I parody Shakespeare.

Once I asked my audience: "Have you heard Shakespeare with an Indian accent?" That question had audience members holding their sides with laughter because it's such an unusual juxtaposition. If you try this, just make sure both images are recognizable by everyone.

Cross-cultural humor may not work if the audience doesn't understand the cultural reference. Nazel Gaz has a Turkish background and belongs to a Turkish association in Melbourne, Australia. She offers an example of Turkish humor: "If you're angry, you would say in Turkish,

language for the deaf. My teacher explained that some signs were specific to America and others to Australia. We would laugh during the class as she explained the confusion and humor that are generated when you sign the wrong signs in another country.

Join the Fun!

Russell Peters is an international name in comedy. The Canadian Indian comedian is one of the fore-runners of cross-cultural comedy. He draws on Indian, Canadian and other cultures to create comedy out of cultural idiosyncrasies. The people who laugh most during his shows are those whose own culture is being parodied.

There are universal aspects to humor that can cross the divide of different cultures. Performance

"Cross-cultural humor works best when you use a wider canvas, taking on subjects that are global and adding eccentricities of a particular culture."

'I will smack you until the donkey returns from the water.' It's like the English saying 'until the cows come home.' This may not be understood by a non-Turkish audience who doesn't understand the reference."

Names coming from different cultures can provide an endless source of comedic cultural confusion. One Indian woman came up to me after a show and said her name was Sushma. Her Aussie friends couldn't pronounce it, so they call her "Sushi." I found it funny and when I related it to my next audience, they laughed, too. They also laughed when I mentioned the nickname used for me. Instead of *Uma*, Aussies simply call me "OO."

It's not just the sounds of language that provide humor. The deaf have a brand of humor that is culture-specific. I completed an Auslan course, which is Australian sign

and visual humor are great for this. I've seen some comedians stand on stage and say nothing and bring the house down just with their expressions. I use performance, body language and exaggeration in my show and find they're often more effective than verbal descriptions.

Cross-cultural humor can break down barriers between different cultures. When done effectively, it serves as a reminder of our human frailties. It's a way of saying: "Look, I'm human just like you." 

Uma Thakar, CC is a member of the Tuesday Chatters club in Rosanna, Victoria, Australia. She performed her solo comedy show at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival 2011 in Melbourne, Australia. Reach her at themahuma.com.



Club leaders proudly display a variety of club banners and ribbons at District 59's 2010 Spring Conference, in The Hague, Netherlands.

How the love of Toastmasters unites one big continent.

By John Zimmer, CC, CL

District 59:

Countries, Culture and Camaraderie

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible."

– Mahatma Gandhi

If Gandhi were alive today and a member of Toastmasters, he would feel right at home in District 59.

Across Borders and Cultures

Stretching from Poland to Portugal and from Sweden to Switzerland, District 59 – my home district – comprises 18 countries and approximately 4,752 members in Continental Europe. We have almost 200 clubs, the majority of which are English-speaking. However, there are also dozens of clubs where meetings are held in languages such as Dutch, French, German, Polish and Portuguese.

In addition, there are bilingual clubs. The four main speech contests are held in multiple languages all the way to the division level. At our district conference, the contests and education sessions are held in English, German and French.

While there is a distinct European flavor to District 59, it is leavened by the presence of numerous expats (including me) who hail from the four corners of the globe. Thus, I am on safe ground when I say that District 59 may be the most international Toastmasters district in the world.

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

District 59 conferences are a treat. The contests are exciting and of high caliber; the workshops are informative and inspiring; and the venues are magnificent. For example, our last four district conferences have been held in sun-drenched Lisbon, colorful and cool Barcelona, along the wind-swept shores of the Hague, and in historic and bohemian Hamburg. I have attended the last seven conferences and my only complaint is that they do not last long enough.

Of course, the best part of the conferences is the people. It is stimulating to spend a weekend with so many individuals from such varied backgrounds. The conversations over drinks or dinner are invariably thought-provoking.

And although the cultures might change, the commitment and enthusiasm for the organization and its education program are constant. Toastmasters in District 59 are dedicated; we *have* to be in such a geographically large district. In North America, there are districts in which all of the clubs are in the same city. In District 59, visiting a club in another division usually means traveling several hours in a car, on a train or on a plane.

It is worth the extended travel, because you can make many terrific friendships. Although living hundreds or thousands of kilometers apart means that we do not see each other as often as we would like, we stay in touch via email, Skype and social networking.

Babel Topics

I have tremendous respect for my fellow Toastmasters who are non-native English speakers. I know what it's like to speak in front of people in a language that is not your mother tongue. No matter how good you are in that other language – and the level of English for most

Toastmasters in District 59 is excellent – you are rarely as comfortable as when you are speaking your own language.

For native English speakers, addressing audiences that include non-native speakers provides an excellent opportunity. You must work on the clarity of your message by removing colloquialisms and jargon that might not be readily understood by a non-native speaker. It also helps you to speak more slowly, enunciate more clearly and pause more often than you would in front of a “home crowd.” The experience will remind you that any speech is about the audience – first, last, always. Your message should not be diminished because of your inability to temper your hasty speaking habits.

A Family Affair

Pablo Casals, the renowned Spanish cellist, said, “The love of one’s country is a splendid thing. But

why should love stop at the border?” In District 59, we deal with border crossings all the time. However, when we get together, all borders dissolve.

Being a Toastmaster in a district as culturally diverse and stimulating

as ours is rewarding. At our 2008 Conference in Bamberg, Germany, former District Governor Greg Palmer, DTM, spoke eloquently and passionately about District 59. His talk was about the “power of family” and his words were well chosen, because that’s what this district feels like – a big family.

I have had the pleasure of giving education sessions at several division

conferences and club meetings across the continent. I am delighted to be able to give something back to a district that has given me so much. Thus it is only fitting that I conclude by saying to my friends and fellow Toastmasters in District 59: *Danke*

“In District 59, visiting a club in another division usually means traveling several hours.”

schön, Dank je wel, Děkuji, Dziękuję, Gracias, Köszönöm szépen, Merci, Obrigado, Tack så mycket, Thank you and Tusen takk! 

John Zimmer, CC, CL, is a member of the International Geneva Toastmasters club in Switzerland. He is a five-time District 59 speech contest champion. Visit his blog at mannerofspeaking.org.

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When *Bad Things* Happen to **Good Clubs**

By Craig Harrison, DTM

All clubs experience bumps and bruises over time. They are prone to the effects of economics and egos, logistics and fluctuations in quality. Over time, the membership of most clubs waxes and wanes. Yet some clubs experience particularly tough times. The question arises: What to do when bad things happen to good clubs?

For the record, I believe all Toastmasters clubs are inherently good – they are formed to serve the needs of their members, to help them learn, grow and build confidence. There is no such thing as a bad club. There are merely clubs that are underperforming or under-serving the needs of their members.

All clubs – even the best of them – need a blend of resiliency and resourcefulness to stave off the bad things that can happen. Don't think your club is immune to such challenges. The only question is how your club will respond to challenges posed by any of the following situations.

Location, Location, Location

About four years ago, AT&T clubs throughout North America were suddenly faced with a loss of onsite meeting space because of a policy change. A combination of communication, leadership and public relations strategies resulted in a recommitment to provide secure meeting space for these clubs.

So how stable is your meeting location? Are you regularly in touch with your landlord or site contact? Nurture that relationship in good times to protect yourself from changes in policy or sentiment toward your club. Demonstrate your club's value to your host organi-

zation's human resources department and upper management. Remind them that great things are happening in the club and that the club adds value to their organization, neighborhood and community. You may be able to avert disasters related to logistical challenges with a little planning and communication.

Here are a few difficulties your club might face:

- You lose your primary location (sometimes on short notice).
- You're forced out of your regular meeting room and possibly downgraded to a less popular location.
- Your members might be forced to register, in advance, for each meeting as a result of security concerns.
- Your company (a primary source of members) relocates, downsizes or closes – stripping your club of talent and mass.
- Your club becomes too big, outgrowing its location or delaying the growth of some members wishing for more opportunities to participate.

Solution: *Have a backup or emergency plan in case, on short notice, your site is unavailable for one or more meetings.*



Ego, Ergo They Go

Sometimes strong personalities within a club will lead to attrition of members over time. Even healthy clubs lose members when a particular member's dominant personality or overriding style drowns out other members' voices. And don't think it's only the club president who can have this effect.

I've been in a club where an overaggressive multilevel marketer used the club as a platform for growing her business. This led to sales speeches, unwanted sales phone calls and emails. Thus, the club environment was poisoned for many members. When club leaders were slow to address it, several members quietly left. Only later did the club realize why it was losing members.

One club I visited was highly politicized. It had developed a political agenda based on local and national parties and propositions. Visitors soon realized this club was far from neutral in terms of its leanings concerning politics. Guests either fell in line or felt the wrath of members who weren't shy about espousing their prevailing beliefs and attempting to persuade visitors and new members. As a result, this club's membership remained constant; there was little growth. Only its true believers felt comfortable.

Solution: *With the exception of some clearly designated specialty clubs, Toastmasters clubs should be open to people of all races, religions and orientations – inclusivity is the key. Whether through speeches or Table Topics, members and guests should not feel the need to adhere to others' belief systems or politics. Nor should they be sales targets. Club leaders should make regular announcements to address this issue and should discuss the importance of evaluating a speech's writing and delivery – not necessarily its content.*

A Leader Runs Through It

Bad things can happen as a result of leadership challenges. On occasion, a club will suffer from an overbearing immediate past president who is reluctant to let go of a club's culture or allow new leaders to modify its structure or operation.

I've seen specialty clubs, whose officers are elected for one year at a time, re-elect their president for a second year. Members will tolerate a leader they're not enamored with for one term, but two consecutive terms is more than many will endure. Without fanfare they will withdraw or transfer their membership. I've always felt the strength of a club comes from the diversity of its members – their styles, thoughts, opinions and skills, and the rotation of leaders

each term. Too much of any one member may inhibit others from expressing their excellence.

Sometimes a power struggle or battle of styles will occur between officers. When it goes public it can divide the club; some people side with one officer while other members support the opposition. Polarizing members with “political” friction leads to fissures and fractures of the club’s cohesiveness. This is definitely not a recipe for club excellence!

On occasion a club leader will browbeat members with rules. Occasionally these club leaders can be so dogmatic that their entire focus on is the letter of the law and they miss the spirit behind the law. They espouse rigid rules – often not official Toastmasters rules – at every opportunity, neglecting the focus that Toastmasters really encourages personal growth and learning in a safe environment.

Sometimes over-ambitious club members and leaders, in their zeal to excel in the Distinguished Club Program,

- The vice president education stopped assigning roles in print weeks in advance.
- The club leaders began to construct the agenda on a flip chart when that day’s meeting had started.
- A few members left and were not replaced.
- Guests were ignored when they visited and didn’t join or return.
- Members failed to show up for meetings and neglected to arrange back-ups to cover their roles.
- Meeting standards declined a little bit each month.
- Members gave impromptu speeches.
- The sergeant at arms stopped stocking the appropriate speech evaluation forms for each assignment.
- Members increasingly arrived late.
- Speakers rarely provided introductions in advance, but scribbled on lined paper right before they were to speak.

An air of informality pervaded meetings. Soon the membership had dwindled to a handful of die-hards, mostly male. The environment resembled more of a men’s club. And thus, a club that was once a model of excellence became a club likely to dissolve within a year without attention and a rededication. That year passed, and the club died.

In communities, quality of life is tied to practices such as repairing potholes in the roads as soon as they appear. The quality of a Toastmasters club is similarly threatened by the incremental diminution of quality in its various practices.

Solution: *Infuse your club with more quality and preparation in its practices, communication, materials and interaction. Then watch it grow!*

It’s Not What Happens, It’s How You React

Bad things may happen to your club. Yet nothing is irrevocable. There are club specialists, coaches and rescue chairs available to assist you in saving your club. Learn more about club coaches by visiting www.toastmasters.org/ClubCoach. Also, veteran members can deliver modules such as “Moments of Truth” to help. Your area governor can also assist. You don’t have to go it alone in your quest to make your club the best it can be, again. 📌

Craig Harrison, DTM, of the Toastmasters Leadership club in Oakland, California, is a keynote speaker and principal of the training firm Expressions of Excellence! Visit ExpressionsOfExcellence.com for more resources for your club and members.

“True leaders recognize that the core of every club is its people.”

focus on empire building and amassing points, to the detriment of human relations. When everything is quantified instead of humanized, a coldness pervades the Toastmasters experience.

Solution: *True leaders are unifiers, not dividers. Be sure to elect leaders who further the purpose of the club, its members and Toastmasters International. True leaders recognize that the core of every club is its people.*

The Long Decline

Some clubs suffer from the cumulative effects of many small decisions, each causing a slight decline in quality. Regarded individually, each choice or practice may seem inconsequential. Yet the sum of all these parts leads to an average or below average club experience for members and guests. I call it the curse of mediocrity.

Consider the “Pedestrian” Toastmasters club. This now-defunct group was once Distinguished. At that time it had a nice blend of men and women, and longtime and newly joined members. Their meetings were vibrant and varied. Over time a series of events occurred, each causing a small ripple. For instance:

- The vice president membership stopped leading membership-building campaigns.



Well-communicated feedback can be a powerful tool.

By Luann Lee Brown, ATM

Coping with a Disliked Member

Our club was doing great. The Toastmasters goal of providing a supportive environment was fully actualized.

Our club includes a cornucopia of people, creating diverse and enlightening listening and learning experiences. Guests are always

like Him. As a result of this one member's offensive behavior, my once enjoyable meetings became only tolerable.

“During and between meetings, I split my energy between blaming, berating and bemoaning my fellow Toastmaster.”

I didn't want to leave my “family” of Toastmasters, but neither did I want to chew the insides of my cheeks raw every time he spoke. Thus, I was forced to problem-solve. Unfortunately, I did not have the good sense to begin with such a tactic. During and between meetings, I split my energy between blaming, berating and bemoaning my fellow Toastmaster.

Fortunately, I discovered that such a situation can be resolved without losing one's sanity or the joy and growth that Toastmasters offers. Here's how:

Our weekly program nurtured everyone and speaking skills mushroomed. It was all so perfect. Until He joined. Have you ever had a member who, frankly, you wished would join another club?

cherished and treated accordingly, resulting in a continual flow of new members. While I adored some members more than others, in three years as a Toastmaster, I'd never encountered anyone quite

Identify specific behaviors that trigger your emotions. Remember, each of us responds to the world uniquely. Every time we react to another person strongly – positively or negatively – it says as much about us as it does about the person. Accept responsibility for your feelings and thoughts. What drives you to distraction may actually be enjoyed by another member.

Talk privately to the individual. Use the “sandwich technique.” Rather than venting to other Toastmasters and risk splitting club affections or possibly causing

behaviors. Plan to meet for coffee, away from the club, in a relaxed setting. Give yourselves enough time to talk and be prepared not only to express yourself directly and kindly, but also be ready to listen.

Remember the Toastmasters mission statement. We gave an oath when we joined this extraordinary organization to provide a “mutually supportive” environment for our fellow members. There aren’t any exceptions or addendums stipulating that we only need to support those we like. It’s a huge challenge to

there are times when we are too close to a situation, thus blurring our vision. Stand back; take a deep breath, refocus and return.

If the above approach doesn’t work, find a mediator. It’s important that the mediator be objective. This person might be the club president or someone else in the club. Their expertise can be extremely valuable in sticky, uncomfortable situations. It stretches his or her communication skills, too! If the issue is violating Toastmasters ethics or threatening club morale, an objective mediator is especially important. If you are considering leaving, perhaps there are others who feel the same way.

“Serendipity happens through other members who touch our lives and teach us what we most need to know.”

more conflict, consider the situation as yet another Toastmasters learning experience. Once you have identified specific behaviors that you find annoying, share them as you would a helpful evaluation, sandwiched between positives. Everyone has at least a few positive attributes! Use assertive rather than passive, passive-aggressive or aggressive communication, using a lot of “I statements” as opposed to “You statements.” For example, say, “I felt uncomfortable when you told that off-color joke” rather than, “You were so obnoxious.”

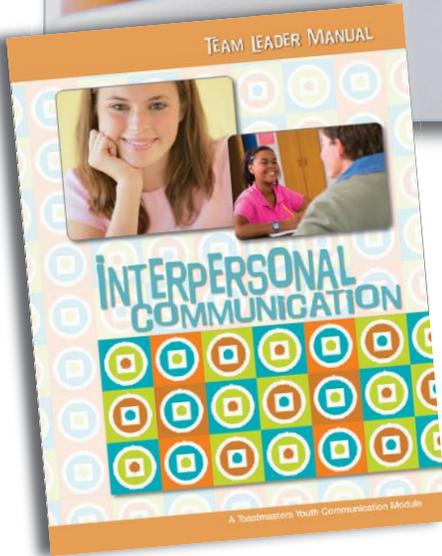
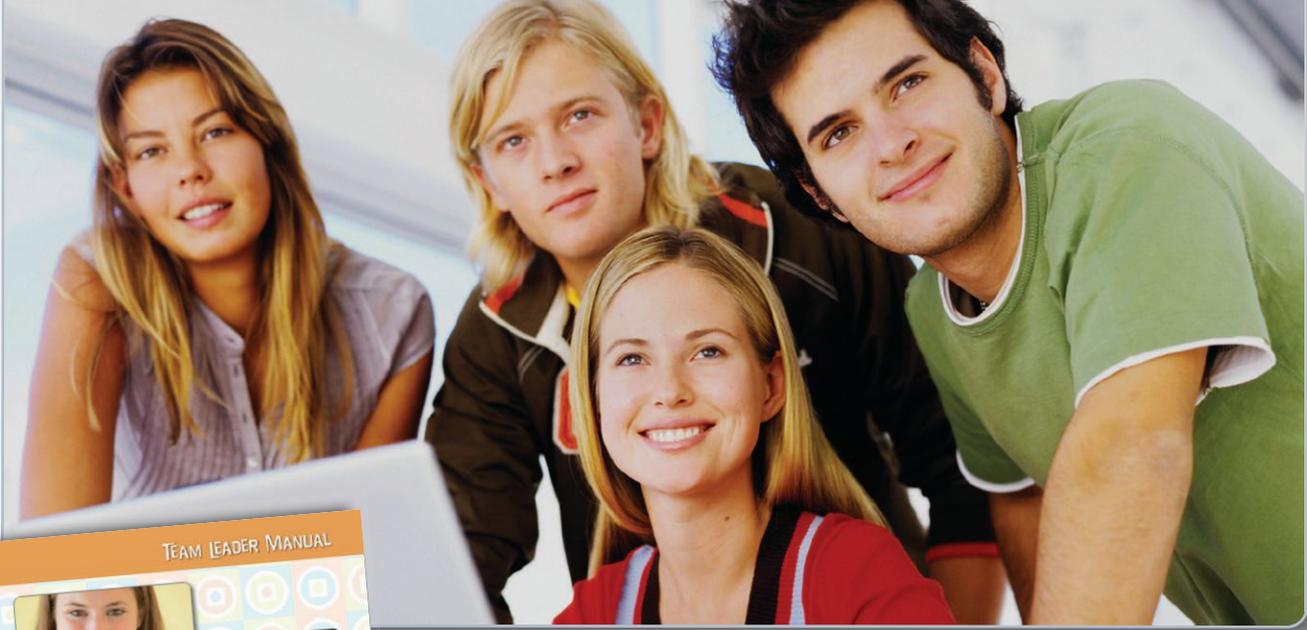
Timing is critical, even when there are not lights to guide you! Choose a time when you are not upset and stick to the issue – the issue being your response to specific

make the Toastmasters mission statement come alive when faced with a member who presents obtuse evaluations that seem to strip the recipients of any confidence, or a member who chronically uses the club as a platform for political or religious reform, or a member who never shows up when scheduled as a functionary. Well-communicated feedback can be a powerful tool. Use that tool for your sake as well as your club’s sake, and even for the possible benefit of the member you’re reacting to with alarm, irritation or anger.

Don’t quit Toastmasters! A brief “time out” may be helpful, however, to gain perspective. This isn’t always necessary, of course. But

In our club’s situation, a mediator was found and the problem was resolved. In the process, I discovered that my nemesis was, in fact, my teacher. He taught me a lot, indirectly and experientially, about myself and communication. In an effort to change him, I changed myself. I grew out of the struggle. Did I do it all graciously, ideally and with a perfect outcome? Only about as well as I did my Ice Breaker and with about as much comfort. Sometimes our most important personal and communication growth in Toastmasters occurs even when we are far removed from the lectern. Serendipity happens through other members who touch our lives and teach us what we most need to know. 

Luann Lee Brown, ATM, is a former member of the Gilbert Toastmasters club in Chandler, Arizona.



By Beth Black

The New Youth Communication Program Is Here

Helping teens communicate and learn.

Culminating years of research and preparation, the first module of the new Toastmasters youth communication program is now available. The new *Interpersonal Communication* module will help teenagers gain the communication skills they need to be successful in school and later in adult society. It was created in response to many requests from Toastmasters and members of the general public looking for a program to help teenagers better express themselves in one-on-one or small-group situations.

Since 1965, the Toastmasters International Youth Leadership Program (YLP) has offered a “mini-Toastmasters” experience that allows young people a glimpse at what the full Toastmasters education program teaches. The new youth communication program provides all that and more. Complete with a fully developed curriculum, it educates young

people on communication issues that affect them – framing these issues as subject matter to be taught in a classroom or other mentor/student setting.

Areas of Study

The research conducted by Toastmasters International determined that young people need to focus on interpersonal communication before they tackle the challenges of public speaking. Face-to-face communication weighs heavily in job interviews, college meetings and school assignments – as well as parent-teacher-student meetings and simply building friendships. Teenagers who know how to listen well and express themselves with control, clarity and tact will be able to advance further in their personal goals and careers. For this reason, the first module covers the topic of interpersonal communication.

Of course, some information on public speaking will be presented in the first module, but the main

focus will remain on communicating effectively with others in face-to-face circumstances.

Toastmasters International has also received many requests for a focus on public speaking education for youth, which is slated to debut after the *Interpersonal Communication* module is in full use. This second module of the program, on the topic of public speaking, will offer training and lessons on subjects such as famous speakers and speeches in history, tips on giving effective speeches, such as overcoming nervousness, developing a speech's structure and using appropriate body language – as well as information on how to use PowerPoint for impact.

For Classrooms and Beyond

Modular by design, this program allows the coach to select materials as he or she sees fit – standing alone (if time allows) or comple-

(Continued on page 31)



Know yourself, your topic and your audience.

By Krista Wells, Ph.D.

Speaking From Experience

My grandmother knew how to set a formal dinner table. I remember sitting in her dining room and admiring her beautiful linen tablecloth, water glasses to the left, wine glasses to the right, and her Steuben glass centerpieces. It almost didn't matter what you were about to eat, because it just *looked* so classy.

A good speaker must also “set the table.” As a Toastmaster who gives presentations to the military community, and as a career and life-transition coach, I have learned

how to take the right steps to make my speeches and communication with others successful.

Here are six quick tips:

1 Create a great introduction.

As I travel to military bases to give speeches, I find that if I leave the introductions up to others, it often leads to a military service member reading my biography: boring!

So I have some fun with it. I write an introduction listing my credentials, life experience and my speech topic, and send it to the person who will

introduce me, with instructions on how to read it to the audience. I spice up a typical resume reading with some teasers and fun material to interest the audience and help them feel connected. I find that, contrary to my original fear of seeming too eager, or appearing like I am bragging, most introducers actually appreciate the gesture. It sets the tone for success. A good source for writing fun and lively introductions about yourself is the book *Brag! The Art of Tooting Your Own Horn Without Blowing It* by Peggy Klaus.

2 Style matters. Just as my grandmother's perfectly folded linen napkins added that extra flair to the table, you can add panache to your presentation by personalizing your appearance. For example, at my last speech to a component of the U.S. Joint Forces Command, I wore purple because "wearing purple" is a military expression that means "to stay in joint billets" – meaning joint housing.

Sometimes I just focus on fun accessories. For example, at a military-spouse career expo I spoke on the topic of "Finding Portable Professions" and I wore a vintage locket adorned with an image of an old military couple. I used it as a prop to explain the power of authentic networking. Think about what little additions may spice up your wardrobe.

3 Do the homework. To help your audience get more out of your presentation, consider interviewing one of the members before you give your speech. Recently, I spoke at an award ceremony called Military Spouse Heroes at Home. As homework, I called last year's winner to learn more about the previous year's event and the types of concerns spouses have. I also spoke to the woman hosting the ceremony, asking her for advice on what information she thought was most useful. By getting to know her, I felt that I embraced my topic more deeply and had more to offer. In addition, when I saw last year's winner in the audience, I felt instantly more at ease during the speech.

Doing your homework before giving a speech is a way to make sure your audience is heard.

4 What's the point? When I decided on my Ph.D. dissertation topic, I sat down with a professor and went to great length excitedly detailing my proposed paper on emotional intelligence and diversity. Dr. Bernardo Ferdman looked at me and said, "So Krista, what's the point?" I have since learned that he was right. All you need is *one main point* to create a really memorable speech.

Military spouses may forget the details of my stories, my punchlines or that "amazing quote" I spent hours looking for, but they should walk away with one main point! Try to challenge yourself to cut down your next speech into one sentence. For example, in a speech I gave to the U.S. Army, my sentence was, "What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?" I always assign an action step for my audiences to perform later. This helps ensure that everyone can make use of the main point in my speech.

5 Be authentic. Many military spouses say they appreciate my authenticity. I tell them that "life balance is hogwash" when you are raising four young children and your spouse is deployed. You may fill your kids with

too many chicken nuggets and that is *okay!* Those spouses appreciate that I'm not trying to be someone I am not.

Most popular speakers, regardless of their expertise, are successful because they tap into a universal problem that we all experience and can relate to. Spouses seem to enjoy tips, but also appreciate the authentic "real life" struggles I have overcome. They prefer to hear a genuine story about my fears on the day my husband was deployed while I was pregnant – waiting alone in an emergency room with my 3-year-old, who suffered numerous seizures. Listening to the account of how I got through that day means more to them than a canned list of ways to deal with chronic stress. I find that the more I can just be myself, the more I enjoy telling stories and the more the audience enjoys me.

6 Add party favors. When my sister recently got married in Vermont, I wanted to give her guests perfect little gifts as a reminder of the special day. I chose Vermont's famous maple candy, a treat that reminds my family of our dad. A small party favor like this leaves people with a taste – a memory. The ideas are endless. At my luncheon presentation titled, "You CAN Have It All!," I gave out fortune cookies. At a recent speech I gave for Military Spouse Appreciation Day, titled "What Are Your Big Rocks?," I gave all 100 spouses in the audience a small rock with an inspirational message branded onto it.

Small tokens related to your topic are a great way for guests to walk away thinking about what you said. They can also serve as a friendly reminder to ask you back.

"All you need is one main point to create a really memorable speech."

I learned from Toastmasters how important it is to get to know yourself, your topic and your audience. I have tried to apply these skills in my work with military spouses. I also keep in mind that the reason my Grandma's table looked so polished was because it involved planning, placement and preparation. Remember that you, too, can "set the table" in a way that makes the experience truly inviting and memorable for everyone in the room. 

Krista Wells, CC, Ph.D. is a member of the West Hartford Toastmasters in West Hartford, Connecticut. Krista is The Military Spouse Coach[®]; she works with military spouses, delivers workshops and presentations at military bases, writes for military publications and is a life and career coach. Contact her at **Krista@militaryspousecoach.com**

Dave Logan is one of the most natural and accomplished speakers you are likely to find. Delivering keynote presentations to corporate titans such as Microsoft and Coca-Cola, he is charismatic, self-assured and in command.

But as a teenager, Logan says, he was “painfully shy” and daunted by the very idea of facing an audience. Fortunately, he listened to his father’s advice to join Toastmasters.

“He had been a member in the 1950s and early ’60s, and he really enjoyed and appreciated it.”

Logan joined a Los Angeles-area club that met at a local high school. During this formative stage of his life, he says, Toastmasters helped him take great strides with his confidence – and that was a major catalyst for his future development.

“Speaking well is very important to me,” says Logan, 43, the keynote presenter at Toastmasters’ 2011 International Convention, taking place August 17-20 in Las Vegas, Nevada. “It is essential for leadership. I give speeches around the world, and Toastmasters certainly made all that possible.”

Logan is an expert on leadership and management, with particular focus on corporate culture. He offers organizational leaders an array of strategies to improve their workplace culture so they can boost their company’s performance.

A faculty member at the University of Southern California’s Marshall School of Business, Logan is co-author of the book *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization*. The book has generated plenty of positive buzz in the business world, and its principles form the cornerstone of Logan’s work. *Tribal Leadership*, which recently came out in paperback, hit number one on the *New York Times* best-seller list in mid-June, in the “Advice, How To and Miscellaneous” category.

Logan’s keynote at the International Convention will focus on the corporate dynamics and leadership tips highlighted in the book and in his management philosophy.

Learning from Tribes

Logan’s perspective on “tribal leadership” is based on the idea that every organization is a tribe or a network of

tribes – groups of between 20 and 150 people who share common behavioral patterns. Whether a company flourishes or sputters depends on these workplace dynamics, he asserts. In *Tribal Leadership*, Logan and his co-authors studied the traits of tribes – how they speak, think and interact with co-workers – to determine which kinds of groups are the most dysfunctional and unproductive, and which work together most successfully.

“Ongoing conversations” are what shape workplace culture, says Logan, who earned a Ph.D. in organizational communication from USC’s Annenberg School. When such communication is counterproductive, your job as a leader is to “shift one type of conversation into another,” he adds.

How? By being a strong communicator yourself.

“Do that and you can alter the fabric of the tribes around you – taking them from mediocre to outstanding.”

Effective tribal leadership requires inspiring and engaging group members and showing them that their work is valued, says Logan. A good leader has to know what is important to employees – and address the needs of all tribe members, not just a few.

“Good leaders listen to people, and they combine the various aspirations they hear into a vision that speaks for the whole,” says Logan. “Then, when people hear the vision, they say, ‘That person speaks for me!’”

Light a Fuse with Mentoring

When group members lack ambition and desire, and are not willing to try new challenges, the group’s performance suffers. In those situations, Logan recommends a leader step in to mentor those who want their situation to change. This leader can mentor these individuals by helping them to see their strengths and to select projects where they can flourish, he suggests.

Logan also points out that many people have a passion for their place of employment, but eventually

How to **GUIDE** Your **TRIBE**

By Paul Sterman

Convention keynote speaker shows how leaders can lift others.



fall out of love with their company. How can leaders and managers re-ignite the enthusiasm of their tribes? Talk to them, and listen carefully to their answers, says Logan. Ask them why they chose to work at the organization in the first place, and what accomplishment they are most proud of.

From their words, you can glean what the employees once felt most passionate about. Perhaps it was the organizational spirit of ambition and innovation. During meetings, or casual conversations, talk to employees about these values, Logan recommends. The more people talk about these ideas, the more they are re-inspired to be part of the team that embraced these values.

Logan recently conducted a class on tribal leadership at Qualcomm, the international wireless technology company headquartered in San Diego, California. Desi Rosado, Qualcomm's senior director of Information Technology, says the class consisted of managers, directors and vice presidents, and they gained many practical benefits from the workshop.

"Some managers have even formed a discussion group called 'Tribal Leadership' to share ideas and principles introduced by Dave and to bolster their management skills," Rosado says.

In Sync and In Demand

Logan is co-founder and senior partner at the Los Angeles consulting firm CultureSync, which specializes in strategy, negotiation and high performance. Its underlying principles are drawn from the tribal leadership philosophy. (Logan's two co-authors on *Tribal Leadership* were CultureSync colleagues: John King, a fellow senior partner there, and Halee Fischer-Wright, also a senior partner until leaving recently to work in the medical field.)

Logan works with organizations ranging from Fortune 500 companies and universities to nonprofits and high-tech startups. He also speaks at high-profile events such as BizTech Expo and the TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) Talks at USC. In addition to *Tribal Leadership*, he has co-authored three other business-leadership books: *The Coaching Revolution*, *Reinventing Your Career* and *The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life*.

When Logan arrived at USC's business school in the mid-1990s, he taught business communication. "People would always ask me, 'How can I learn more about communicating well?'" says Logan. "I would tell them to find out about Toastmasters."

Eventually, he and an MBA student at USC formed a club on campus – the Trojan Toastmasters. Though he is no longer a member, the club is still thriving.

Logan, who has also served as USC's associate dean of executive education, now teaches management and leadership in its Executive MBA program. Executives as well as mid-to-senior-level managers are in the program.

Students and colleagues at USC say Logan is a compelling speaker in the classroom, managing to captivate his audience without being preachy.

"Dave is one of the best speakers I have ever heard," says Jane Pak, CEO of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners, and a student in the Executive MBA program.

"Dave's speaking feels very conversational, so you never get bored," she says. "You don't feel talked at."

James Ellis, dean of the Marshall School of Business, says, "Dave is a really good communicator with students. He has good empathy for his audience, listens well and is succinct in his thought processes."

Leadership Lessons Take Hold

Pak, who took a class in organizational development taught by Logan this past semester, says she and her fellow students have learned a great deal from him. Describing Logan as a natural leader, she says watching him has driven home an important lesson: If you want to lead and positively impact others, don't try to be somebody you're not.

"Dave has mastered the ability to lead with authenticity," Pak says. "That sounds like a cliché, but it's true with him. He is exactly who he is. People naturally gravitate to that and want to follow him." 

For more information about Dave Logan, his International Convention keynote and the Convention itself, visit www.toastmasters.org/Members/Convention. Dave Logan's own website is davelogan.com, where he offers a series of "Tribal Leadership Tips."

Paul Sterman is an associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach him at psterman@toastmasters.org.

Corporate Culture – From the Pits to the Pinnacle

By Paul Sterman

It is a question at the heart of every organization: How do leaders get employees to perform to their potential? Leadership and management expert Dave Logan went in search of the answer.

Logan and his two co-authors of *Tribal Leadership* conducted a 10-year study of 24,000 people. Their research on "tribal culture" – traits shared by organizational groups – reveal a wide range of attitudes and behaviors, from people who are disturbingly anti-social or apathetic to those who flourish in an atmosphere of teamwork and achievement.

Why is it important to identify tribes and their traits? Because then, as an organizational leader, you can take action to improve the culture in these groups, says Logan.

Tribal Leadership features insights from diverse leaders, including Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, and Mike Eruzione, captain of the 1980 United States hockey team that captured the Olympic gold medal. The book's authors break down corporate culture into five distinct stages. At the bottom are those who act out in despairingly hostile ways. In the second stage, people say, in effect, "My life stinks"; these individuals are apathetic and self-pitying. In the third stage, the theme is "I'm great" – these people are personally

competitive, producing limited innovation and almost no collaboration, says Logan.

Stage four is the beginning of high performance, where employees say to themselves, "We're great." And in the fifth stage – the "top of the mountain," as Logan calls it – tribe members show a passion for collaboration and doing terrific work. Genuinely wanting to make history and change the world for the better, these groups have produced brilliant innovations, leading their industries and the economy, Logan notes.

For leaders and managers, there are no one-size-fits-all solutions to improving their corporate culture, he stresses. They must use communication and leadership strategies that apply to members of all different stages.

"Your job is to nudge each group forward," says Logan.

For an overview of Logan's thoughts on tribal leadership – as well as a sample of his speaking style – listen to his presentation at the TED Talks at USC. You can hear the 2009 speech at davelogan.com/media-appearances/.

You can also listen to Logan on the Toastmasters podcast at toastmasterspodcast.com/keynote.html



Dan Nainan



Mohammad Al-Issa

Convention speakers share tasteful humor for diverse audiences.

Make 'Em Laugh

By Jennie Harris

Toastmasters Dan Nainan and Mohammad Al-Issa know how to get their audiences to laugh. Nainan is a professional comedian. He is also one who performs “clean,” refusing to use profanity or raunchy jokes in his act. Al-Issa, a reliability engineering specialist from Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, is a master at giving humorous speeches; he won the District 79 Humorous Speech Contest in 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The two men, who will both speak at the Toastmasters International Convention in August, specialize in humor that is suitable for people of all ages and cultures. Here, they share valuable tips on how to make people laugh – using material that works across international borders as well as in your Toastmasters meetings.

For Nainan, multicultural humor comes naturally – he has a Japanese mother and an Indian father. He often jokes playfully about their use (or, rather, misuse) of the English language. Nainan and Al-Issa think of

original jokes by regularly observing the people and events around them. When a joke comes to him in the spur of the moment, Nainan, a member of American Express Toastmasters in New York, types it into his smartphone and later makes it stage-worthy.

When trying to be funny in a new culture, Al-Issa, ACG, ALB, a member of the Dhahran Toastmasters, recommends you select topics that have universal meaning, regardless of where people live. “When I speak humorously about how ladies love to look beautiful or how men love to appear strong, I can be sure that all people (despite their cultures) will have the same thoughts and feelings,” he says.

People will only laugh if they’re familiar with the subject, adds Nainan. “If I joked about the sport of cricket in America, nobody would laugh,” he says. “On the other hand, if I did jokes about cricket in India, I would bring the house down.”

Computer Comedy

Technology is a fruitful topic across borders, because many countries are experiencing changes in their computers, gadgets and software, says Nainan, who worked as a demonstration engineer for Intel Corporation in his previous career. For example, he says jokes about Skype can succeed practically anywhere.

Nainan says that “everybody in the world” is familiar with American culture. The reverse, however, is not true: “Most Americans can’t even name the president of Mexico or the prime minister of Canada – the countries with which they share borders!” Therefore, says Nainan, jokes regarding how little Americans know about the rest of the world or their outsized consumption habits – such as their addiction to SUVs – make universal comedic targets.

Researching what offends the people of a particular culture is just as important as learning about issues they can relate to. For instance, in Thailand, if you make

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By Jennie Harris

How a professor combines his passion for math and magic in showstopping stunts.

Mathemagics: Making Math Fun

Did anyone happen to bring a calculator?" With this simple request, tuxedo-donned Arthur Benjamin sets the stage to wow his audience. His international show, "Mathemagics," blends math and magic in the form of astonishing mathematical calculations. These include squaring three-digit numbers in his head faster than you can say "abracadabra." Tell him you were born on August 27, 1957, and he'll immediately announce it was a Tuesday. Toastmasters can learn a great deal from this math expert who can communicate a complicated subject in a clear way and effectively connect with his audience.

A professor at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, California, Benjamin teaches courses such as calculus, probability, statistics, discrete mathematics, combinatorics, number theory and game theory. When students ask if they'll need a calculator for one of his tests, this professor jokes, "Well, I didn't need one when I *made* the exam." Amazingly, everyone laughs. Recent graduate Elizabeth Reiland says Benjamin's "passion for math is infectious. He makes the material fun by breaking down subject matter in ways that are easy to understand and remember."

Fame is part of his equation. Named "America's Best Math Whiz" by *Reader's Digest*, Benjamin has appeared on *The Colbert Report*,

The Today Show and CNN, and was profiled in *The New York Times* and *Scientific American*. He not only is a math whiz; he also is a dynamic presenter in the classroom as well as on the international stage, as evidenced by the standing ovation he received at the 2005 TED conference.

[<http://bit.ly/mathemagicianart>] He gained even more fans when the conference speakers' sessions were made available online a few years later.

Toastmaster magazine's Jennie Harris asked Benjamin about his experiences.

How did you learn to perform rapid calculations?

It definitely came with practice. Most of my methods were self-taught, and I enjoyed putting in the time and practice, because for me it was a form of play, not work. It's one of those skills, like riding a bicycle, that doesn't require too much practice once you've mastered it. Now I give more than 50 presentations per year and I get enough practice from my performances.

How did you become a "mathemagician"?

As a kid, I enjoyed doing magic tricks. In high school, I performed at children's birthday parties throughout the Cleveland, Ohio, area as The Great Benjamini. Independently of this, I had developed this skill of doing rapid mental calculations. When I started

doing shows for older audiences, my father suggested that I put some of my mathematical tricks into the show. To my surprise, it got a huge reaction. This gave me the incentive to do even bigger and faster calculations. Thus, I became a "mathemagician."

Were you always comfortable speaking in front of an audience?

Looking back, I actually think I was *too* comfortable in front of audiences. I can remember when I was a kid, my parents would take me to the theater, and I would stand on my head in the lobby during intermission. I argued that the people were there to be entertained and that's what I was doing. But I think it was that same uninhibited quality, and my willingness to react to my audience and think on my feet (or my head), that made me successful as a kids' magician and, ultimately, as a college professor. In fact, I would attribute most of my success as a speaker and professor to what I learned about entertaining an audience through magic.

Are there other "mathemagicians"?

I'm sure that there are thousands of other people who can calculate as quickly as I do. I've met mathematicians, accountants, stock traders, cab drivers and others with similar skills, but they tend to be introverted and shun the footlights. I don't think there are too many others who do it pro-

professionally. Although, in the last few years, a number of kids have read my book *Secrets of Mental Math*, watched my videos (produced by *The Great Courses* series) and have started giving mathemagical presentations in their neighborhoods.

Which mathematicians have influenced you?

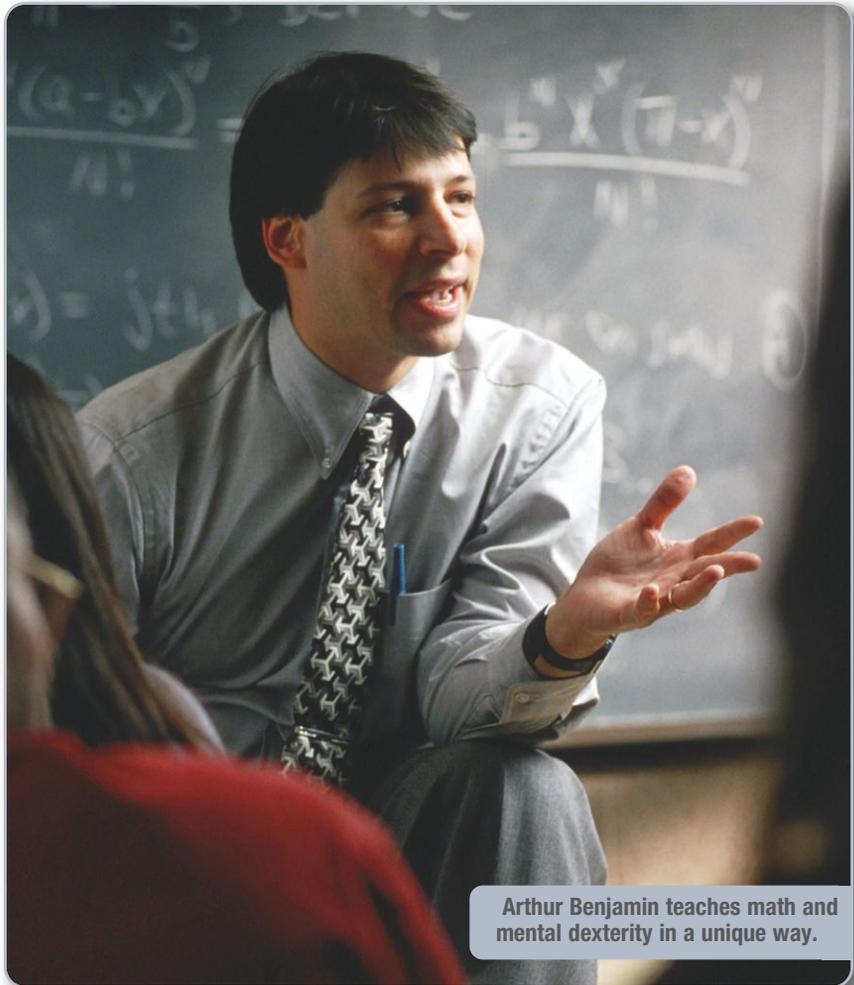
First on my list would be Martin Gardner, author of more than 70 books on subjects like recreational mathematics, magic, puzzles, science, critical thinking and poetry. He wrote a *Scientific American* column called “Mathematical Games” for more than 25 years. He might have been the first person to use the term “mathemagician.” Martin had a way of making advanced mathematics clear, fun and magical.

What does it take to speak at a TED conference?

Generally, to speak at TED, you need to be recommended by other TED speakers. Back then, I had never heard of the TED conferences, but one of the speakers told me that if I ever received a call from them to “just say yes.” When they called, they told me that they were happy to fly me to the conference, even though I was on sabbatical in Australia at the time.

Originally, TED talks were only seen by people who attended the event. Around 2007, they began to gradually put most of the TED talks online for free. Mine came out in December 2007 and it was viewed by more than a million people in one year. I used to give about 40 speaking engagements per year, but in 2008, I did 80.

My wife Deena, who is a Distinguished Toastmaster, District 12 Secretary and member of the Espresso club in Upland, [California], made a T-shirt for me that year, saying “Mathemagics World Tour 2008,” and listed 35 cities where I performed that year.



Arthur Benjamin teaches math and mental dexterity in a unique way.

How do you teach advanced math in a clear and entertaining way?

I always try to identify those aspects of the subject that turned me onto it. Just as every joke needs a punch line, every class needs to have a “WOW moment” where the students are glad they decided to show up that day. I find that students really respond to “*relevance* and *elegance*.” In other words, show them something useful or something beautiful.

Could you teach Toastmasters one of your mathemagics tricks?

I would describe my process in three words: “Left to Right.” On paper, we learn to do math from right to left, but when doing it mentally, it is much more natural, and ultimately faster, to do it from left to right. For example, to do 365×4 , start with $4 \times 300 = 1200$. Next do $4 \times 60 = 240$, then add those numbers (from left to right)

to get 1440. Finally, add $4 \times 5 = 20$ to get the answer of 1460. With practice, you can do a problem like this in seconds.

Do people from different cultural backgrounds share the same reaction to your shows?

I have presented my shows throughout the world, and the audience reaction has been consistently strong. My goal has always been to bring mathematics to the masses through my classes, books, DVD courses and live presentations, and I hope to be able to continue to do that for a long time. ■

To learn more about Arthur Benjamin, visit BenjaminMath.com.

Jennie Harris is a junior writer of the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at jharris@toastmasters.org.



Finding jokes with
universal a-peel.

I'm Sorry, Were You Being Funny?

When a seeker of truth wants to challenge your assumptions about reality, he pulls out that tired old brainteaser: If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, does it make a noise? Then he watches, all smug and self-satisfied, while you wrestle with the unanswerable. I don't like truth seekers. They're arrogant and they smell like incense. In reply I give them a koan of my own: If a man slips on a banana peel in the forest and nobody sees him, is it still funny? They don't even know where to start with that one, because truth seekers have no sense of humor. And that's the truth.

But what if somebody does see the guy slip on the banana peel? What if a whole *bunch* of people see him, and they're all from different countries? Would they all think it was funny? Does the sight of a fellow human injuring himself on a piece of fruit have universal comic appeal? And is it even funnier that a group of people from different countries are walking around in the forest in the first place?

Hard to say. Humor is based largely on culture, and cultures differ. True, all people like to laugh, but I doubt if someone like Jerry Seinfeld would have an audience of Kalahari bushmen rolling in the aisles. A frame of reference is needed. Sometimes it takes the form of political leaders or neighboring countries. The Irish break themselves up making fun of the English, just as the Spaniards do with the Portuguese. There's a history there and everybody gets it. A Kalahari bushman, on the other hand, might not be so familiar with growing up Jewish on Long Island.

People who research this sort of thing – yes, there are such people and they write papers like “Theory of Comic Narrative: Semantic and Pragmatic Elements” (my guess is they're not very funny) – say that Germans are the best consumers of humor. That's funny. Not funny ha-ha but funny... *who knew?* All that Teutonic precision doesn't strike me as funny, unless it involves *lederhosen*. Then it's funny. If any of my German readers are offended, I apologize. But guys, come on – lederhosen are funny. Or, if you go to Oktoberfest in Munich and drink enough German beer, I suppose anything's funny.

These same researchers say the French, Dutch and British are right up there with the Germans. The French like to laugh at their leaders, the Dutch laugh at pomposity and pretense, and the British laugh at the Dutch because they know the Dutch are laughing at them. Curiously, these researchers never say which culture has the least sense of humor. I'm thinking Iceland. There's nothing funny about active volcanoes disrupting air traffic. (On the other hand, I don't understand Icelandic, so maybe I'm wrong.)

Swedish humor is based partly on something called the *Jante Law*, which holds for derision any attempt at individual success and achievement. Apparently, the Swedes laugh at folks with too much ambition. This makes Donald Trump the funniest man in Sweden, even if he doesn't know it. Good thing – if he did he would probably try to add it to his list of individual successes and achievements.

Asians are so polite it's hard to tell what they think is funny. The story is told of a Japanese audience erupting into knee-slapping guffaws over a joke told by an American businessman. When the American expressed relief that his humorous story went over so well, he learned that his listeners never heard the joke. It was inappropriate to repeat so the translator simply told the audience, “The gentleman has made a joke. Please laugh.”

The Chinese are polite too, but they can also be surprisingly direct. I read recently about the director of a Western firm negotiating with his Chinese counterpart, who said: “I really like win-win situations. First I win, then I win again. Ha ha.” The director wasn't laughing.

The most universal type of humor is physical, they tell us. Hence, our aforementioned man slipping on a banana peel in the forest might actually be funny to all those people watching. On the other hand, the particular form of physicality known as rough-house “kidding” is unique to America, so think twice before you get a foreigner in a headlock and give him a noogie. You may be the center of an international incident.

Even readers of this column aren't always amused, and they don't hesitate to let me know. That's good. Toastmasters have spunk! I don't get too upset, though, because I know *most* readers think I'm funny, right? That is right, isn't it? I mean, you *do* think I'm funny. Don't you? 

John Cadley is an advertising copywriter in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at jjcadley@mower.com.

Youth Communications

(Continued from page 21)

menting another subject, such as literature, history or biology. The flexibility of the modules allows teachers to mix and match *Interpersonal Communication* module materials with their texts on other subjects. The program is geared to reinforce many states' and countries' learning standards, and the results can help a class achieve far more than expected norms in standards.

Sophia Linnell, an English teacher at Rancho Santa Margarita Middle School, in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, tested a storytelling assignment from the program to augment a writing lesson in her classroom. "I was delighted with how well the students accomplished what I had asked them to do. They were too, because when the last sentence was uttered, they broke into spontaneous applause," she says. "I had never had students react so positively to a lesson on writing a story."

Go, Team, Go!

The program offers a team approach, as young people tend to respond positively to a spirited atmosphere in which they are all members of the same team – one that will build champions who can ultimately conquer life's challenges. Like all good teams, they are led by a coach. In this case, the coach is an adult who can guide their use of the material to meet prescribed needs and bring structure to the activities.

Also, like all good teams, the members are required to support and aid each other in their quest for improvement. Every member of the team must sign a copy of the Team Member Agreement, agreeing to contribute appropriately, provide emotional support for each other and take time to complete all given assignments. An assortment of fun and educational activities will keep the team occupied and learning as they bond over common issues (such as nervousness) and various learning activities.

In Your Neighborhood

This program is now available for purchase. Visit toastmasters.org/shop to read about it and order a copy for the teenagers in your school or after-school program. Coaches do not have to be Toastmasters to use the materials effectively. The *Coach's Guidebook* offers directions to make teaching this program fun and easy to implement as a means to reach educational goals.

Pete Frey, a teacher at Bolsa Grande High School, in Garden Grove, California, wrote, "The students loved the material, and I have never had students display the openly enthusiastic engagement in writing a speech that I saw then and there." Whether your teenagers need to write a speech or learn a complex math equation, this program can support multiple learning styles and help them find the success they deserve. 

Beth Black is an associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at bbblack@toastmasters.org.

Make 'Em Laugh

(Continued from page 27)

fun of the king, you can go to jail for 10 years, notes Nainan. He discovered that in Trinidad, police officers are present at comedy shows to make sure the performer doesn't swear on stage.

Having broad appeal to audiences is one reason Nainan avoids profanity and vulgarity. He follows advice that famous comedian Jerry Seinfeld told him early in his career: "You should work clean – you will work everywhere." Since then Nainan has performed on every continent except Antarctica; his recent tour took him to Singapore, Malaysia and India.

More Tips

Physical humor can help when there is a language barrier, provided that the gestures are commonly understood by all cultures. But review a

country's body language in advance so you don't innocently offend somebody, says Al-Issa. Consider the "thumbs up" sign: In America it means "great" or "good luck," but in Iran and Bangladesh it is an obscenity, equal to the American gesture of raising the middle finger.

Al-Issa, a consultant for oil company Saudi Aramco, encourages Toastmasters to read the advanced communication manual *Humorously Speaking*, which provides guidance on how humor should be incorporated into speeches gradually, and offers basic and essential tips for effective humor.

Nainan admits the club meetings are sometimes "a little bit dry" and they could be spiced up with tasteful humor. Deftly incorporating a few jokes into a speech can really engage the audience. "Humor is addicting," he says, "and the audience is waiting on edge for the next joke to come."

Nainan recommends dedicating a few minutes of every meeting to

humor, or designating a special monthly meeting to the subject.

Comedian Dan Nainan performs at the International Convention Opening Ceremonies, preceding keynote speaker Dave Logan, at 7 p.m., August 17. Mohammad Al-Issa will present an education session – "Quickly, Learn the Art of Communication" – from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m., Friday, August 19. The Convention takes place August 17-20 at Bally's Las Vegas in Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information, visit www.toastmasters.org/Members/convention.

For more information about Dan Nainan, visit comedian.dan.com. Mohammad Al-Issa can be reached at mohammad.issa@aramco.com.

Jennie Harris is a junior writer for the *Toastmaster* magazine. Reach her at jharris@toastmasters.org.

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