

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | OCTOBER 2015

TOASTMASTER®

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Achieving Results



What do leaders do?

They do many things, such as inspire, coach, support, delegate when appropriate and so on. In the broader sense, the most in-demand leaders consistently achieve results. In return, these leaders receive increasingly demanding assignments.

Not everybody is looking for demanding challenges, but it's nice to be in a position where they're made available because of one's past successes.

Sometimes in organizations, urgent work has to be done, so the best people are assigned to complete it. In these situations, little personal development takes place—it's just a matter of getting the work done, quickly. Conversely, sometimes organizations provide education and training for their employees; however, they do it without a clear view of how it fits with the employees' plan for personal development.

In the professional world, the most fulfilling personal development happens when people have challenging tasks and important work needs to be completed.

That's part of the brilliance of the Toastmasters leadership program: We tuck personal development into real work—for example, when a club works to become Distinguished.

Our organization's standard of achievement for clubs is to become Distinguished. If you are a club leader, I encourage you to inform your members of club goals and regularly provide them with status updates and progress reports, and recognize behaviors that will lead to club achievement. If you're not in a formal club leadership role, please ask your club's leaders how you can contribute to club achievement while you work on your personal development. For example, all members can help their clubs become Distinguished by recruiting new members or completing an education award.

Often it's difficult for us to recognize our own personal growth, but people around us notice it much more easily. In everyday life, Toastmasters display improved communication skills and interpersonal relations. We support team members and have the ability to contribute to team and organizational achievement.

If you'd like to read more on this topic, I recommend the article "Leadership That Gets Results" by Daniel Goleman, published in 2000 in the *Harvard Business Review*. You can find it online.

Toastmasters exists to serve you, the member. I'd like to see all members develop transferrable skills that will help you in your personal and professional life. I sincerely believe that while members achieve their personal goals within Toastmasters, they also develop the ability to help their clubs achieve results. **T**

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International President

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“I urge you to get a better understanding of yourself so that you can captivate your audience in a unique, yet effective, way!”

— Juliana Heng, ACB, ALB
KPMG KL Toastmasters club
Petaling Jaya, Selangor

Know Yourself

After reading “Fascinate Your Audience” by Dave Zielinski, featuring Sally Hogshead, in the July issue of *Toastmaster* magazine, I was truly fascinated by how we can fascinate our audience in our own unique ways. Hogshead’s tagline, “Don’t change who you are, become more of who you are,” is thought-provoking.

Instead of forcing yourself to adapt to a presentation style that you are not comfortable with, why not leverage what you already have? Getting to know yourself is essential in the journey of self-discovery. People will connect with you easier when you use your unique charm and enthusiasm in your presentations, because you are being true to yourself.

My friend says, “If you are a fish, be the best fish when you are swimming in the sea. Don’t ever think of climbing a tree.”

I urge you to get a better understanding of yourself so that you can captivate your audience in a unique, yet effective, way!

Juliana Heng, ACB, ALB
KPMG KL Toastmasters club
Petaling Jaya, Selangor

A Word, Please

Since we’re talking about the Word of the Day (“What’s the Word?” by Mitch Mirkin in July), here’s a tip: The best thing you can do is to concentrate on adjectives and adverbs. A greater vocabulary of adjectives and adverbs will give you a deeper knowledge of varieties and characteristics of words.

You will be more incisive, more perceptive and more lucid in your use of language. In short, you’ll be smarter.

As for nouns, nobody really cares what a *flywheel* or a *hasp* or a *finial* is. But knowing adjectives and adverbs will give you more precise and fine-grained descriptions. They will improve your speech immeasurably.

Alan Paprocki, CC
B-C-P Toastmasters
Cary, North Carolina

Mindful Praise

It’s wonderful to see an article like “Mindful Leadership” by Linda Allen (June). Let us hope that we can bring more of the same idea before Toastmasters audiences, both in written and in spoken form. It seems, at long last, Toastmasters are beginning to appreciate what the world has been working its way toward: the importance and significance of self-knowledge and self-understanding. It is an excellent article.

I’ve been involved with this sort of thing for the better part of 50 years. I taught a popular class for eight years called *Inner Quest: Our Search for Happiness, Body, Mind and Spirit* for a retiree organization in Australia. I’m endeavoring to continue with this sort of approach in Toastmasters.

Tom Ware, DTM
Dundas Club
Dundas Valley, New South Wales, Australia

Techie Growth

I strongly agree with what Carl Rentschler wrote in his article “Communication Challenges of a Techie” (July), regarding how technical people can benefit professionally from improved communication skills. I have been a techie in Silicon Valley for over 15 years, and I am making a change now: I joined a Toastmasters club in May and I am progressing through the *Competent Communication* manual. I plan to do one project per month.

Michelle Yu
Silicon Valley Entrepreneurs club
Santa Clara, California

Invitation for John Cadley

Shattered—that’s how I felt when I read John Cadley’s admission (“Toastmasters for President!” in July) that he was not a Toastmaster. Not a Toastmaster? I immediately took down his portrait from the wall of my Toastmasters Trophy Room and

re-hung one of my ex-husband. That’s how much the news affected me.

In fact, for his almost-unforgivable lapse in not joining Toastmasters, I think John should be punished. He should be made timer at a club on a permanent basis until he agrees to join. Bet that won’t take long!

But seriously, I think John should attend various Toastmasters club meetings on a “Celebrity Surprise” basis. He’d also be a great “Guest General Evaluator” because his article revealed he was an insightful observer of just what goes on at our meetings. He obviously enjoyed what he saw and his column, as usual, gave me some laugh-out-loud moments.

Oh, and John, if you ever want to come on Down Under and visit the best and friendliest Toastmasters club in Australia, I’ll need a little notice—just enough time to swap those portraits back again!

Vicki Johnson
Kawana Waters club
Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia

Honoring Loved Ones

When I joined Toastmasters in 1973, I knew the experience would enhance my life by helping me to become a better public speaker. It also helped me to keep closer contact with my sister, Past International Director Ginger Kane, and her Toastmaster husband, Max Kane.

When my sister died in October 2014, Max asked me to speak at the memorial service and I did. A mere six months later, Max died. His brother asked me to speak at the memorial service and I did.

Thanks to Toastmasters, I was prepared to speak in front of mostly strangers on the subject of life and death. Thanks to Toastmasters, I was able to select, organize and deliver material for appropriate eulogies. Toastmasters helped me with life and to cope with the deaths of loved ones.

John Mohr, DTM
Aerospace Orators Club
St. Louis, Missouri

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to letters@toastmasters.org. Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.

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Create a Quality Experience

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Use the *Moments of Truth* as a guide to enhance the club experience.

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ON THE COVER: Sara Safari, DTM, of the Irvine Lunchtime Toastmasters Club in Irvine, California, treks toward Mount Everest base camp.

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▶ MEMBER MOMENT

Where Business Meets Beauty



Charlene Rhinehart

Charlene Rhinehart is more than just a beauty queen.

The Chicago, Illinois, resident is a certified public accountant, a first vice president for the National Association of Black Accountants and, not least of all, a dedicated Toastmaster. Rhinehart, DTM, is club president of the Chicago Speakeasy Toastmasters. Her experience as a club and district leader,

and an Ambassador for the revitalized education program, has placed her in a unique position to learn how to transform obstacles into opportunities.

Crowned Ms. Corporate America 2015 in March, Rhinehart puts her Toastmasters skills to the test as she travels around the United States to conduct professional workshops, participate in national radio and TV broadcasts, attend seminars and speak to audiences about diversity in business.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

After becoming a CPA in 2010, I wanted to push myself even further with a unique personal development opportunity—pageantry! I was selected to compete in the Miss Illinois USA pageant in 2010 and my colleague recommended that I join Toastmasters to practice speaking extemporaneously.

What do you like about participating in pageants?

Pageants were a mystery to me before I witnessed the Miss Black and Gold pageants [sponsored by the black fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha] at my college, DePaul University in Chicago. I had never worn a swimsuit in public, didn't possess any unique talents to perform onstage and had no idea what mascara was.

I learned there is more to a pageant queen than what most people think. The women who compete are intellectually competent, poised, confident and altruistic. Toastmasters gave me the confidence to continue competing after I did not place in my first four pageants. For me, pageantry is not just about winning the crown. It is about learning how to embrace every part of you, be authentic in the most unrealistic situations and present yourself to the world.

What is the Ms. Corporate America pageant?

It is for women ages 21 to 55 who make a difference in their profession and in the community. It's a business pageant. Communication skills are imperative when representing women in business.

During the three-day pageant weekend [in Orlando, Florida], competition begins with a panel interview with six to nine judges who want to get to know you. Next is a media interview where all contestants answer questions on video. We each had a one-on-one interview with a celebrity judge before our onstage interview questions.

How did your Toastmasters experience help you with the interview sessions?

Pageant interviews required me to be quick on my feet, build a connection with the audience in a few seconds and articulate a compelling mission and desire to be Ms. Corporate America. Being able to speak passionately, with grace and poise, are traits I picked up in Toastmasters.

▶ IN BRIEF

TRANSLATED MATERIALS

Did you know that *Moments of Truth*, a club-quality evaluation tool, is available in eight languages? Other products are available in the following languages: Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish. To see what's available, search the resource library (www.toastmasters.org/Resource-Library) by language using the keyword field, or go to www.toastmasters.org/Shop.

ATTEND A DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Expand your Toastmasters experience at a district conference, where you can network with like-minded people, learn from district leaders and watch speech contests. For more information, including the conference date, visit your district's website or go to www.toastmasters.org/DistrictWebsites.

PLANNING A SPEECH CONTEST?

Make your event a success! Download the most up-to-date speech contest materials and ensure that contestants are eligible to compete by checking the *Speech Contest Rulebook*. Get free materials from the Toastmasters Online Store at www.toastmasters.org/DigitalSpeechContests.

HALL OF FAME

See monthly DTM awards at www.toastmasters.org/DTM and club anniversaries of 20 years or more at www.toastmasters.org/ClubAnniversaries. Both lists are updated regularly.

▶ SNAPSHOT

Meeting in the Nepal Mountains

Members of the Himalaya Toastmasters club in Kathmandu, Nepal, gather near the terraced farmland of the Kavrepalanchok District for their annual picnic event. Club President Ravi Shanker Bhatt, ACB, ALB (wearing a plaid shirt), poses with the Toastmaster magazine.



▶ ADVICE FROM MEMBERS

How to Win the Best Speaker Award

BY HAL SLATER, DTM, ACCREDITED SPEAKER
Voyagers Toastmasters Club
San Diego, California

For those of you who, like me, take competition seriously, here are five key elements to winning your club's Best Speaker award.

1 HEART. Honest self-disclosure is the most important element of any communication, especially public speaking. When you discuss the inner truths of an experience in a way that genuinely reflects something we all share, the audience will be touched. Just be careful not to overdo it, because you can make the audience feel uncomfortable.

2 HUMOR. The speaker who gets the most laughter from the audience is rarely far behind in the voting. I have seen people win Best Speaker because they kept the audience amused.

3 ORGANIZATION. The opening-body-conclusion format tells the audience: 1) what is coming and how to store the information it is about to hear; 2) the information they will want to remember; and 3) how they might make

use of it in the future. Without this structure, audience members waste time figuring out how the information relates to them.

4 VOICE. If your voice is relaxed, it will be easy for your audience to listen to and won't be a hindrance to your quest. The key to a resonant voice is your breathing. When you step onto the stage, breathe deeply and center yourself before you begin.

5 GESTURES. Movements that are congruent with your message will enhance the audience's understanding of your speech and keep them more engaged. The key to effective gesturing is to practice the principle advocated by the great martial arts teacher Miyamoto Musashi: "Do nothing which is of no use."



If you gesture aimlessly, it will be hard for any gesture to have meaning.

I hope these tips help you build a stack of ribbons that makes you proud and encourages you to keep participating in Toastmasters long after you achieve your Distinguished Toastmaster award.

The Facts Are In!

The past Toastmasters year (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2015) proved to be one of growth for the organization.

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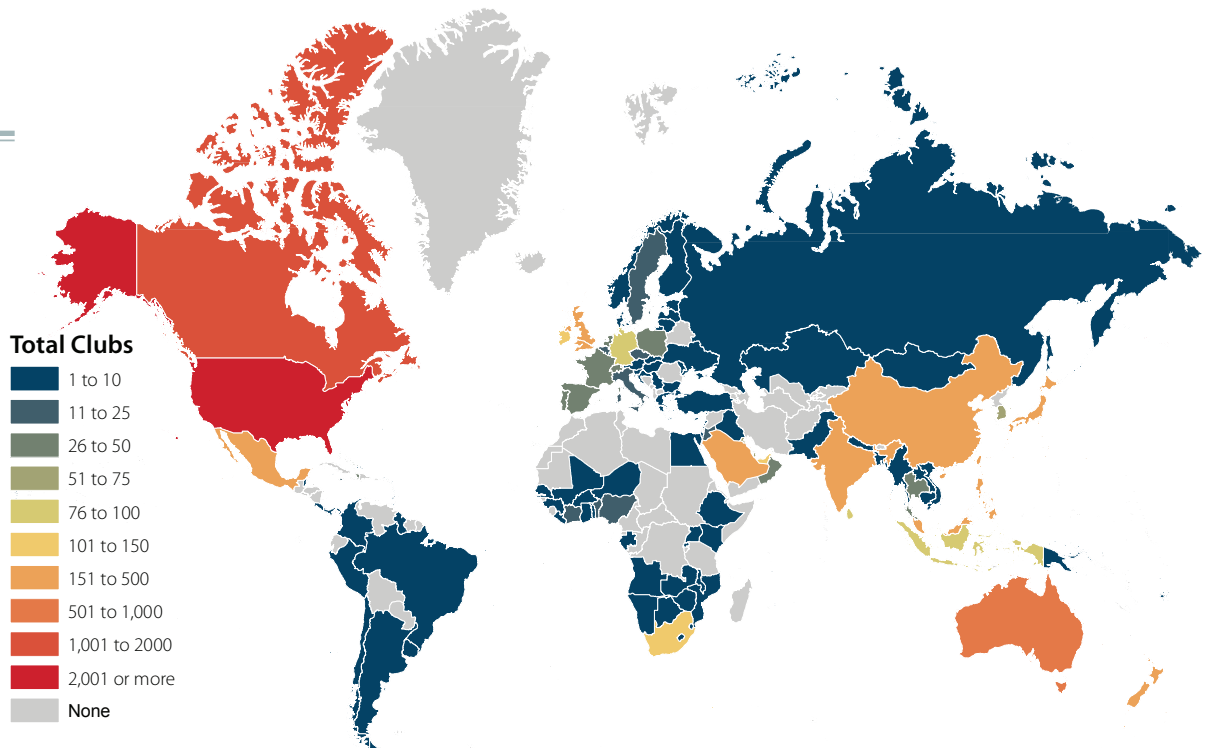
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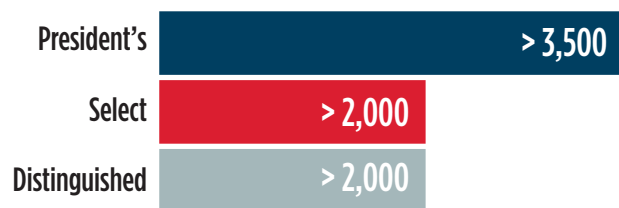
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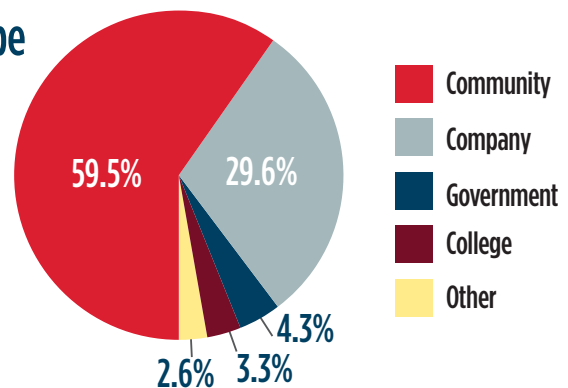
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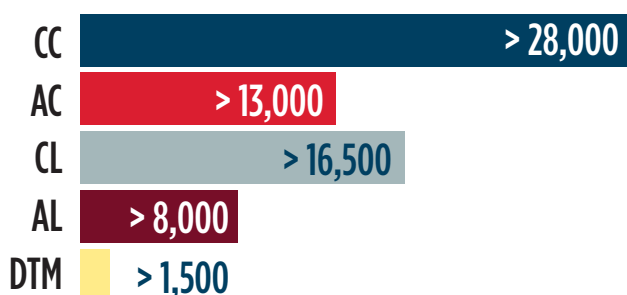


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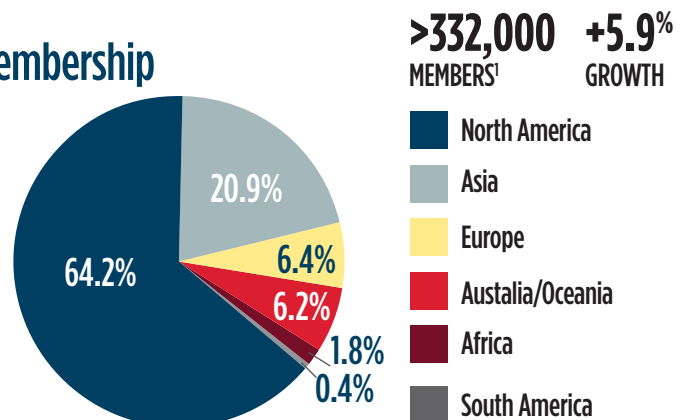


MEMBERS

Awards



Membership



¹ Total membership for October 2014 renewal period (includes dual memberships).

▶ MEET MY MENTOR

Vickie Olson, DTM

Rick Ranhotra, DTM, is a strategic planner in the marketing and sales department at Georgia Power Company in Atlanta, Georgia. Years ago his career coach recommended that he join Toastmasters to improve his ability to influence others—something that would be valuable in his job. In addition, his manager at work was a former Toastmaster. In 2003 Rick became a member of the Dunwoody club in Dunwoody, Georgia. Vickie Olson, DTM, mentored him from the start.

Through Vickie's leadership and her emphasis on regularly recognizing members' accomplishments, the club has a thriving mentorship program. Rick improved his speaking style to make more of an impact on his audience. He advanced in the Toastmasters program, and Vickie advised him on club roles and his High Performance Leadership project, and recommended him for district leadership. Rick went on to become area governor.

Recently, Vickie was recognized as Toastmaster of the Year by the club.

What makes Vickie a good role model?

Vickie is a lifelong learner and giver. Always humble, she constantly strives for self-improvement and exhibits a can-do attitude. She sets the bar high in her speeches but would not claim to be perfect. Most recently, she earned a master's degree after many years had passed since she completed an undergraduate degree.

What is her mentoring style?

Vickie has a passion for helping others, and has a sincere desire to see members become better speakers and better people. She astutely determines the level of feedback members can absorb, and is kind in her choice of words. Be it formal evaluations or one-on-one advice, she is not judgmental. With Vickie's influence, club members are motivated to take on leadership roles and create an inviting club culture.



FROM LEFT: Rick Ranhotra and Vickie Olson

What is the best advice she has ever given you?

To be accepting of others, not just in the club but in life. To praise those around you as they grow and give honest evaluations tempered with kindness.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you or other Toastmasters? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

▶ WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

What are the benefits of visiting other clubs?

“ Having visitors is useful because they bring a different perspective to the club, as well as new ideas. Our district led a club ambassador program last year and members earned pins for visiting other clubs.”


Robyn M. Featherston, DTM
Gulfport Toastmasters ▶ Gulfport, Florida

“ I love having members of other clubs visit mine, because the energy level always seems boosted. It is a good way for the visitor to meet other Toastmasters and to learn what other clubs do that may work well in his or her home club. It also provides the visitor a good opportunity to speak in front of a different group of people and to speak just a little outside of their comfort zone.”

Marjane Monahan, CC, ALB
Leadership Toastmasters club ▶ Tallahassee, Florida

“ Visiting other clubs has been a great experience for me, and I share how members can interact with members of other clubs. It has also been a great experience for the clubs in my area. A visiting member can offer a different perspective when sharing things their club does differently. I have seen some very successful clubs collaborate with 'sister' clubs to promote further education, since most clubs do not have speaking champions to guide them.”

Joanne Smith, DTM
Toast of the Town club ▶ Calgary, Alberta, Canada

 Members contributed to the discussion on the LinkedIn Official Toastmasters International Members Group.

TRAVELING TOASTMASTER



1 | DEE JEAN ONG, FROM KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, poses next to the Golden Mermaid statue at Samila Beach, Songkhla, Thailand.

2 | From left: WEE LEE YAP, FROM JOHOR BAHRU, MALAYSIA, AND HER FRIEND PLAI I canoe near Sibul Island in Malaysia.

3 | ELLY HARD, DTM, FROM SPRING, TEXAS, travels on a Turkish gulet yacht in the Aegean Sea, off Turkey's Turquoise Coast.

4 | MURYADI OEY, ACB, CL, FROM ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, stands before the Tangkuban Perahu volcanic crater in West Java, Indonesia.



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PICTURE YOURSELF HERE! Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine—print or tablet edition—during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions. Bon voyage!

Speech Contest

The two words that changed my life.

BY BRIDGET MAGEE, CC, CL

Speech contest! If you are anything like me, these two words strike terror in your heart. I had been a Toastmaster for a year and a half when I was first asked to participate in a club speech contest. At that point, I was barely warming to the idea of giving a speech in my club.

When I joined Toastmasters I was in the *My-heart-is-beating-out-of-my-chest-I'm-going-to-die* stage. After a few speeches I moved to the *My-breakfast-is-going-to-reappear* stage. When I was asked to compete, I was at the *My-head-is-spinning-so-fast-I-may-faint* stage. I wasn't ready for a speech contest. Or was I?

I asked myself, *Bridget, why did you join Toastmasters?* I quickly ticked off the answers: One, I wanted to overcome being terrified of public speaking. Two, I wanted



Bridget Magee

Sure, I was terrified, but I also had (dare I say it?) fun. Wait, what? How can something terrifying be fun? I thought about this. Riding rollercoasters was terrifying, and fun. Driving on the freeway for the first time was terrifying, and fun. Raising children was terrifying, and fun. And now I can say competing in a Toastmasters speech contest was terrifying, and fun.

An aspect of a speech contest that still gives me pause is that I will be judged, compared and ranked. This is different than delivering a speech in my club, where I am gently critiqued, which allows my warm, safe cocoon to remain intact. The cold, hard reality of a speech contest is that it has only one winner.

If there is only one winner, doesn't that mean all the other contestants are losers?

Wait a second, Bridget, this thinking doesn't support your goals. I quickly recognized that the outcome of a speech contest has little to do with me as a speaker. Once I delivered the best speech I was capable of, it was out of my hands. Sure, I was the one being judged. I was the one being compared. I was the one being ranked. But the judges are the ones who have to do those things, not me. This realization was liberating. So I focused on what I could control. *Heart, don't beat out of my chest so I don't die.* Check! *Stomach, keep my breakfast where it belongs.* Check! *Head, keep the spinning to a minimum so I don't faint.* Check! With my new mindset I literally "won" every contest I entered regardless of who took home the trophy.

There is no question that competing in a speech contest is hard, but hard things are important. Marriage is hard, and important. Exercise is hard, and important. Not eating a whole pan of brownies in one sitting is hard, and important. Each one of us can do hard things. Each one of us can do terrifying things while still having fun. When you contemplate participating in a speech contest, ask yourself WWBD? (What Would Bridget Do?) The answer will be, Go for it—every time! It will change your life. **■**

BRIDGET MAGEE, CC, CL, is a writer, poet, speaker, teacher and mom. She is a member of two clubs in Tucson, Arizona. Read more of her writing at www.bridgetmagee.com.

There is no question that competing in a speech contest is hard, but hard things are important.

to grow both as a speaker and as a person. Three, I wanted to challenge myself. A heartbeat or two or three later I realized speech contests are the perfect venue to accomplish all of my goals!

After competing in my first contest I understood that delivering a contest speech was the same as giving a speech at a club meeting, but with some very beneficial differences. I had to follow the same guidelines for structuring my speech and staying within the time limit, but the energy in the room during a speech contest was different. The warm, safe cocoon of my weekly meetings, attended by 10 to 15 members, was lovely, but a speech contest attracts more people.

The air during the contest was electrifying and I became exhilarated. The large crowd created an intensity that sparked growth not only in my speaking skills, but also in my anxiety-management skills. And speaking in front of an audience larger than 15 people had real-life applications too.



Mohammed Murad, Toastmasters' 2014–2015 International President, emceed the 2013 World Championship of Public Speaking. A good emcee makes speakers feel comfortable and the audience feel included.

When You Are the Emcee

12 steps to achieving excellence onstage.

BY GILDA BONANNO, CTM

When you are the master of ceremonies (also known as an emcee) of an event, your role is crucial to the success of the program, whether it's for your company, a professional association or a nonprofit organization. A bad emcee can ruin an event while an excellent one creates a seamless and engaging experience in which speakers feel comfortable and the audience feels included from start to finish.

Your energy, confidence and sincerity should match the spirit of the event.

From my experience as both an emcee and a professional speaker, these 12 tactics can help you shine.

1 **Be clear about your role.**

An emcee can play many roles, ranging from reading a few speaker introductions to writing remarks for all speakers. Each occasion has its own unique requirements and challenges, so confirm your role with the meeting organizer and be clear about your responsibilities and the organizer's expectations.

2 **Prepare speakers thoroughly.**

If your job is to prepare speakers, find out everything you can about the event well in advance—several months before, if possible, and again several weeks before, if necessary. Tell the speakers the theme, the audience size and background, and the expectations about the content and time limits of their remarks. It's also important for speakers to know the logistics, including the stage setup, microphone options and dress code. Keep speakers informed of any changes that may occur. If possible, request a copy of the speakers' remarks or outlines a few days before the event. Reference their remarks in your own comments and review the amount of time each one plans to speak.

3 **Opening remarks set the tone.**

The emcee is usually the first person who speaks at an event. Your energy, confidence and sincerity should match the spirit of the event. It should set the tone for the occasion. This is not the time for "ums" and "ahs," ad-libbing jokes or discovering problems with the sound system. Print your remarks or outline in a font size you can easily read, and make sure your words are relevant to the theme and the host company or organization.

4 **Don't "wing" introductions.**

An introduction should be short, relevant and prepared in advance rather than made up on the spot. Sometimes speakers send their own introductions; other times you create the introductions using material from the person's bio. Each one should only be a few sentences long. Write out an introduction for each speaker and read each one in a confident and engaging manner. Don't try to ad-lib or make an off-the-cuff joke during an introduction—it can prove disastrous. For more on this topic, see my blog post "Please Do Read the Speaker's Introduction Word for Word" at gildabonanno.blogspot.com.

5 **Names matter.**

Names are important to people. Just ask John Travolta, who flubbed Idina Menzel's name at the 2014 Academy Awards ceremony (he called her "Adele Dazeem") and was still being lampooned for it at the 2015 Oscars. Well in advance of the event, find out each speaker's name—including whether they use a middle initial or a hyphenated surname—and learn the correct pronunciation. Write it out phonetically and practice it out loud so you can say it with ease and demonstrate your respect for the person.

6 **Titles matter.**

It's important to use the appropriate titles for dignitaries and elected officials, and to follow protocol for the order in which such people should be introduced. Unless you're an expert in these matters, find someone who is. Search your network for a protocol expert or business writing professional who is familiar with proper salutations and titles.

7 **Staying on time matters.**

I once emceed a breakfast for the Women's Business Development Council. Nine speakers, three panelists, one moderator and I participated within a 90-minute time frame for an audience of 700 people. The program was to be followed by a networking event, so people needed to leave the breakfast on time to get to the networking program on time and get back to work on time. That kind of timing precision does not happen without planning and organization.

Prepare, practice and time each section you are responsible for. And while you cannot control how long other people speak (unless you are writing their remarks), you can emphasize in your early speaker preparation the importance of staying within the time limit. Build in extra time and know ahead of time what material you can cut or condense if you start late or something goes over time.

I kept my minute-by-minute schedule on the lectern and made sure I could see my watch easily to compare the actual time to the planned time. We started less than five minutes late and ended on time without feeling rushed.

8 **Do an on-site rehearsal.**

An on-site rehearsal before the event is crucial to the smooth running of the live event. The night before one of the events I emceed, I went to the hotel conference center and

practiced my remarks onstage. I did a sound and light check and found that the lights were so bright that I could not read my remarks. I asked the lighting technicians to dim them enough so I could see clearly, yet not so much that the stage was dark. Had I not rehearsed on-site, I would have been blinded by the lights during my opening remarks in front of a live audience.

9 **Don't introduce strangers.**

It's helpful to meet the people you are introducing before the day of the event. If that's not possible, seek them out on the day of the event, prior to showtime, and introduce yourself. Putting a face to a name will help both of you feel more comfortable, and you will sound more sincere in your introduction. You can also confirm name pronunciations one final time and determine where the people are sitting so you know where to look for them.

10 **Manage the stage.**

Many years ago at Toastmasters, I learned a crucial lesson: "Never leave the stage empty." If you introduce someone, wait for them to get onstage before you step to the side. (If the stage is small, or the person you're introducing is going to be making lengthy remarks, step offstage once the person gets onstage.) If appropriate to the event, start clapping when you introduce the person and don't stop until you shake hands with them or greet them onstage.

11 **Be prepared for the unexpected.**

As an emcee, you have to stay in control, even if the unexpected happens. Prepare for how you will respond if the fire alarm sounds, or a speaker forgets her notes or a technology glitch occurs. I once saw a CEO get completely flustered onstage when a video he introduced didn't play. He fumed and fussed, but he didn't know what to do or who to ask for help.

12 **Make sure to follow up.**

After the event, ask for feedback from the meeting organizer, other speakers and audience members, and review the video, if there is one. Ask what worked well and what could work better next time. I usually ask a colleague in the audience to time each segment so I can compare the actual timing against the original plan. Ask for the colleague's timing notes.

The information you gather can help you prepare for the next event you emcee. Be sure to follow up and thank all the speakers and everyone who helped make the event a success.

The next time you emcee an event, keep these 12 tactics in mind. With a little work and some careful preparation, you can create a positive experience for the company or organization, the speakers and the audience members. **T**

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The Climb

Determined DTM reaches new heights in Nepal.

BY SHANNON DEWEY

At the first sign of motion, Sara Safari scrambled up the last 3 feet of the fifth ladder and clipped her harness to the closest anchor, just as a huge chunk of ice raced past her left side.

Back and forth the world's highest mountain shook, delivering unwelcome snow and debris. She covered her face, dug her spikes into the ice and gripped the rope as hard as she could. Her only thought was to stay alive.

On that morning of April 25, 2015, Safari woke early, put on her climbing gear and mentally prepared for an eight-hour conditioning climb up the Khumbu Icefall—the riskiest part of Mount Everest. But half-way up the icefall, her quest to summit Mount Everest ended.

The Nepal earthquake hit with a magnitude of 7.8, killing nearly 10,000 people and injuring more than 20,000. The earthquake triggered an avalanche on Mount Everest, making it the deadliest day in history on the mountain.

Building Confidence

Safari, 33, began preparing to climb the mountain two years ago. She believes she is the first Distinguished Toastmaster to attempt the climb. The skills she has learned in Toastmasters the past five years played a vital role in her life in the months leading up to the climb.

Born in Iran, Safari moved to the United States 13 years ago. She studied electrical engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and after graduating, began working as a system engineer at Raytheon, where she first learned of Toastmasters.

After switching jobs, she found Irvine Lunchtime Toastmasters, in Irvine, California, and after six months she participated in a speech contest.



Sara Safari on the Khumbu Icefall on Mount Everest.

“Before I joined Toastmasters, I shook when I spoke, I couldn’t make eye contact and I could not think of words,” says Safari. “Participating in that speech contest was the best thing I could have done to learn skills in public speaking. I got so comfortable talking in front of people that I stopped working as an engineer and started teaching instead.”

While growing up in Iran, Safari spoke Farsi (Persian), but she also studied English in school. When she moved to the U.S. as a young adult, she knew enough words to speak the language, but she struggled with listening. She stayed quiet, trying to learn how to connect with others. Joining Toastmasters brought her out of her shell.

“At first I was so scared of trying something new, but by being a member I have learned to better connect with people,” she says.

Finding a Purpose

While teaching electrical engineering at California State University, Fullerton, Safari met psychology professor Jeffrey Kottler, who founded the organization “Empower Nepali Girls” 15 years ago. The foundation’s goal is to help at-risk Nepali girls access education to promote opportunity, equality and hope.

“When I heard about those girls, I wanted to do something right away,” says Safari. “I knew this needed awareness and

funds, and that more people should know what's going on in that part of the world."

While many people feel passionate about a cause and may send monetary donations, Safari wanted to do something bigger. About 29,000 feet (8,848 meters) bigger. She decided to raise money by climbing Everest.

"I took a course called Landmark and it really inspired me. The teacher challenged us to come up with a project that was so big and beyond ourselves, we couldn't imagine doing it. Since I wasn't a mountain climber, I thought if I climbed Everest it would bring a lot of attention to the girls," says Safari. "People asked me, *'Are you crazy? You want to risk your life for people you don't even know?'*"

I was never taught what to do when you're in an earthquake and avalanche while on the edge of a mountain."

— Sara Safari, DTM

Having never climbed a mountain, Safari had a lot to learn. Her first lesson began in the Cascades in Washington state in May 2013. For the next two years she climbed increasingly challenging mountains in Ecuador, Argentina and finally Mount Cho Oyu in Tibet, a 26,906-foot (8,201-meter) mountain.

"As I was climbing mountains, I was also visiting the girls in Nepal. Seeing their improvement kept me going," says Safari. "While raising funds, I was learning so much about myself. I learned that I impose limits on myself all the time—when in fact there are no limits.

"The same thing goes with Toastmasters. At first my capacity was talking in front of six people. Then, three months before my trip to Mount Everest, I was visiting schools and talking to crowds of 100 to 200."

Climbing for a Cause

To summit Mount Everest takes about 60 days of climbing and acclimatization exercises, and Safari was almost one month in when the earthquake hit. Before she started, she had already raised \$29,000 for the Nepali girls—\$1 for every foot of the mountain she expected to climb—thanks

to friends, family and fellow Toastmasters. Despite the unexpected end to her journey, Safari feels good about the 200 girls she's helping to send to school next year.

During her visits to Nepal, Safari learned about the girls and their families. Some were from remote villages and very shy. They often did not make eye contact.

She also learned that the girls typically live with their families in a 50-square-foot shack. Often, they have only tattered clothing and ragged sandals to wear, even in the cold winter.

"They are the most humble, kind and happy people," says Safari. "They're really trying to learn English in school and communicate with those of us supporting the foundation. They are resilient girls and

deserve more opportunities. I want to start a Toastmasters club for them, or start with a Speechcraft. It would be amazing."

Safari often found strength in her passion for her cause. She pushed herself to do something she thought impossible, and learned important life lessons along the way.

"Even though it seems like I'm helping others, I'm actually helping myself," she says. "I have pushed myself, expanded my abilities and then brought these discoveries back to share with other Toastmasters."

The Aftermath

On April 3, Safari had begun her journey up Everest with six climbers from various countries whom she had just met. She spent 10 days trekking to Everest base camp, and another two weeks acclimatizing with training climbs through the Khumbu Icefall. She fought through the cold, hunger, sickness and whatever else the mountain demanded of her.

Six hours into the climb up the icefall, she reached a 30-foot wall where she was met with five stacked ladders. With only the challenge of scaling these ladders on her mind, she wasn't prepared for what Mother Nature had in store.

"I did self-rescue training so many times for practice," Safari says. "I was never taught what to do when you're in an earthquake and avalanche while on the edge of a mountain."

After three long minutes, the shaking ceased and Safari and her fellow climbers looked around the now somber mountainside. A sense of mourning enveloped Safari as she waited for two nights to be rescued, dreading what she would see down the mountain. Back at base camp, she saw crashed tents, climbers' passports, broken cameras and scattered food—and was told the dismal news about climbers who had died there.


After an additional four nights, a helicopter took the climbers to a village called Lukla, and from there they flew to Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, where Safari immediately visited the girls she supports through Empower Nepali Girls. There was no food, water, blankets or even lights, but the people of Nepal stayed hopeful.

The day-to-day struggle Safari felt on the mountain helped put things in perspective when she got back to her home in California.

"On the mountain I had to keep myself going each morning, even when I thought I didn't have any more to give," she says. "With high elevation we lost our appetite, and we were eating the same food every day. Everything that I learned in the mountains—through hardship and extreme environment—I bring to my life and to my club, inspiring members to give 100 percent in all situations and to never give up."

Safari says her journey is far from over.

"I feel so honored and privileged to volunteer for the Empower Nepali Girls foundation, and I want to continue helping. I think the most important thing in life is to be able to inspire other people to reach their dreams—that is the purpose in *my* life."

You can follow Sara's journey at www.facebook.com/climbingeverest2015. To find out more about the Empower Nepali Girls foundation, visit www.EmpowerNepaliGirls.org 

SHANNON DEWEY is the editorial coordinator for the Toastmaster magazine.

Create a Quality Experience

How to help your club, and its members, thrive.

BY MELANIE KLINGHOFFER, CC, ALB, AND MARY NESFIELD

What do you say when someone asks you why you attend Toastmasters meetings? Most likely a few things immediately come to mind, like the public speaking practice that helps you advance in your career, the encouragement you get from fellow members and the camaraderie you experience during each meeting. It's the *quality* of the club that keeps you in Toastmasters.

The *Moments of Truth* is your club's guide to delivering quality service and outstanding member experiences. It's available in multiple languages for free as a download in the Toastmasters Online Store. As part of The Successful Club Series, the guide states: *A high-quality club encourages and celebrates member achievement, provides a supportive and fun environment and offers a professionally organized meeting with variety. In those clubs, officers are trained in all aspects of club quality to ensure that members have access to a formal mentoring program, are provided evaluations that help them grow and are motivated to achieve their goals.*

Members of four clubs—ARBOR Toastmasters in Arlington, Texas; Voorhees club in Voorhees, New Jersey; Toastmasters Club of Fishers in Fishers, Indiana; and the Toastmasters of La Jolla club in San Diego, California—were asked what they value most about their clubs. To better understand the underlying elements that influence club quality, consider the six critical points as outlined in the *Moments of Truth*, and how four clubs leverage them to keep members engaged.

1 First Impressions

New members breathe new life into a club. The most important thing you can do to recruit new members is create a good first impression. Visitors are drawn to clubs that generate excitement and enthusiasm. When the room is infused with energy, people are excited about being there, and that's what keeps members coming back.

- Make the meeting room easy to find and visually appealing
- Greet guests warmly with a guest packet and name tag
- Introduce them to club officers and others
- Invite them to sign a guest book, roster or log

When the meeting comes to order, build the energy in the room! Energy is lifted when members know the meeting will be fun, friendly and a safe place to practice building confidence.

Veronica Sites, CC, CL, a chaplain, a Ziglar Legacy Certified Trainer and a public speaker from Crowley, Texas, says she initially visited two clubs and decided to join the ARBOR club in Arlington, Texas, because "it showed enthusiasm and support."





Clockwise, from upper left are Gil Michelini (gray shirt), a finalist in this year's World Championship of Public Speaking, with fellow club members of the Toastmasters Club of Fishers; Jan Peterson, Best Evaluator, with Pamela Evangelista of the ARBOR club; members of the Toastmasters of La Jolla club; Matthew Goldberg, 2013 division-level speech contest winner, with fellow Voorhees club member Rhonda L. Young; award-winning members of the ARBOR club; and 2015 District 5 semifinalist Prabhu Kandasamy (white shirt) with Anthony Pascale, Table Topics winner, both of the LaJolla club.

How do you raise the enthusiasm in a club meeting room? Try clapping! When members are recognized in this way when speaking or meeting a goal, others will be encouraged to participate. Include guests by offering them the opportunity to address the club. Treat potential members like they are already valued members. Follow up with everyone by email to keep the communication going, and don't forget to invite visitors to join.

2 Membership Orientation

Congratulations! Your club has a new member. It's time for a formal introduction. The New Member Orientation Kit for Clubs has materials to orient and induct new members. Welcome ribbons and membership pins are a great way to underscore the value of club membership. Make sure to:

- Explain the education and recognition programs
- Involve the member in all aspects of club activities immediately
- Assign every new member a mentor
- Assess new members' needs and assign them a speaking role
- Direct the new member to www.toastmasters.org

Strong mentoring provides clubs with a vital boost. "Mentoring has great benefits for the new member, the mentor and for the club as a whole," says Past Area Governor Matthew Goldberg, DTM, a member of the Voorhees club in Voorhees, New Jersey. "It improves the quality of meetings, helps retain members, and intangibly and noticeably contributes to a warm, supportive atmosphere."

Sites says when she joined the ARBOR club, it was only a couple of weeks before she had a mentor. And it's because of a mentor's suggestion that Sites became an award-winning chaplain.

"Toastmasters has helped me to become a more polished speaker and a better evaluator—not only of others but of myself," she says. "I also believe that my listening skills have increased tremendously, and that is priceless for a chaplain."

The support she gets at her club helps her speak on topics including goal achievement, self-image, building winning relationships, bully prevention and overcoming tragedy. She has traveled to Bolivia, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria and many states in the U.S. to deliver her messages.

Goldberg, a writer, speaker and coach, recalls one particular member who thrived under the guidance of a mentor. Goldberg had competed against him in a Humorous Speech Contest. “He was compelling, quite witty and did a great job; he appeared to be a natural.” What Goldberg later learned is that this member had a strong, caring mentor who took him under his wing and encouraged him to attend meetings when he wasn’t so self-confident. “Seeing him at the lectern now,” Goldberg says, “it’s hard to believe that was the case.”

Now that same member is a mentor himself, helping other individuals and clubs thrive.

“Clubs should be open in a variety of ways: to new members, different points of view and innovative approaches that make meetings fresh and vibrant.”

— Matthew Goldberg, DTM

To ensure that new members have a good club experience, it’s important to create “a mentoring mindset where it’s expected that new members will be assigned a mentor shortly after joining, and then mentor others as they get up to speed,” Goldberg says.

The Club Mentor Program Kit has materials to help your club start a mentoring program. As part of the Successful Club Series, the Toastmasters *Mentoring* module offers tips for training members to become mentors.

3 Fellowship, Variety and Communication

Goldberg says the most important component of club quality is open-mindedness. He says clubs should be open in a variety of ways: to new members, different points of view and innovative approaches that make meetings fresh and vibrant.

“Toastmasters provides a lot of great resources for clubs to use and also add to. That same open attitude facilitates member growth,” he says. “Members learn and

grow when they are open to new experiences, new ideas, and to being inspired as well as providing inspiration.”

Strong bonds are forged within a club when members share a range of experiences. Members of the Toastmasters of La Jolla club are tightly connected through social events, themed meetings and achieving success together. The bonding started when a few members gave speeches that were highly personal.

When speeches reveal personal information that resonates with the audience, connections are built that help lay the foundation for acceptance and belonging, as well as for forging strong friendships.

Members who speak authentically and reveal vulnerability motivate, inspire and excite guests and other members.

La Jolla club members enjoy Halloween costume meetings, improv workshops, line-dancing socials and pot-lucks. They make Table Topics fun, like the time they practiced around a bonfire at the beach.

Think of ways you can add fun into the mix. The words of our founder, Ralph C. Smedley, ring true to this day: “We learn in moments of enjoyment.” It’s important to focus on education, and to help members meet their goals, but be adventurous—there’s room to explore new ways of learning while having fun in a supportive environment.

4 Program Planning and Meeting Organization

Everyone wins when meetings are organized and skillfully conducted. Club officers show respect for members’ time when meetings start and end on schedule.

Goldberg says, “Accountability leads to learning, growth and success in various

ways. Staying on schedule with respect to meeting agendas allows more members to participate. It also helps members stay on target with reaching their own goals.” Smart planning makes it happen.

Sites, of the ARBOR club in Texas, says, “It makes growth possible for each person within the club, ranging from beginners to professional speakers.”

In your club, ensure that members know their responsibilities and are prepared to follow through with their assigned roles. Distribute sign-up sheets to keep everyone on track. Help members plan by publicizing programs and agendas in advance, or send all-member emails announcing the next meeting theme, and a complete list of filled roles and speaking spots. Include open roles and speaker spots to encourage volunteers.

To ensure that members with all levels of experience get the chance to participate, the La Jolla club schedules a novice, an intermediate and an advanced member to deliver manual speeches at each meeting.

If your role is evaluator, offer praise along with constructive criticism to help others grow. Past District Governor Walter A. Wolfe, DTM, a member of the Toastmasters Club of Fishers in Fishers, Indiana, says, “A club with a strong evaluation program is a club that is successful in its growth and membership retention.” He says the evaluation process is “the most productive learning tool our members can use to reach a desired level of competency within Toastmasters. The feedback received launches each of us on a journey of speaking and communication we never thought possible.”

5 Membership Strength

Maintaining a minimum of 20 or more members ensures a better learning environment, as it gives the club enough members to provide leadership and fill meeting and committee assignments.

For the last three program years, the Toastmasters of La Jolla club set and achieved its membership goals. The club attributes its success to ramping up the club’s public relations efforts with “open

houses” and community-related events. During the renewals period, members received email reminders six weeks before the deadline. Two weeks before the renewals deadline, the club president sent emails to those who had not yet renewed, asking how they felt about the club and what could be done to turn their experience around. In March, the club had achieved an 84 percent renewal rate, with 48 out of 57 members paying on time.

Goldberg believes that 20 or more active, motivated members is a good starting point. “My club fluctuates between 30 and 40 members,” he says, “and the more who participate enthusiastically at meet-

goals. Offer support and encouragement, and point out members’ progress as they achieve their goals. This is why evaluations and awards are such an important part of the Toastmasters program. Goldberg says, “There have to be many challenging opportunities for members to learn and grow, and all of us value being recognized in some way for our efforts.”

If your club doesn’t maintain and display a member progress chart, make it a goal to do so. You’ll find the Toastmasters Wall Chart helpful in showing members’ progress.

Make it your club’s priority to always acknowledge and applaud member and club accomplishments. Remember to

Clubs that embrace and follow the *Moments of Truth* achieve their goals. Set, evaluate and review goals to stay on track. The Distinguished Club Program will help you with planning and recognition.

In addition to recognizing members’ goals, remember to reward yourself and all club members when your club becomes Distinguished. Make it a celebration! Cheer, clap and make it exciting.

“You can have everything you want in life if you help other people get what they want,” says Sites. **T**

See page 26 for more on club quality.

“A club with a strong evaluation program is a club that is successful in its growth and membership retention.”

— Walter A. Wolfe, DTM

ings, the more effective and dynamic the learning environment.”

Recognize those who sponsor new members and work toward member retention by keeping the club experience lively and varied.

6 Achievement Recognition

A common trait among successful clubs is that their officers tune in to the members’ goals, help them achieve those goals and celebrate their successes formally. Club officers and mentors at the La Jolla club not only help members build their communication and leadership skills, but also help them leverage their skills to achieve success outside the club.

For example, the club celebrated when past Vice President Membership Josh Rutherford’s first book was published. Rutherford, CC, the current club president, practiced reading from his book before his club, and when a local art gallery hosted his first reading, many of Rutherford’s fellow club members went to support him.

Meeting with each member or distributing a Member Interest Survey will help you, as a club officer or mentor, gain an understanding of members’

submit award applications immediately to World Headquarters. Members of Toastmasters of La Jolla say they feel special when they receive emails from the club president acknowledging their successes as well as their contributions. Continue to spread the word of success through social media and press releases.

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DID YOU KNOW? *Moments of Truth* is available in eight languages in the Toastmasters Resources Library at www.toastmasters.org.



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Speaking Up in Tough Situations

How to find your voice without feeding conflict.

BY JESSE SCINTO, M.S., ACB, ALB

Toastmaster Geeta has problems at work. As digital project manager for a well-known fitness brand, she's put a great deal of effort into developing an online app, of which she's very proud. But she keeps butting heads with Steve, the marketing director, in meetings.

"He shows up, even when he's not invited," says Geeta (not her real name, though this example is loosely based on a real situation). "He even tries to take credit for my work in front of the CEO."

Email exchanges with Steve devolve into territorial disputes over who's responsible for what. It's gone on for months, and Geeta considers asking her boss for a new assignment, just to avoid Steve. There has to be a better way. But what?

Conflicts are a normal part of life. In work, family and politics, disagreements arise. How we resolve these conflicts can have a significant impact on our happiness and self-fulfillment. Communication, of course, is the key. But conflict resolution takes more than just a willingness to talk. It requires us to **regain** perspective, **reframe** our contributions and **rehearse** our approach.

When I find myself in tough situations, I often turn to the Harvard Negotiation Project's classic book *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. I recently spoke with co-author Douglas Stone by phone. "You don't have to be Martin Luther King or John F. Kennedy to be good at difficult

conversations," says Stone. He instead cites authenticity, listening and clarity of purpose as critical skills.

Regain Perspective

In conflict, it's easy to fall prey to all-or-nothing thinking. We assume that if we're right, the other person must be wrong. We blame and make blanket statements (*You always leave the dishes in the sink*). Exasperated, we resort to extreme forms of communication.

One of those extremes is escalation, in which we try to impose our will using sarcasm, shouting, appeals to authority, alliance building and similar techniques. The problem with escalation is that it rarely gets us what we want. We may temporarily argue someone into submission, but they'll resent us for it. Escalation damages relationships.

The other extreme is avoidance, doing nothing but hoping for the best. We choose avoidance when we fear the consequences of speaking up. *What if saying something makes matters worse? What if it hurts our relationship or makes me look stupid?* The risks seem to outweigh the benefits.

But there's a cost to avoidance. When we're silent, we let others think we agree with them even if we don't. We empower those willing to speak, allowing them to lure sympathetic listeners who never hear our alternative viewpoint. We also deprive speakers of the opportunity to make things right. They may not know how strongly we feel or how their behavior affects us unless we put it in words.



"In the short term the consequences [of speaking up] may be uncomfortable," says co-author Stone. "But in the longer term, the consequences of not having the conversation may be more uncomfortable."

Both escalation and avoidance prevent us from seeing avenues for compromise and understanding. *Difficult Conversations* says we can regain perspective on conflict with a "learning conversation," in which we look for common ground and try to understand the other person's point of view.

In the situation with Geeta, a good first step for her would be to invite Steve to a learning conversation.

One of the easiest mistakes to make in a conflict situation is to assume we know the other person's intentions. There's no way of knowing for certain unless they tell us, and even *they* may be confused about the "why" of their actions. Instead, focus on the impact you've experienced, using "I" statements to describe your feelings and observations (just like in a good evaluation).



Here's an example to show how this approach applies to Toastmasters:

Ever since Toastmaster Antonio became vice president membership for his club, he's received unwanted advice from former club president Ruth. (These aren't their real names, but the example is rooted in a real situation.) She claims to be helping. "Antonio is new and doesn't know our traditions," she says. But Antonio disagrees, and he's asked the current club president to intervene.

Meanwhile, Ruth feels like every time she speaks, Antonio rolls his eyes and shakes his head. She, too, has spoken to the current president. What could they do differently?

This is ripe for a learning conversation that separates intentions from impact. For instance, Antonio might say, "I don't know if it's your intention, but when you send me emails about club tradition, it feels like you're stepping on my toes. I'd like more space. Can we talk about it?"

If Ruth initiates, she could say, "When I see you roll your eyes, I feel disrespected.

I don't know if that's your intention or even if you know you're doing it. But I'm hoping we can talk."

Reframe Your Part

It's easy to recognize someone else's problematic behavior but much harder to see our own. To resolve conflict, we must be willing to examine our own contributions to a conflict. According to *Difficult Conversations*, every conflict takes place on three levels: facts, feelings and identity.

Facts have to do with the observable actions that give rise to a conflict—in other words, what happened or what was said. This may be in dispute. Feelings are the emotional reactions: anger, frustration, sadness or humiliation. Even when we try to conceal feelings, they become evident to others through body language.

The third and deepest level has to do with self-identity. *Am I a good or bad person? Am I lovable or not lovable? Am I competent or incompetent? What will others think of me if I say something now?*

Feelings and identity issues make conflict hard to talk about. But self-awareness helps us see what's important and prevents others from knocking us off balance.

Rehearse Your Message

It's easy to get flustered in difficult conversations. But rehearsal can help us maintain composure and choose words that represent our thoughts and feelings accurately. "Before you practice," says Stone, "you want to think about what's at the heart of this conversation for you. Then practice ways to say it or even write down good words to use."

Also try to anticipate what the other person might say and how you will respond. Write out a plan: "If Mike continues to make comments about my weight at work, I will say ..." This is what's known as implementation planning.

Although rehearsal is useful, we don't always know how the conversation will go. "You have to remind yourself it's not a presentation, it's a conversation. A big part of what you're doing is listening," says Stone. Be generous in how you listen to someone else, and speak from the heart.

Realistic Expectations

In the end, you must have realistic expectations about what you can achieve in a conversation about a conflict. Your goal may be to get the other person to change, but you can't control how the person will respond. What you *can* control is sharing what's important to you.

"I think often the thing that really sticks with us isn't the thing the other person did," says Stone. "It's the thing that we didn't do or didn't say on behalf of ourselves." ■

JESSE SCINTO, M.S., ACB, ALB, is a member of Greenspeakers Club in New York, New York. He writes for magazines and is a lecturer in Columbia University's Strategic Communications programs, where he teaches public speaking and persuasion.

TWO PATHS TO **SPEECH CONTESTS**

Whether you're onstage or behind the scenes, your role is vital.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

Twice a year, Toastmasters districts around the globe conduct speech contests. In the weeks leading up to the contests, you'll hear two familiar questions: "Who will compete?" and "Who will volunteer to help out?" Thousands of Toastmasters answer, "I will!" What's *your* answer?

If you want to explore a unique experience outside of your club's ordinary setting, why not participate in a contest? Be a contestant. Be a volunteer. Better yet, be both! (Although, not simultaneously.) Maybe you're thinking, *No way! I'll volunteer, but I won't compete.* Or maybe you love competing, and you think you can't be a volunteer. I challenge you to rethink your position. I did.

Competing or volunteering adds a rich dimension to the membership experience. Contests are a vibrant part of the Toastmasters world; they create a dynamic subculture of camaraderie across the globe. Just say "speech contest" and you conjure up a plethora of stories, ideas, memories and opinions.

Prior to joining Toastmasters in 1997, I was an engineering manager at NASA in Cleveland, Ohio. As part of my job I gave frequent presentations. One day, after delivering a speech that I thought was terrific, my boss said, "Maureen, you are a really bad speaker." Looking back, I realized he was right. I *was* bad.

A Turning Point

Fast-forward to August 15, 2009. I'm standing on the stage at the World Championship of Public Speaking in Connecticut, speaking to about 2,000 people. A lot had changed. I went from being a really bad speaker to one of ten finalists competing in the Toastmasters championship. How did this happen? It's because I dove deep into the Toastmasters program, with a special emphasis on contests.

I entered my first contest about six weeks after joining Toastmasters. It was a Table Topics Contest and I didn't know what I was doing. Apparently, neither did the judges because I won. (I jest. I value the judges' discernment, but I was shocked that I did so well as a new member.)





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2015

CONTESTS



Being part of a contest volunteer team may intimidate new members. To feel more comfortable, read the Speech Contest Rulebook and ask experienced members for guidance. Pictured are Susan Zhou, DTM, PDG, and Alex Ginete, DTM, PDG.

I was bitten by the contest bug. I entered every contest I could. Humorous Speech, International Speech, Evaluation and Table Topics. (There is also the Tall Tales Contest and the Taped Speech Contest—the latter for members of undistricted clubs and clubs in provisional districts.) Along the way, I honed

Surveying Members

My contest experiences mirror that of many other members. To explore what others thought of speech contests, I conducted a survey—albeit an unscientific one—on the Facebook Official Toastmasters International Members Group, a group of more than

“Through contests, I built valuable relationships outside my clubs. I have a greater understanding of the power of Toastmasters.”

— Stephanie Hooper, DTM

my skills, had some tumultuous ups and downs and made a boatload of friends. After the 2009 championship, I began volunteering to help out at speech contests because, as a finalist, I had seen a magnificent and inspiring side of Toastmasters, and filling various contest roles gave me a chance to give back.

Roles at speech contests include the contest chair, judges, timers and counters. Many Toastmasters say serving in a contest role is highly rewarding. Stephanie Hooper, DTM, of Burlington Better Speakers in Washington state, has served as a contest volunteer in almost every role, from club to district level. She says, “Through contests, I built valuable relationships outside my clubs. I have a greater understanding of the power of Toastmasters.”

11,700 members. I asked members about their experiences as contestants or volunteers, as well as the challenges, fears and benefits they experienced. Hundreds of members responded—with passion and enthusiasm.

The results were revealing. The responses showed that most contestants have served as volunteers at some point during their membership; in contrast, many volunteers have never competed. Volunteerism was highest at club-level contests. No surprise there. With more than 15,000 clubs around the world, plenty of opportunities are available.

Volunteerism coincides with the length of membership. Newer members volunteer at club and area contests, often in roles such as counter or timer, leaving the more

complex roles for seasoned members. Yet every job is significant to the success of every contest. No matter how long you’ve been in Toastmasters, there’s a role for you to fill.

Challenges

When I asked members about the challenges, fears and benefits of being a contestant or volunteer, I received a chorus of nearly identical answers. By far, the most common challenge for *contestants* was maintaining confidence and controlling nerves. Be encouraged! Even professional speakers (including me) battle nerves and stage fright. It helps to know that the audience is on your side and wants you to succeed.

Joyce Preston, DTM, of Goldmine Toastmasters in Concord, North Carolina, says, “My greatest challenge was instilling confidence in myself that I could win. My club members believed in me more than I believed in myself.”

Other challenges members reported included choosing and developing a topic that entertained and appealed to the audience, finding the time to write and practice, being new in Toastmasters, being in front of an unfamiliar or much larger audience, being too focused on winning, staying within time, disagreeing with judges’ decisions and being a perfectionist. Do any of these resonate with you?

Contest *volunteers* indicated two main challenges. The most common is having enough qualified volunteers to fill all of the roles. In many cases, backups are needed. Mary Lynn Rideout, ACS, ALB, of MidTown Toastmasters in Toronto, says, “My biggest challenge was, as chief judge, replacing volunteers who cancelled at the last minute.”

When you volunteer for a contest, the contest officials and contestants are counting on you. Take your commitment seriously, for the benefit of all involved. Your absence leaves a huge hole.

The second biggest difficulty identified by volunteers is summarized by Alicia Curtis, ACG, ALB, from EY Toastmasters in Sydney, Australia. She says, “My biggest challenge was not knowing the role.” New or inexperienced members often find being part of the volunteer team intimidating. Knowing what is expected as a volunteer in a specific role is crucial. What can you do?

Read the *Speech Contest Rulebook* available on the Toastmasters website, ask for clarification and don't be afraid to admit you need guidance. If you are a contest chair or chief judge, be meticulous with your briefings, even if you think everyone knows the procedures.

Fears

What's the most common fear? For *contestants* it's forgetting a speech. It's a terrible feeling mentally grasping for that forgotten word, with the whole audience staring at you.

When I was in the finals, despite practicing my speech hundreds of times, memorizing every word, and being more prepared than I ever imagined, I still forgot the name "Dale Carnegie." It evaporated from my brain. I panicked onstage. But one thing I've learned in Toastmasters is that failing is *almost* fun. Where else can you fail, fall flat on your face, and receive applause as you leave the stage? Members will reach out to you with a helping hand of encouragement. I'd rather fail in Toastmasters than anywhere else! It's safe.

For *volunteers*, the most common fear is messing up, especially when it can affect the outcome of the contest. What if you hit the wrong light, or miscount the ballots? Understandably, you want to do a good job. Being conscientious about it is the first step. Relax and do your best.

Judges say their biggest fear is remaining impartial and fair, and choosing the best winner, especially when all speeches are terrific. Ruskyle Howser, ACS, ALB, of the Tokyo Toastmasters club in Japan, expresses the fear well: "Judging a speech contest is like being asked which is more delicious: chocolate fudge, fresh strawberries or garlic bread," he says.

Benefits

With all these fears and challenges, why would anyone be part of a contest? For the benefits! They outweigh the anxieties. Ask almost anyone who has competed or volunteered if it was worth it, and they will say "Yes!" The top benefits of competing are personal growth and confidence, as indicated by participants in the survey.

Norm Cook, DTM, of the Cypress Communicators club in Anaheim, California, responded, "My progress, caused



Competing in speech contests helps members gain confidence, grow as speakers and meet members from other clubs. Pictured are Aditya Maheswaran, the second-place winner of the 2015 World Championship of Public Speaking, and International President-Elect Mike Storkey.

by the focus and concentration during the contest season, is equal to doing many manual speeches over several months. Contests are why I have stayed in Toastmasters for over 30 years."

For *volunteers*, the most common benefit, almost to the exclusion of anything else, was networking and meeting new people. I am convinced that you will enjoy your journey when others join you in your journey. Toastmasters is a people organization. Meeting and mingling with others, making new friends, building great memories—those are the gold nuggets of our organization.

Namirah Bhamla, ACG, ALB, of Omantel Toastmasters in Muscat, Oman, echoes this. She joined Toastmasters to overcome shyness, and contest participation helped. She says, "Speaking, meeting and greeting new people, which I used to dread, gave me the opportunity to make many friends from around the globe with whom I'm still in touch"

For people who choose to be both contestant and volunteer on different occasions, the two experiences dovetail beautifully, creating a greater appreciation of both situations. Gary Maholm, ACG, ACB, of the Evansville Number One club in Evansville, Indiana, reflects on his experience. "Learning the process as a volunteer

helped me understand how to be a better contestant," he says. "Serving as a judge gave me insight into what it takes to win a contest. After being a contest chair, I was much more at ease as a contestant. My anxiety was reduced and I could focus on my presentation."

Contests can be stressful, but they are richly rewarding. Whether you are a club contestant, semifinal volunteer, new member or three-time DTM, your membership experience will be enhanced. You will create a wonderful set of memories that will sharpen your communication and leadership skills both inside and outside of Toastmasters.

So, the next time you hear the questions "Who's competing?" and "Who's volunteering?" raise your hand and say "I am!" You won't regret it. ■

MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM, is a former NASA propulsion engineer. Today she's a professional speaker, author and presentation skills coach, as well as founder of High Altitude Strategies, a coaching and speaking service. She belongs to the Medina Club in Medina, Ohio. Visit her website at www.MaureenZ.com.

The Psychology of Human Needs

What I learned as club president.

BY MELANIE KLINGHOFFER, CC, ALB

Toastmasters of La Jolla, a club in San Diego, California, is a fun, friendly, safe place to practice speaking and leading. Its supportive, encouraging environment is designed to help members achieve personal growth and reach their highest potential. Last July, club leaders executed a strategy that allowed the club to go from surviving to thriving! Membership tripled from 18 to 57 members, 84 percent of members renewed, and the club achieved multiple member and club awards—including President's Distinguished recognition.

As the club's president, I discovered a connection between building a quality club and humanist-based psychologist

Our goal in Toastmasters is to deliver a quality environment for members to build confidence in communication and attain leadership skills.

Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation. Maslow presents his theory as a hierarchy of needs. It starts with deficiency (basic) needs that must be satisfied first (e.g., physiological, safety, social, esteem), before someone can move on to the next level. Once a need is met, the need stops operating as a motivator and the next higher level of unsatisfied need becomes the motivator. This progression continues until a person rises to the highest level and becomes motivated to fulfill his or her growth needs (self-actualization).

Maslow's Theory

Our goal in Toastmasters is to deliver a quality environment for members to build confidence in communication and attain leadership skills. How does Maslow's theory impact club quality, leadership performance and member development?

1 Basic Needs

It starts at the most basic physiological level when meetings attract guests as a result of comfortable accommodations,

ample seating and parking, bright lighting, minimal noise distractions, refreshment breaks, temperature control and convenient access to restrooms. Guests search for clubs that meet these basic needs, and once these needs are satisfied, the next need—safety—becomes the motivator.

2 Safety Needs

Safety within Toastmasters is a conversion and retention need. Guests are motivated to join, and members stay to practice speeches in clubs that are supportive, encouraging and psychologically safe places. The goal at this level is to be free of fear. However, fear is triggered, not

eliminated, when a club environment is negative and speech evaluations are critical to the degree that they are emotionally harmful. In this environment, guests will not join and members will not renew.

To satisfy the safety need, members should be authentic and open to fostering a connection with others. Feedback should follow the structure of relaying positive comments first, potential areas of improvement second, and positive comments last. Once safety needs are satisfied, members are motivated to move on to having their social needs met.

3 Social Needs

Social needs are related to interpersonal interaction. These needs are met when members work together as a team, forge friendships, and are inclusive of all members and guests to generate a feeling of acceptance, belonging and community. This is accomplished through fun meetings with themes that help members get to know each other, social events that establish camaraderie and speeches that

not only allow others to learn more about the speaker but also invite bonding, which is cultivated through vulnerability. Getting involved at other levels within the Toastmasters organization also fills social needs. Once social needs are met, members are motivated to satisfy their esteem needs.

4 Esteem Needs

The need for esteem is related to the degree of importance a person feels. It is tied to internal motivators such as self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment and self-respect as well as to external motivators such as status, recognition and appreciation. Toastmasters' education program allows members to achieve awards which satisfy esteem needs, as do holding officer roles. Esteem needs can also be satisfied through the celebration of success. My club celebrates with cake when members win awards. Leaders send emails to acknowledge member achievements. Members deliver high-energy verbal recognition (Woo-hoo's!) during meetings upon speech completion and club milestones.

5 Self-Actualization

After satisfying all of a person's basic needs, the final need is one of growth—self-actualization. At this level, people reach their full human potential. This need is never fully satisfied because psychologically we all continue to have opportunities for growth.

Through Toastmasters, members can satisfy self-actualization needs by creating more value for themselves when training and mentoring others, striving for higher-level leadership positions, and helping develop success strategies and programs for the club through the international level.

Motivating guests and members by filling their needs drives their behavior. They join, renew, achieve awards and maintain a high level of participation within the club and organization. Are you satisfying your members' needs? If not, elevate your leadership by applying these motivation tools within your club—starting now! ■

3 Ways to Shake Off Writer's Block

How to ignore the intimidation of a blank slate.

BY KATHLEEN FORDYCE

You've agreed to give a speech either at work, at a social occasion or at your club meeting. Now comes the hard part—getting started.

As a professional writer, I often have people come to me for help with writing. Despite their great ideas and depth of knowledge, they feel unable to start.

Anton Vanterpool, DTM, of Alexandria, Virginia, is an information technology specialist with the United States Army. A Toastmaster for more than 25 years, he struggles with writer's block.

“Get something down on that paper. Get those fingers moving on that keyboard. Good is better than nothing.”

— Joan Detz, author of *How to Write & Give a Speech*

“For me, it's having a lot of ideas that I want to put out there but I can only put out three or so at most,” he says.

Tamara Guirado, a writing teacher and coach in New Orleans, Louisiana, believes that starting is usually the hardest part of any creative endeavor. “The blank page is intimidating because our writing monster (i.e., the ego) steps in and tells us a bunch of false stories about our abilities, our worth and our ideas,” she says. “The monster is so loud that we can't hear our creative voice. The fact is, we have a fire hose full of creative force at all times; we just aren't always aware of it because this giant monster is stepping on the hose.”

The next time you get stuck when trying to write a speech, consider these tips:

1 Start with a list.

At this point, don't worry about crafting the perfect opening, and don't stress over transitions or get overwhelmed by details. Simply start by listing your ideas. Don't censor yourself.

Joan Detz, a speaking coach and author of *How to Write & Give a Speech*, agrees. “Get something down on that paper,” she says. “Get those fingers moving on that keyboard. Good is better than nothing.”

Toyinda Wilson-Long, a new Toastmaster in West Lafayette, Indiana, thinks of it in terms of a brain dump. “Even if I just start by writing words down, I go back and try to think from there,” she says.

2 Imagine you are talking to your best friend.

It is tempting when preparing your speech to include big words or jargon to try to sound smart when speaking in front of a group. But this often leads to a bulky, flat and memorized speech that ultimately is less engaging and more difficult to deliver.

Instead, during the brainstorming process, imagine you will be delivering your speech to a group of friends. This helps you get your creative juices flowing (because who struggles when sharing ideas with close friends?), and helps you develop your own authentic voice. The end result will be a more compelling, relatable and conversational speech.

Still stuck? Call a friend and talk about the main messages you hope to convey in your speech, and take notes.

3 Brainstorm for 10 minutes.

Don't spend hours stressing over a speech. I find it more productive to work in short, timed spurts because it forces me to focus. Write out your ideas. Once you have them on paper, it becomes easier to see themes and organize your speech. After 10 minutes, see what you have. If you

are still struggling, take a break and come back to it later.

“If I find that if I am not feeling the flow, I go do something else for a while,” says Laura Hepler, ACB, ALB, from Washington state. “Sometimes you just need to clear your head.”

Detz, the speaking coach and author, points out one difference between a professional and a non-professional speechwriter: The professional starts no matter what. “We do not expect it to be perfect when we type those initial words or sentences,” she says. “We will perfect it during the process but we know that we cannot just sit there.”

Now, start writing. ■

KATHLEEN FORDYCE is a freelance writer in New York. Follow her on Twitter @KathleenFordyce or visit www.LiveLaughWrite.com.

GET INSPIRED

Still struggling with writing your speech? Author and speech coach Joan Detz offers these quick, timed exercises to get your creative juices flowing:

- Search for quotations that are related to the key words in your speech. (5–10 minutes)
- Look up synonyms for your key words in a thesaurus. (2 minutes)
- Email a close friend and ask for their uncensored thoughts on your topic. Use them as a sounding board. (2 minutes)
- Go to the nearest window and look at the farthest point, where the sky meets the horizon. “It's very calming; it's very tranquil and can often just free up your mind,” says Detz.



Try the Triangle

Shape your speeches with this structuring technique.

BY FELICITY BARBER

When I was 17, I went along to “parents evening” at my secondary school. It was my first year of A-level exams, which is a crucial year in the U.K.: Your A-level results determine where you go to university.

I sat down in the classroom with my parents, across the desk from Mr. Rodgers who taught A-level politics, one of my favorite subjects. When my mom asked him how I was doing, he replied, “Well, one thing’s for sure, she can’t write. But we’ll get her through her A-levels.”

I was devastated. I couldn’t look at my dad. He’s an antiquarian bookseller. He spends all day reading old books and writing about them. My parents’ house is like a library: Books fill every nook and cranny. In their minds, if I couldn’t write it was

because I wasn’t reading enough. And if I wasn’t reading enough I must have been born into the wrong household.

Stunned, I didn’t have the courage to ask Mr. Rodgers what the problem was with my writing. But a few days later I did turn to my history teacher. She was a little less intimidating. She had good news and bad news. The bad news was that my writing had one glaring problem: It had no structure. The good news: It was entirely fixable.

My teacher spent an hour with me explaining how to structure an essay, and the result was a marked improvement in my writing. I aced my final exams, earned a place at the university of my choice, and embarked on a career in political communications.

A Start in Speechwriting

I wrote policies, briefings, press releases and blog posts, but I’d always been fascinated by speeches. So when Lloyd’s of London, the renowned insurance group, offered me a job as a speechwriter, I was overjoyed.

I started out using the same structure that had served me so well for essays. Toastmasters members are familiar with the formula: opening, three points, close. It works, but when you’re writing a speech every week, it can get a little boring. In search of new structures, I turned to my work mentor for advice.

Together we came up with innovative techniques for linking ideas together. My favorite structure draws on the shape of a triangle, and it works really well for Toastmasters speeches—particularly for

persuasive speaking. Use a diagram of a triangle when you plan your speech. Start your speech from the pointy bit at the top and work your way down and out toward the base.

Beginning

For a stellar opening, choose one story or killer fact that illustrates the point you're trying to make. You want to pick something micro that centers on an individual or one aspect of a problem. It will grab the attention of the audience and build a connection with them.

Middle

When you move to the middle of your triangle, outline the problem you're trying to solve and how you plan to go about it. This is your chance to convince the audience why the issue you're tackling is important. It's critical that in this part of the speech you outline a logical case, built on strong evidence.

End

Finally, you move to the base of your triangle. This is where you explain how the issue relates to the audience and what they can do to tackle it.

How It Works in Practice

Let's pretend I'm the founder of a Silicon Valley start-up company that's designing a new piece of security hardware to protect people's homes. I'm giving a speech to a group of wealthy investors to convince them to give my business oodles of money.

I could start with the challenge of home security and how many homes are broken into every year. Or I could start with a demonstration of my product and how it works.

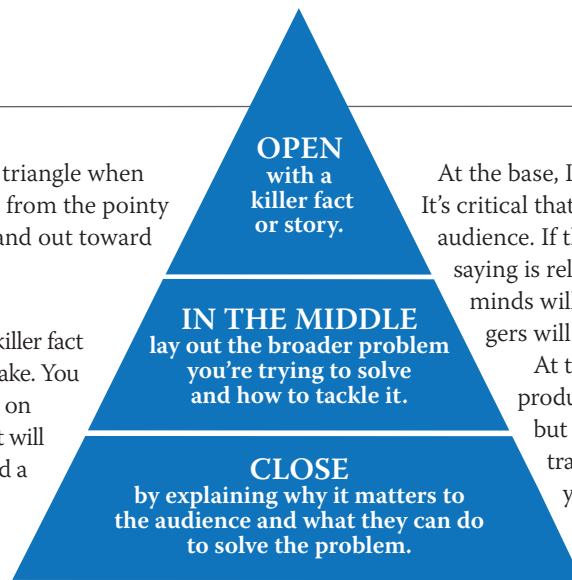
But I don't. I start with a story about one family, my family, who were the victims of a burglary last year. I talk about the shock of coming home to find out we'd been burglarized. I talk about the psychological impact of knowing someone had entered our private space. I talk about the heartbreak that comes from losing things of sentimental value, like the watch belonging to a grandparent or some jewelry given as a gift by a dear friend. I describe how this experience was the inspiration for my start-up.

So that's the tip of the triangle—the story that the audience can all relate to. By creating an emotional connection you earn their engagement.

Then I move to the middle of the triangle: the problem I'm trying to solve, which is the fact that between 2012 and 2013 there was a 20 percent increase in property crime in San Francisco. I talk about how a few simple security measures can drastically reduce this statistic. I talk about all the things I've experimented with as the founder of this start-up. I explain why the solution I'm presenting today is the most effective for reducing the risk of burglary.

I demonstrate how the product works and I describe how well people are responding to it. I outline how I would use any investment to grow my business.

In the middle of the triangle I have clearly explained the problem and the solution.



At the base, I explain how this relates to the audience. It's critical that you relate your speech back to the audience. If the audience doesn't feel that what you're saying is relevant to them, their eyes will glaze, their minds will turn to what's for supper, and their fingers will start to fumble for their smartphones.

At the base, I explain how by investing in this product, you'll not only garner a huge return but you'll be part of an innovation that will transform home security. I explain how you'll help solve a problem that affects thousands of families just like your own. I explain how you'll be part of a solution that will help you better protect your own home and precious things.

By the time I get to the base of the triangle everyone in the room feels that investing in this product is about much more than financial gain. It's about helping people protect their assets and safeguarding families from the heartbreak that comes from losing things of great sentimental value.

Why It Works

The triangle structure is great because it hooks people in, forces you to evidence your argument and creates a clear space for you to make your speech relevant to the audience. Learning to use structure effectively has transformed the impact of my ideas, my writing and my speeches.

And the best thing about the triangle is that it's not just confined to speeches, presentations and pitches—it also works really well for written work. Try using this technique for your next proposal, article or blog post. You'll be impressed with the results! **T**

FELICITY H. BARBER is a member of the Rhino Business Toastmasters club in San Francisco. She is a speechwriter, executive communications specialist and coach, and the CEO and founder of Thoughtful Speech (thoughtfulspeech.com).

BEYOND THE TRIANGLE

Don't Forget

The most critical element of any speech, presentation or pitch is a strong central message. You want to be crystal clear about what that is during your preparation. It will help you stay on track all the way through to editing and delivery. If you're clear about what you have to say, it will be clear to the audience too.

The Circular Speech

If you're struggling with the ending, try coming back to the beginning. Re-read the start of your speech: Did you begin with a story or a fact? If so, why? What was the takeaway or the lesson for the audience? Try making a reference to that initial story. It will give your speech a sense of completion, which is satisfying for the audience.

For the example I used in the accompanying article, I might return to my original story (about being burglarized) and explain that while I'll always regret I was a victim of crime, I'm grateful because it inspired my product and business idea.



My Memoirs

A courageous self-portrait in which the author looks at his life with brutal honesty.

BY JOHN CADLEY

Have you noticed? It's the Age of the Memoir. Nobody creates plots and characters anymore. They just remember stuff and write it down. All you need is a rotten childhood and a literary agent.

I have neither, but I'd still like to get in on the action. Memoirs sell big time. People get rich spilling the family secrets. (The only secret in my family is that my Aunt Betty briefly joined the Communist Party because, in her words, "Everybody loves a party." When she found out it wasn't that kind of party, she quit.)

So ... how do I start? At the beginning, I guess.

Every memoir mentions parents. Apparently, they have a big influence on their children. Who knew?

I was born in a hospital and my parents took me home and I grew up and went to school. I graduated and got a job and got married and had children and now they're grown up and I'm retired and I spend my time reading, gardening, eating, sleeping and taking my medications.

Wait a minute—that's my whole life. People aren't going to buy a one-paragraph memoir. Maybe I need to add a few details. Let me start again.

I was born in a hospital in Brooklyn, which is in New York City, which some people think is the same as New York state but it's not, OK? My parents took me home, which at that time was an apartment in Brooklyn Heights, which is also in Brooklyn, which is one of the five boroughs of New York City. I grew up like most kids. First I was 1, then I was 2, then I turned 3, etc. When I was 4 we moved to Long Island, so named because it's long and it's an island (only you don't need a boat to get there—we took the Midtown Tunnel).

Wow, that's twice the words of my first draft and I haven't even graduated from high school yet. You can really flesh things out by adding important details like those. Let's see ... what else? Parents. Every memoir mentions parents. Apparently, they have a big influence on their children. Who knew?

My father was an accountant. He worked hard and never embezzled anything, as far as I know. My mother was a teacher and was never accused of having an affair with her male students, probably because they were all in the third grade. My parents didn't get drunk, although one time (after his second whiskey sour) my father called Richard Nixon a name that was a curse word then but which today you hear on network television. They stayed married for 54 years and nobody went crazy.

That's the truth—but it's not very dramatic. Memoirs need drama. Nobody wants to read a boring memoir. It's like eating shrimp with no cocktail sauce. Let me think ...

I was in the Boy Scouts and I didn't get my Coin Collecting Merit Badge because I misspelled "numismatic." It scarred me for life. To this day I never keep spare change in my pocket.

What else?

Speaking of the Boy Scouts, we went camping in New York's Catskill Mountains and I went on a hike with my patrol, and the Scoutmaster said there were bears in the woods so we were in danger the whole time (risking our lives with every step, you might say) but we didn't see any bears and nobody got attacked. But they could have.

A memoir also has to have an IGTWM (I'm Glad That Wasn't Me) factor. Those memoirs are the ones people like best, where they read a page and go, *Are you kidding me?! That's awful!* I don't have anything that's really awful, but ...

After my senior prom we all went out for hamburgers and when the bill came I didn't have enough money and I had to ask my date for 75 cents. Awkward? Embarrassing? Yeah, you would NOT have wanted to be me.

I can't think of anything else. I'm sure there's more but I can't remember it. Whoops! That's not a good thing for a memoirist to say. Let me rephrase: I can't remember anything as exciting as the stuff I've already told you, and a memoir, like a life, should never be boring.

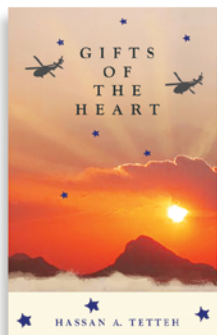
You weren't bored, were you? **T**

JOHN CADLEY, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.

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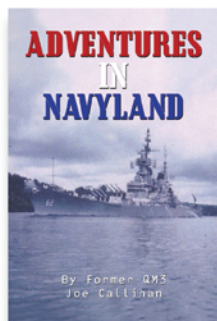
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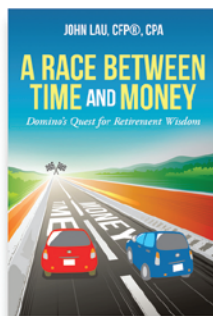
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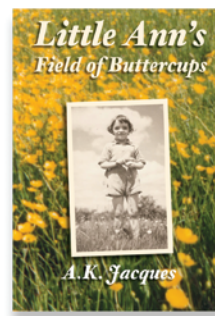
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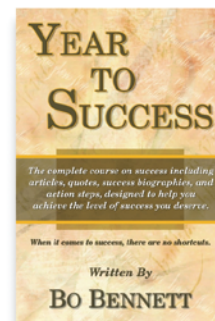
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