

TOASTMASTER[®]



**OPEN
HOUSE**

Stir up

Excitement

**with an Open
House Meeting**

**How to Grow from
Your Toastmasters
Evaluations**

The Value of Setting Standards



As I look back over the past few months and review the commitments in the Toastmaster's Promise, I am reminded of the value of setting standards. Many of us joined our first club primarily motivated by becoming part of a worthwhile organization and the promise of personal growth. Whether we joined to gain confidence, become a better speaker or leader, or to enjoy social interactions with fellow members, in order to gain what we wanted out of our membership, we needed to adhere to the standard of respecting each other individually and collectively.

The Toastmasters strategic plan calls for excellence, participation and engagement of our members, and this aligns with the 10th commitment in the Toastmaster's Promise: "To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities." It is the overarching foundation of our organization. Without it, the preceding commitments have little or no relevance.

Whether we joined to gain confidence, become a better speaker or leader, or enjoy social interactions with fellow members, we needed to respect each other individually and collectively.

To assist us in keeping these 10 commitments, Toastmasters International has four core values: Integrity, Respect, Service and Excellence—the standards by which every member should be recognized. Members are expected to demonstrate these values in their club, home, career and community. These core values, together with the Toastmaster's Promise, are the blueprints for a successful club. If your club is ailing, suffering from low membership or interpersonal conflicts, I advise you to review each commitment together with the core values to determine how you and your club measure up to these standards.

I often say that Toastmasters is not here to make better Toastmasters, but better people—people who take the skills and the lessons they learn in their club and apply them to their family lives, business endeavors and community. I encourage you to live by the commitments in your Toastmaster's Promise and by the Toastmasters core values and enjoy the benefits. And always "Remember the Member."

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

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“Congratulations to Rachel and to all the Global Messengers who participate and excel in Toastmasters.”

— **Edda R. Bevilacqua, ACB**
Santa Maria Toastmasters,
Santa Maria, California

Impressive Accomplishments

I was inspired by Paul Sterman's two articles [in the March issue] about the Global Messengers, participants in the Special Olympics who are also active Toastmasters. I watched the reality show *Born This Way* and admired the accomplishments of the seven young people with Down syndrome—particularly Rachel Osterbach. Congratulations to Rachel and to all the Global Messengers who excel in Toastmasters! With the love and support of their parents and mentors in Toastmasters, great things can happen.

Edda R. Bevilacqua, ACB
Santa Maria Toastmasters
Santa Maria, California

Technology Overload

The “Snackification of Communication” article [February] by Lisa B. Marshall intrigued me. I was overwhelmed reading the cons of this trend toward briefer, more casual interactions. Yes, there are pros as well, such as the reduction of time it takes to communicate by texting, for example.

Technology has allowed us to connect with our digital devices and now we feel lost without them. Communication channels have increased; however, the quality and content of communication has decreased to a great extent. Most of us

have the ability to speak. This is the way we convey our feelings, and we should speak to the best of our ability. We need to disconnect from our gadgets and reconnect with ourselves in order to discover our treasure trove of hidden talents.

Thank you, Toastmasters, for giving us the opportunity to speak during our meetings and network with our friends and colleagues, and for acting as a catalyst in bringing about the desired changes in our lives.

Shalini Menezes, ACS, ALB
Emirates Group Toastmasters
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Loving Love Stories

I really enjoyed Mary Nesfield's Toastmasters love stories in “When Chance Meetings Take on New Meanings” [February]. It was a reminder of how fortunate I was to meet my future wife through Toastmasters!

For more than 27 years, I never had a girlfriend and I was starting to think I would be single for the rest of my life. My grandfather introduced me to Toastmasters in high school in Taiwan. I took an eight-year hiatus from my club due to school and working in the United States. When I came back to Taiwan, this time it was my dad who invited me to visit clubs around Taipei. It was there, at Formosa Toastmasters, that I met one of the most passionate members in Taiwan: Gordon Brooks. It was through him that I met my future wife, Isa.

Isa stumbled upon Toastmasters during an interview. The interviewer suggested that she could improve her English by joining a club. She went to the wrong location and asked someone there about Toastmasters. The person she asked belonged to another club—the Formosa club.

As my friend Gordon says, at Toastmasters you can meet the right person, at the right place and the right time.

Steven Chen, ACB, CL
Prestige Toastmasters
Taipei, Taiwan

Thrive in Joy

Inspiring and uplifting. Those are the two words that came to mind after reading the article “Finding Joy After Tragedy” in the March issue. Mr. Jay Fagnano, grieving

father of Nick, who met with a premature death, embarked on his Toastmasters adventure and experienced the therapeutic aspect of speaking about that tragic event.

This has made me reflect on one key characteristic of a Toastmasters audience—they are attentive listeners. More importantly, they practice the art of “bracketing,” which involves temporarily giving up or setting aside one's own prejudices, frame of reference and desires, in order to experience the world from the speaker's point of view. By joining Toastmasters, Mr. Fagnano undoubtedly knocked at the right door in his attempt to improve his ability to express his immense loss and to work through his grief.

I wish Mr. and Mrs. Fagnano the best in their noble endeavor to better the lives of so many children. And to Nick Fagnano, I want to say, “Thrive in Joy!”

Zeenat Fugurally
Speak Up Toastmasters club
Ebene, Mauritius

Story On!

The March cover of the *Toastmaster* magazine says, “Personal Storytelling Draws Crowds.” It does. It also results in being invited as a guest speaker to tell stories. For example, my own experience: 854 invitations.

In the article “Story Takes a Turn,” author Craig Harrison writes that personal storytelling is a logical path for Toastmasters. It is. My love of storytelling resulted in my being honored to present storytelling workshops in Toastmasters at several district conferences. To quote Harrison, “Tap into your own stories, show your humanity and build community as you share your narrative with others. Story on!” I have. Let's hope many other Toastmasters take this advice.

Arthur Thomas Ware, DTM
Dundas Club
Dundas Valley, New South Wales, Australia

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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Stir Up Excitement with an Open House or Demo Meeting

Take a show-and-tell approach to growing your club and district.

By Maureen Zappala, DTM

PHOTO ON LEFT: The Chamber Toastmasters club in Kiev, Ukraine, hosts a demo meeting at the American Chamber of Commerce in Ukraine.



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PATHWAYS PROMISES MORE RECOGNITION

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Settle your nerves with these simple strategies for sharp responses.

By Christopher Cox, DTM

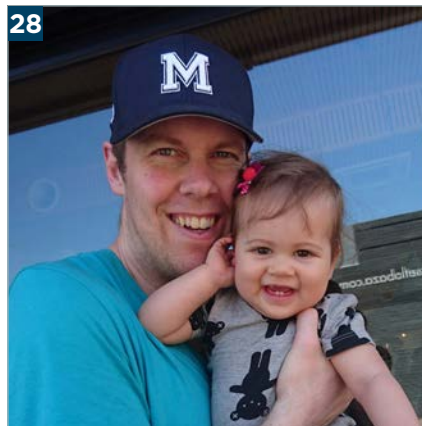


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How I started a club in my homeland, Cameroon, Central Africa.

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▶ MEMBER MOMENT



Romanian Adoptee Speaks Up for Children's Rights

BY SHANNON DEWEY

When Alexander Kuch first met his adoptive parents in a Romanian orphanage, he was 2 years old and had suffered from the effects of long-term neglect and lack of touch and affection. The couple brought him to Germany, where he didn't start speaking fully until age 5 due to underdevelopment during his critical learning stages as a baby. Psychologists predicted he would barely graduate high school and certainly not attend university, and would never be able to socially interact with others.

Today, at 22, Kuch is studying international relations and politics, as well as psychology, at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He is a global speaker on children's adoption rights, meets with foreign dignitaries and volunteers as a youth ambassador. Last, but certainly not least, Kuch, CC, is an active Toastmaster at the Silverdale-Orewa club in Auckland.

Despite the odds stacked against him, Kuch worked hard to receive an education and position himself as an advocate for orphans around the world. He has one adopted brother, also from Romania, but when his family was in the process of adopting two girls in 2003, the Romanian government banned foreign adoptions and they were unable to bring the girls home. Then 8-year-old Kuch took matters into his own hands by writing to the government about reopening international adoptions.

In 2006, his family moved from Germany to New Zealand, where he continues his campaign to reopen international adoptions in Romania. Kuch is actively involved in civil societies that contribute to his passion in cross-cultural settings.

What organizations do you work with?

I'm Adopted is the name of an organization that helps people find their biological families and provides them with post-adoption support. As an ambassador for I'm Adopted, I help with public events and speak at online Q&As and at national and global conferences. I have also organized public speaking and leadership workshops for AIESEC, a global platform for young leaders that partners with the United Nations.

I was also part of the Leprosy Mission New Zealand, and went on a two-week humanitarian trip to Nepal in 2016. I completed an internship for one of New Zealand's leading humanitarian aid and development organizations, Tearfund, where I researched gender-based violence prevention methods in Nepal in a post-disaster context.



Alexander Kuch, left, with Romanian Ambassador Nineta Barbulescu.

How has Toastmasters played a role in your advocacy?

My mentor, Bjørn W. Simonsen, DTM, has increased my ability as a public speaker since I joined Toastmasters three years ago. He was the president of the Hibiscus Coast club and offered to become my mentor. I appreciate his sincerity and his ability to push me to achieve my full potential.

I have learned at my clubs and through Bjørn how to speak confidently and assertively and how to engage with people who are older than I am while still voicing my opinions. Despite being the youngest member, I really value how I've always been encouraged by my club and pushed to grow. I now speak at important events on children's rights and adoptions, such as the December 2016 event at the Romanian Embassy in Australia.

Who is your audience?

My audience varies from foreign dignitaries and professionals in the children's rights and adoption fields, to youth and the media. I always keep the audience in mind, as well as what experiences and expectations they have. I give speeches in English but when speaking to the Romanian government I use a live translator and adjust my words but keep my message the same.

What's next?

In July I'll be speaking at the Global Changemakers Youth Summit in Switzerland. I also want to earn my master's degree in conflict studies with a focus on children's rights and adoptions. I will graduate from the University of Auckland at the end of 2017, when I also plan to publish my autobiography: *The Adventures of Alex*.

Learn more about Alexander Kuch's journey at www.alexkuch.com.

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor for Toastmaster magazine.



AN OFFSHORE ESCAPE AND PRICELESS MEMORIES

Qatar Toastmasters club hosts its 431st meeting on a *dhow*, a traditional sailing vessel used in the Gulf region. The meeting, themed “Offshore Escape,” is intended to give members a different and creative experience outside the typical meeting context. “One could see a display of teamwork in full swing,” says club member Rasha Abualhasan, CC, CL. “In our club, we try to make priceless memories that last a lifetime.”

▶ LOOKING AT LANGUAGE

3 Simple Tips for Speaking to a Global Audience

BY DEAN M. BRENNER

In the 21st century business world, very few things are NOT global in some way, and successful professionals and organizations have no choice but to think about how to reach and connect to a global audience. When speaking to a global audience, here are some tips on making them remember what you say.

1 Don't use colloquialisms, examples, metaphors or pop culture references that are not likely to translate well. I was on a conference call a few months back, led by an American who loved to use sports clichés and metaphors. During this global web meeting with people from 10 different countries, he insisted on using the phrase “three yards and a cloud of dust” to

describe his team's determined progress. For an American football fan, the metaphor is vivid and clear. But the guy from Holland and the woman from China were completely lost. After the call, I encouraged him to adjust his speech pattern. He eventually got it, but his first reaction was “come on, everyone knows what that means.”

2 Make sure your sentences are short, easy to digest and have simple “noun-verb-object-period” sentence structure. The simpler the sentence structure, the easier it is for the non-native English speaker to follow you.

3 Slow down, and pause more frequently. Think of your words as a meal. We don't want to give our audience indigestion by eating too quickly. We want

them to enjoy the meal. We want them to take a bite, chew, swallow and take a moment to breathe before the next bite. With a global audience, the absorption rate is going to be different because many of them are probably thinking in their first language and then translating into English. This adds time, and we must be patient and respectful.

This article was originally published on The Latimer Group website in September 2016.

Dean M. Brenner is president and founder of The Latimer Group (www.TheLatimerGroup.com), an executive coaching and training firm focused exclusively on teaching persuasive communication. You can read Dean's weekly blog at TheLatimerGroup.com/blog/.

QUICK TAKES

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Kate Gardiner, ACS, ALB

BY MARY NESFIELD

Kate Gardiner has mentored many adults, as well as disengaged youth, throughout her career in education and training. And since joining the Noosa Toastmasters club in 2011, in Queensland, Australia, she started adding club members to her list of mentees. Katina Cuba, CC, began reaping the benefits of Gardiner's mentoring when she joined Gardiner's club in February 2015.

Cuba worked in the petroleum industry in Peru, her native country. Her corporate job brought her to America, the United Kingdom and Argentina before she relocated to Australia to start her own consulting company. As a business strategist, she sought to expand her portfolio. An online search led her to a local Toastmasters club, which she joined after her first visit.

How did you think Toastmasters could help you?

I wanted to take my business to the next level, but I needed to increase my own confidence in delivering seminars and webinars. The club's structure allowed me to practice speaking publicly and because members were supportive and encouraging, I felt nurtured and safe enough to do that.

What do you like about Kate?

Kate is a natural leader with a strong work ethic. She takes a great interest in the way we learn and she's committed to the club and its members. She is quick to respond to questions and is straightforward in her feedback. Plus, she's quick to celebrate task completions.



FROM LEFT: *Kate Gardiner and Katina Cuba*

How has she helped you?

My first language is Spanish, and although I practiced speaking English in Peru and in all the countries where I've lived, I'm just now overcoming my anxiety about my accent, and that makes me more confident when I speak to a large audience. I have made new friends and I expanded my business network. Thank you Kate!

Mary Nesfield is associate editor for *Toastmaster magazine*.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

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

▶ VISITING A CLUB WHILE TRAVELING

A Warm Welcome in Barbados

Katherine Peters, ACS, ALB, and her husband Bill Feniuk (both in center), from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, visit the Vanguard Toastmasters club while on holiday in Barbados. "Not only were we warmly welcomed, we were made to feel right at home," Peters says. "The commonality of Toastmasters bound us together and the rich cultural diversity created a cherished, enjoyable experience for all."



▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS

Team-building Toastmasters

Toastmasters in Busan, South Korea, enjoy a spring outdoor meeting as a team-building exercise in celebration of their club becoming Distinguished. They belong to a club at The Institute For Opportunity (TIFO), a nonprofit organization for social development.



▶ ADVICE FROM MEMBERS

The Burden of Burnout

BY ANNA KAUFMAN, DTM

It's midnight. The Toastmasters club contest is tomorrow, more volunteers are needed and the membership dues are behind. The point where work, stress and pressure outweigh the enjoyment and cause a lack of energy is known as burnout. As a club officer or member, you've likely experienced this collapse—it affects you mentally, physically and emotionally.

I've been there and have helped others through it. Here are four tips to help you avoid the effects of stress and burnout.

1 Delegate. Certain aspects of a leadership role have a bigger effect on the success of a club or an organization. As a club president, for instance, opening a meeting and scheduling executive committee meetings are critical to achieving a smooth flow. The president doesn't always have to be the one to fulfill these tasks, how-



ever. Ask for help to make sure the critical pieces keep moving even if you're not the one taking responsibility for them.

2 Take it in pieces. Take one day at a time, one meeting at a time. It's nice to look ahead and view the full picture, but taking small steps can sometimes be less daunting and will still get the work accomplished.

3 Be honest with yourself and your club members. We all go through periods of burnout and experience exhaustion and lackluster energy. Acknowledging it shows strength of character, not weakness. People may respond positively when you admit your frame of mind and likely offer to help, allowing you to breathe a bit easier.

4 Take a break. Whether it's a meeting that you don't attend, or a few days where you go without Toastmasters emails or phone calls, a hiatus can provide clarity and rejuvenation.

It's not easy to move forward while in a state of burnout, but seeking support and practicing these tips can help you feel more grounded during this time.

District Director Anna Kaufman, DTM, is a member of District 31 Leaders club and Sun Life club in Massachusetts. She is an empowerment enabler through speaking, training and coaching. Find out more at empower.annaakaufman.com.

1



1 | **JEAN LARSEN, CC**, from Long Island, New York, visits Antigua, Caribbean.

2 | **CANDACE APRIL TAN, CC**, from Rizal, Philippines, enjoys the snow in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada.

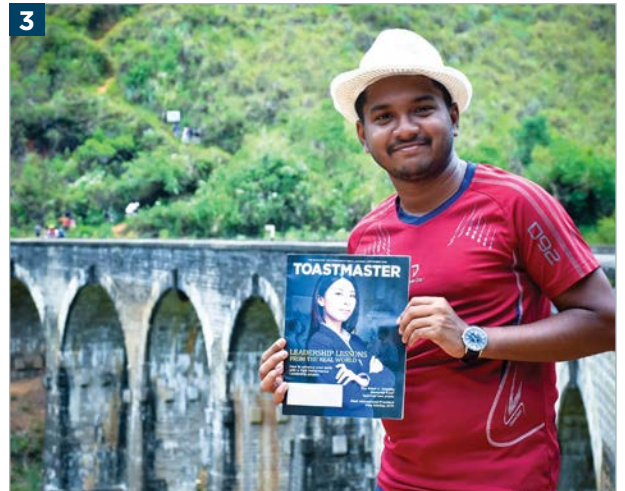
3 | **DIREN DANTANARAYANA, CC, ALB**, from Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, poses near Nine Arch Bridge in Demodara, Sri Lanka.

4 | **DARIUSZ BUKOWSKI, CC**, from Sydney, Australia, takes a ride through Mungo National Park in New South Wales, Australia.

2



3



4



View more photos on Toastmasters International Official Fan Page on Facebook.



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

Second Chances

Members of a prison club gain inspiration, honest talk and the skills to educate at-risk youth.

BY NEAL GOYAL

At first glance, we might be the most unlikely group to embrace the Toastmasters program. After all, what could federal inmates who have made poor choices that led to incarceration possibly gain from public speaking? The answer: everything.

For those of us who are committed to changing our lives, we know the stark reality that no matter what we do to redeem ourselves, society will still view us as felons. But each of us has a desire to overcome that stigma. While each inmate may take a different path to redemption, we all have one thing in common: the need to become effective, clear and fearless speak-

ers. Public speaking is one of the scariest things to do, but talking onstage about our fears and flaws can make the experience that much more daunting. However, because our club environment has become so inviting and free from judgment, we know that whatever we say on that stage will be respected, and that we will receive support in more ways than we knew was possible.

Collectively, we know that once we are released from prison we will spend the rest of our lives explaining ourselves to the world for our past actions. To do so effectively, we must become confident,

Every Toastmasters club develops its own culture that unites its members in unique ways. For us, Toastmasters is dual-purposed—it allows us to become public speakers and also gives us an outlet for the emotions we experience as incarcerated individuals. We become more honest with ourselves and gain long-term benefits, which also inspires others.

Not only do we wish to become effective speakers for our post-release lives, we also want to add value to the community. In August 2016, with our newfound skillset, we created IMPACT (Inmates Mentoring Peers Against

We will spend the rest of our lives explaining ourselves to the world for our past actions. In order to do so effectively, we need to become confident, skilled and practiced speakers.

ers. This is exactly what the Toastmasters program offers to the 2nd Chance club at Lompoc Federal Prison Camp in Lompoc, California.

Every Wednesday at 6 p.m., shortly after dinner is served, numerous inmates gather in the chapel for the weekly Toastmasters meeting. Widely viewed as the “most powerful hour at camp,” we see the program as a gorgeous isolated pocket of positivity and inspiration in an environment that typically breeds negativity and hopelessness. What makes this so powerful is not only how we seek to become better speakers, but how our meetings give us an emotional outlet and a source of inspiration and openness. We share similar stories of pain being distanced from our family, shame from the crime we committed, and the desire to change ourselves to lead a life of

skilled and practiced speakers. Practice goes a long way toward self-improvement, and the framework of Toastmasters allows for feedback, constructive advice and continual improvement.

Beatrice Hawkins, the prison’s staff facilitator for our club, fosters an environment that encourages us to open up and become more passionate in the delivery of our speeches. Club President Anthony Aguas has been an incredible leader by example, providing us with routine words of inspiration. As vice president, I embrace this role that gets new speakers comfortable onstage through words of encouragement and personal coaching. These efforts have created an environment where inmates are eager to share their stories. The best part is how every speaker becomes better as time goes on.

Criminal Thinking) to educate at-risk youth. By sharing our stories with troubled teens in high schools, juvenile centers and probationary programs, we inmates deliver valuable messages to today’s youth. Through IMPACT, we have presented to over 300 young members of the community in hopes of preventing them from making the same poor choices we did.

The 2nd Chance club is so grateful for the Toastmasters program. The gravitational pull of those Wednesday nights gives us the confidence to communicate effectively. And that is something that will stay with us for life. **T**

NEAL GOYAL is a member of the 2nd Chance club at the Lompoc Federal Prison Camp in Lompoc, California.



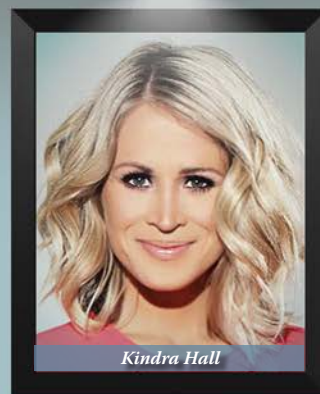
Delatorro McNeal II



David Dye



Diane Ciotta



Kindra Hall

THE 86TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Preview the Exciting Speaker Lineup

Register for the Toastmasters International Convention, taking place August 23 through 26 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Choose from a variety of registration, add-on and special event options. Registration for access to the events Wednesday through Saturday, including the World Championship of Public Speaking®, is \$525 (\$575 after July 3). Alternatively, you can enjoy the VIP experience for \$570 (\$620 after July 3). Can't get enough? Sign up for additional events such as a city bus tour, the Smedley 5K Fun Run, networking lunches and more.

Here are highlights about the featured speakers:

Keynote Speaker Delatorro McNeal II, MS, CSP

"Toastmaster to Top Speaker."

Ranked as one of the best motivational speakers in the world, Delatorro is a 10-year member of the National Speakers Association and executive producer and star of the business reality TV show *The Keynote*. He shares what it takes to achieve any goal with excellence and integrity.

David Dye

"Winning Well: Leading for Transformational Results—Without Losing Your Soul."

An internationally recognized expert in leadership and employee engagement, David will share tips, tools and techniques for volunteer leaders.

Diane Ciotta

"Life is Like a Sales Call."

Diane is a professional keynote speaker and entrepreneur whose Training Classics sales refinement company teaches about integrity and accountability to sales professionals. Learn more about selling from your heart—not from your head.

Kindra Hall

"The Irresistible Power of Strategic Storytelling."

Kindra is an award-winning columnist, author and champion storyteller. She shares the psychology behind strategic storytelling and how to fully take advantage of it in your career and presentations.

Mark Hunter, DTM

"The Voice of the Bonsai—A Conversation on Leadership."

Mark is the 2009 World Champion of Public Speaking and has held leadership positions for 40 years. He will share how his interest in growing bonsai trees led to insights in leadership from the relationship between bonsai masters and their trees.

Mohamed Ali Shukri

"Life in Your Speech."

Mohamed is a health and safety expert, corporate trainer, award-winning speaker and Co-Active coach. He shares how to

change someone's life by putting life in your speech.

Sandra McDowell, MA, CEC, PCC

"Neuroleadership: Leading with the Brain in Mind."

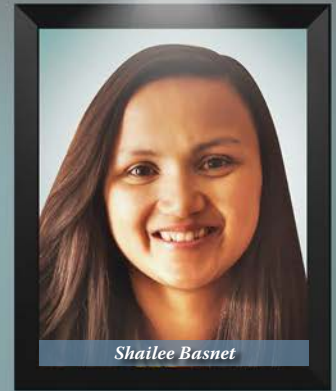
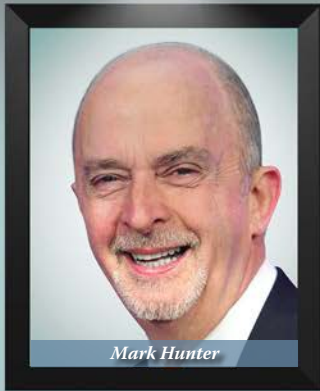
A sought-after speaker and facilitator, Sandra has extensive experience in communication, executive coaching and leadership in the financial services industry. Learn about new developments in neuroscience and how to best harness your brain for improved productivity, communication and overall well-being.

Shailee Basnet

"Together We Reach Higher."

Shailee is a professional speaker and freelance trekking guide who summited Mount Everest. The coordinator of the "Seven Summits Women Team," the world's first female group to climb the highest mountain on each continent, she shares lessons learned during her journey that you can apply to your own life. **T**

Visit www.toastmasters.org/Convention for registration packages, the complete schedule of events, education session information, full speaker profiles, hotel and travel descriptions and—new this year—member testimonials!



ERIN GRUWELL: TOASTMASTERS' 2017 GOLDEN GAVEL AWARD RECIPIENT


Toastmasters International has named Erin Gruwell its 2017 Golden Gavel recipient for her commitment to improving education by offering training and curriculum to teachers, and scholarships and outreach for at-risk youth. Gruwell exemplifies the Toastmasters values through her integrity, her respect for the individual, her service to others and her focus on motivating individuals to become their best selves. Gruwell will be honored with this prestigious recognition in August at the 86th Annual Toastmasters International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia.

As a high school English teacher, Gruwell encouraged her disengaged students to write about their life challenges in diaries.

She eventually captured her former students' collective journey in the best-selling book, *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*, which also became a critically acclaimed movie starring Hilary Swank as Gruwell. She then founded the Freedom Writers Foundation, which offers programs to improve the education of all students. She created the Freedom Writers Methodology, a progressive teaching philosophy and curricula and uses it to teach educators around the world how to implement her innovative lesson plans in their own classrooms.

After the release of the book and movie, Gruwell began receiving requests for the Freedom Writers (her former students) to speak around the world. Although the students had bared their souls in the diaries, the prospect of standing before audiences and telling their very personal stories was daunting. Gruwell knew a colleague in Toastmasters and arranged for the students to attend an eight-week Speechcraft session at the Freedom Writers Foundation in Long Beach, California. "The Toastmasters leaders made it their mission to model what great speaking is for us, to help ease the Freedom Writers' anxiety about presenting and to encourage us all to take risks as speakers," Gruwell says. "Toastmasters became a game-changer for us." The group soon chartered its own club, Freedom Writers Toastmasters, in September 2014. Brimming with confidence and polished speaking skills, the Freedom Writers now travel the globe presenting to audiences of vulnerable and voiceless youth, with a message of hope that they, too, can overcome enormous odds to transcend their circumstances.

A new documentary titled *Freedom Writers: Stories from an Undeclared War* is set to be released next spring through the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in the United States.

You can hear Erin Gruwell speak by attending the convention. Register now at www.toastmasters.org/Convention. Watch this video of her: bit.ly/2qLCLer. 



Pathways Promises More Recognition

Earn awards early and often in Toastmasters' exciting new program.

BY PAUL STERMAN

No doubt about it: It feels good to receive praise and awards when we achieve a goal. Even better, such recognition motivates us to keep going and accomplish even more. That principle has always been a central part of the Toastmasters experience: Members are recognized for their growth and success.

In the Pathways learning experience, there are even more opportunities to earn awards and accolades. The new education program provides recognition earlier and more often in a member's journey. Consider this: In the current education program, you must give 10 speeches before you earn your first award in the communication track—the Competent Communicator. In Pathways, you can achieve an award after your first three speeches.

Meeting frequent milestones earns you badges, certificates, letters and other honors. You can also give online feedback badges to other members of your home club—badges with uplifting labels like **Collaborative**, **Innovative** and **Inspirational**.

“Stepping up the recognition is one of the brilliant aspects of Pathways,” says Paul White, DTM, a member of several clubs in Virginia. White is one of about 100 Chief Ambassadors who work as Pathways leaders helping members learn about the new program and what it means for them.

In Pathways, you choose one of 10 distinct learning paths. Choices include **Presentation Mastery**, **Dynamic Leadership**, **Effective Coaching** and **Motivational Strategies**. Each path is divided into five levels, which build in complexity from Level 1–5.

At each level, you complete two to three projects, and when you finish a level, you earn a digital badge and a digital certificate. The awards are displayed in Base Camp, the program's learning management system. Every member has access to

Base Camp, whether or not you decide to work in Pathways online or prefer to work with print materials.

When you complete Level 3, 4 or 5 in a path, you can request a letter from Toastmasters World Headquarters to inform your employer of your achievements. And when you complete an entire path, you earn the **Proficient** designation. For example: “Toastmaster Margaret completed the Innovative Planning learning path and is now Innovative Planning Proficient.”

Positive Pilot Feedback

In the Pathways program pilot, members in three districts have been eligible to enroll in Pathways. District 57 in Northern California launched the first phase in February, District 27 in the Washington, D.C., area followed in March, and District 51 in Malaysia began the pilot in May.

White, District 27's Chief Ambassador, says the new recognition system will help with “member learning, satisfaction and retention.” It is one of many innovations in Pathways that are a boost to both new and veteran members, he adds.

“Stepping up the recognition is one of the brilliant aspects of Pathways.”

— DISTRICT 27 CHIEF
AMBASSADOR PAUL WHITE

“One of the beauties of Pathways is that it maintains those things that we love in the [current] education program,” White says, “but adds elements of newness, depth and recognition that are exciting to those of us who have been around for a while.”

Ashley Ching, CC, CL, a District 57 member, became one of the first Pathways users to earn a level-completion badge when she finished Level 1 of the Presenta-

tion Mastery path. Members who truly want to improve their skills must be motivated by more than awards, Ching notes, but she says it is rewarding to be recognized for progress. Because that happens frequently in Pathways, it helps members gain momentum in their speaking efforts.

“Without even noticing, it becomes easier to deliver speeches monthly, weekly and even daily,” says Ching, a member of the Capitol Speakers club in Benicia, California.

Early Pathways users have responded positively to the digital feedback badges. If, for example, you want to praise a member for a particularly compelling speech, you can give that person an **Exceptional** badge. Or let's say you want to applaud a new club member for overcoming fears to give a speech for the first time—give them a **Courageous** badge.

“I can already tell that these badges are definitely morale boosters for both the giver and the receiver, and they will go a long way toward keeping members engaged and motivated,” says Savitha Setlur, DTM, a member of two clubs in Northern California.

Ching received **Exceptional** badges from fellow club members after one of her recent speeches, along with comments praising her enthusiasm and drive. At first, she recalls, she felt some embarrassment at the “exceptional” label. But gradually she allowed herself to appreciate the compliments.

“I let my feelings of embarrassment subside,” she says, “and transform into ones of pride and gratitude to my fellow Toastmasters for recognizing my success.”

To learn more about the Pathways learning experience, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways. To learn more about recognition in particular, visit the “Achievement + Awards” section of the webpage. **IT**

Paul Sterman is senior editor for Toastmaster magazine.



The ABCs of Toastmasters Acronyms

Aid for a new member's SOS distress signal.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Have you ever visited a country where they spoke a language you didn't know? In 1970, I had visited Japan with my university band. Fortunately, we had tour guides or I would have been lost. I neither spoke nor read the language. I didn't even recognize the characters in the alphabet.

When you first join Toastmasters, your experience might be somewhat similar. Listening during meetings can make you feel like you're swimming through alphabet soup. ACS, DTM, VPE, PDG, TLI, HPL, DCP. While over time you will figure it out, let me bring you up to speed a bit more quickly by briefly describing some of the basics of the Toastmasters culture—at least those terms you need to know now.

Education Designations

As you have no doubt noticed, many members have letters listed after their names. Those letters designate the progress they have made in the communication and leadership tracks. Many of those members have two sets of letters, corresponding to the two tracks. For instance, "CC, CL" indicates that they are both a Competent Communicator (CC) and a Competent Leader (CL), having completed the requirements for both of the manuals that you received in your Toastmasters welcome packet.

The Communication track has 15 different advanced manuals from which you can choose, once you complete the CC. Essentially, when you complete two advanced manuals, you become an Advanced Communicator Bronze (ACB). Complete two more and you earn the Advanced Communicator Silver (ACS) designation,

and two more earns you the Advanced Communicator Gold (ACG). Actually, the last two involve additional requirements, but we won't address those here.

The Leadership track has two advanced levels—Advanced Leader Bronze (ALB), and Advanced Leader Silver (ALS). You earn them by taking on leadership positions within the organization.

When you achieve both the ACG and the ALS, you become a Distinguished Toastmaster, or a DTM.

Leadership Positions

So what are those leadership positions that I mentioned? You may have heard of terms like VPE, VPM and VPPR bandied about during a meeting. These are three of the officer roles within the club. A club functions with a total of seven officer roles that members can volunteer for, and I assume that president, secretary and treasurer are self-explanatory.

VPE, or vice president education, ensures all meeting roles are filled and members are achieving their goals. VPM, or vice president membership, works with guests to bring them into the club. VPPR, or vice president public relations, promotes the club to the outside world. The sergeant at arms takes care of club supplies and the meeting setup.

Organizational Structure

To give the individual clubs full support, Toastmasters has an extended organizational structure run by members like you.

The first level above the club is the area. Each area has an area director who assists typically four or five clubs to keep

them informed of Toastmasters news, meetings, etc. Four to six areas make up a division, that has its own division director. Above the division is the district. The district director, along with a number of other district officers, supports about 200 clubs. The district director is the one you will most likely hear about.

I will warn you, though, that up until a couple of years ago the directors were called "governors." You still hear that term used, especially in reference to past district governors, so don't be confused. They are the same thing.

I'll mention one final acronym.

To further ensure clubs are providing value to members, Toastmasters International has developed a series of measurement criteria. This is known as the DCP, or the Distinguished Club Program. You will, no doubt, hear frequent reference to it, especially around June, which marks the end of the Toastmasters fiscal year.

There is a lot more to the Toastmasters experience, and with the rollout of Pathways, Toastmasters' new education program, there'll be still more to come. But the information here should get you through a typical meeting without feeling like you need an interpreter. In fact, before long, you might qualify to be one of those interpreters yourself. Now sit back and enjoy the alphabet soup. **■**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of *Powerhouse Pros*, which specializes in observational humor. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.



**OPEN
HOUSE**



Stir U



*District 89 grows its clubs by hosting district and area level "open day" events that give members the opportunity to share information about Toastmasters with the public.
PHOTO: Members of various clubs in District 89*

Up Excitement

with an Open House or Demo Meeting

Take a show-and-tell approach to growing your club and district.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

Ralph Smedley's first attempts to create Toastmasters failed. In 1905, he held communication skill-building meetings in Illinois, but the groups lacked leadership and soon fizzled.

Nearly two decades later, in 1924, he successfully launched Toastmasters in California, putting the organization on a phenomenal trajectory. Today membership exceeds 345,000 in nearly 16,000 clubs in 142 countries.

Membership has grown because the Toastmasters program works. How can you play a role in this exciting growth process?

Districts grow in two ways: enlarge a club, and create more clubs. The special "open house" and "demonstration" meetings (also called "demo," "launch" or "kickoff" meetings) are the most often-used formats to cultivate growth. An open house builds an existing club. A demo meeting creates a new one. Most members are familiar with an open house. It's a fun, casual event, where guests can ask questions, meet members and get a feel for the unique Toastmasters culture. Demo meetings are less familiar to most members. They introduce the Toastmas-

ters program to an entire group of non-Toastmasters with the goal of helping them form their own club. It's conducted by an individual member, not a club, and feels more like an informational session than the more celebratory open house.

Let's take a closer look at each type of meeting and perhaps you can see where you fit into the growth journey.

Open House and Demo Meetings: **The Similarities**

Both meetings:

- ▶ Showcase the benefits of Toastmasters and how improved skills can transfer to the world outside Toastmasters.
- ▶ Require careful planning with plenty of up-front marketing to generate interest and fill the room.
- ▶ Contain the core elements (and clear explanation) of a regular Toastmasters meeting: a Toastmaster, timer, speaker, Table Topics session and evaluation segment.
- ▶ Amplify applause and recognition, something unfamiliar but welcomed by most people.
- ▶ Encourage visitors to participate, often during Table Topics.
- ▶ Aim to obtain signed membership forms.
- ▶ Help existing Toastmasters grow in their leadership skills, and remind them of their own reasons for joining.

Open House and Demo Meetings: **The Differences**

An open house engages an entire club. A demo meeting is conducted by a small team of Toastmasters (as few as two!), often from different clubs. An open house has refreshments, decorations and a headliner speaker. A demo meeting mimics the structure and feel of a regular meeting. An open house highlights one club; a demo meeting gives a broader big-picture view. An open house welcomes all new members equally. A demo meeting labels the first 20 members as charter members, a prestigious label of honor. A club can grow without an open house, but a new club rarely starts without a demo meeting.



Toastmasters in Cape Town, South Africa, conduct a demo meeting to charter the ToastED club for aspiring TEDx speakers.

Tips for Conducting an **Open House Meeting**

- **Engage your entire club.** Assign coordinators for refreshments, decorations, advertising and setup. Choose a speaker, either from inside or outside your club. Order marketing materials from Toastmasters World Headquarters (fliers, brochures, ribbons, etc. So much is available there, and much of it is free online!).
- **Market heavily!** Every club member can help fill the room with visitors. See the sidebar on page 19 for tips on marketing.
- **Focus on the right elements.** While decorations and food are important, the right speaker *topic* and *evaluator* are crucial. The speaker's topic should be how Toastmasters has benefited them. Whether they're advanced (demonstrating a level of excellence to which visitors can aspire) or a beginner (one who doesn't intimidate visitors) doesn't matter. However, the evaluator should be a more experienced member. Chief Ambassador Phyrne Parker, DTM, from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, says, "A strong evaluator proves the value of Toastmasters. Guests think 'Well, that speaker was OK; I could do that. But wow, look at the help the evaluator gave her!'"
- **Pass the baton.** Golden Speakers, a robust club in Fairfield, Iowa (population of 10,000), holds regular open houses. Member Rick Starr, ACG, ALB, says, "We document everything about the event—the structure, publicity, content—so it's easier to plan the next event. We'll get 75 to 100 people at these events, and many join over the next few months. After each

event, we review what worked and what didn't and suggest changes for next time."

- **Consider a multi-club event.** Past District 86 Director Vitaliy Fursov, DTM, a member of Guelph Public Speakers, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, says, "We organize an area open house instead of a single club open house to promote the program instead of a particular club. This creates increased interest, stronger relationships between clubs and greater energy within each club." Matt Steele, DTM, from MDC Toastmasters club in Hong Kong, is a past program quality director of District 89. The extraordinary growth of his clubs is due to a unique approach. "We host large 'open day' events at division or area levels and invite clubs to participate, giving each a table to promote their club and talk to guests," Steele says. "We'll get 100, even up to 300 people from across a city. With so many people the 'wow' effect is tremendous!"
- **Don't forget to provide guest packets.** These packets have been shown to greatly improve the conversion rate of guests to members. Clubs can make their own or purchase them prebuilt from the online store.

Tips for Conducting a **Demo Meeting**

- **Know your audience.** A corporate demo meeting differs from a community demo meeting because the needs of potential members are different. Kathleen Lubin, DTM, a past program quality director for District 52 in Southern California, says, "For a corporate club, we conduct an informational meeting with

HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR OPEN HOUSE AND DEMO MEETING

- Enlist the human resources department and line managers to promote a corporate kickoff meeting through their internal channels, such as a companywide email, closed-circuit video, or by posting or distributing fliers.

- Promote a community kickoff meeting via word of mouth, personal invitation and social media. Post fliers in busy places (community bulletin boards, libraries, stores, university areas, gyms, cafes). Use branded materials from the Toastmasters website.

- Post your event on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media channels. Create a short promo video on YouTube or Vimeo and link it to your posts. Use Meetup or other networking sites to promote.

Leverage your personal connections to spread the word. Use Eventbrite or other registration-tracking services to keep count of RSVPs.

- Do an internet search using your city with the word “event” to see where other events are posted, and post your event to that site.

- Invite past club members and visitors. Tap into people with large networks or strong influence to reach more people.

- Use low/no-cost media outlets such as smaller community publications, trade magazines or local access television channels. Offer to do live interviews with a media outlet or podcaster.

- Personal, heartfelt invitations are powerful. Invite your family, neighbors and co-workers. Mention

the event at parties, church, school, gymnasium, community gatherings and while running errands.

- Repeat and layer as needed. One post, email or flier is not enough. One of each is better, as long as it doesn’t become irritating or pushy.

- And don’t forget to use the tools that Toastmasters offers:

- New Club Information Kit
- Demonstration Meeting Sample Agenda
- Form 3: Charter Membership Application
- Open House Resources
- Membership Building Kit
- *Let the World Know: Publicity and Promotion*
- Membership Application

corporate leaders first to assess their needs.” Steele echoes this: “Getting support from corporate management as high up as possible helps. It makes a difference for staff to see someone very senior in the kickoff meeting—especially if they do the opening remarks to set the scene for why the company is supporting the creation of a club.”

Andrew Chiu, DTM, of Personal Development Toastmasters, North Hollywood, California, has helped charter about 30 corporate, community and specialty clubs. He describes the AIDA cycle of Attention, Interest, Decision, Action: “For a corporate demo meeting, you’ve passed the Attention and Interest phases, because the corporate leaders let you in. You might be past the Decision phase if a company knows for certain they want a club. The focus is entirely on the Action. This defines how you approach the demo meetings because now your close can be succinct and decisive.”

- **Have a strong evaluator.** Chiu emphasizes that. “The evaluator is the most underrated segment, and where many demo meetings can fail. The decision-makers don’t see themselves giving manual speeches; instead, they visualize themselves getting evaluated (or coached).” He says it’s important to appeal to the context of the corporate audience. Managerial leaders may prefer an evaluator with strong assertive leadership language, but younger employees may prefer an informal and personable man-



Carfield Tang, CC, and Michelle Zhang greet visitors at the District 89 open day event.



Jing Ouyang, CL, of the Victoria Toastmasters club, shows off District 89's open day flier.



FROM LEFT: Kitty Wong, DTM; Rainbow Lee, DTM; and FC Chan, ACG, ALB, sit with District 89 open day attendees.

ner. "If the evaluator nails the assignment, you can get 80 to 100 percent of the people to sign up right away," says Chiu.

■ **Be professional and do things right.** Deniz Senelt Kalelioglu, DTM, of Istanbul, Turkey, has helped build 13 clubs in the country where previously there was only one. She says, "From the beginning, conduct the meeting properly. Don't think you can start any way and fix it later. Show the proper meeting elements. For example, the feedback form used by members for each speaker is an amazing tool. It develops evaluation skills little by little and gives the speaker different people's perception. Let visitors use it too. It will ... give them a taste of the process."

Kalelioglu's enthusiasm is infectious. When there were no other Toastmasters clubs in Turkey, she was intentional about getting help. When asked how she did that, she says, "I sought out experienced Toastmasters, made myself visible and went to the International Convention year after year. As the first and only member from Turkey, I carried our flag onstage at the opening ceremony, made friends and asked for guidance. I shared all these experiences with the people in Turkey. I tried to lead by example, and I worked to become a DTM."

Don't Forget the Follow-up!

Follow-up, such as an email, handwritten note or personal phone call, can help an undecided guest become an excited member. Get their permission to add them to the club email list and keep them on it until they unsubscribe. Past Division Director Dana Barnes, DTM, a member of three clubs near Cheyenne, Wyoming, says, "One visitor joined after 13 years (yes, 13!) because

she kept getting emails." Don't get discouraged. Dana says, "We had a club here in Cheyenne with only three members. They had an open house in January and achieved President's Distinguished in June. It can happen!"

A new club needs 20 members to start. If the required 20 want to join after a demo meeting, that's awesome! But if not, don't quit. Repeat the process of marketing and conducting demo meetings. Past District 10 Director Dave Wiley, DTM, a member of three clubs in Mayfield Heights, Ohio, says, "Corporate clubs usually start faster, within one or two meetings. But community clubs may take longer. Build the expectation with the group that they need 20 members to start. Maintain enthusiasm. Six or eight excited people can draw in more people, even if it takes more meetings. One of our strongest clubs took three months to charter. The demo team was creative with promotion, but they were patient and persistent."

Perhaps Ralph Smedley would have had earlier success with one of these special meeting formats. Certainly, *you* can. Why not try your hand at hosting an open house or being part of a demo meeting team? There's no better feeling than when a visitor says, "Here's my application. I can't wait to get started!" ■

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 Aerospace Toastmasters club in Cleveland, Ohio. Visit her website at www.MaureenZ.com.

10 Tips for Terrific Table Topics

Settle your nerves with these simple strategies for sharp responses.

BY CHRISTOPHER COX, DTM



1 Don't Panic. If you can, just stop caring about Table Topics. Remember, everyone in the audience has been in your position, has probably dried up at some point and is willing you to do well, so you don't need to worry about their reaction.

2 Buy Time. Give yourself time for your nerves to die down and for you to think of something to say. Sit at the back of the room and walk slowly to the front. Acknowledge the audience and repeat the question. If you need to, just talk for a while about something vaguely related to the theme, or even about something totally unrelated: Sooner or later, inspiration will come.

3 Go with the first little idea that comes into your head. Sooner or later, a little idea will pop into your head. Even if it's just a little idea, start talking about it. Don't reject it in the hope that a bigger idea will come along: The little idea has to be expressed first. If you do reject it, it'll sulk, and will block the big idea from ever getting through.

4 Express an opinion, right at the start. Unless you're a beginner, try not to give a long introduction. Instead, answer the question or express an opinion, and do so at the start. This is easier for closed questions (e.g., "What was your favorite holiday?"), but you can also do it for open questions (e.g., "Talk about holidays"). So long as you can seize your little idea and turn it into something concrete.

5 Remember the rule of three. You can put some structure into your speech by breaking it down into three main points that justify your opinion

or reinforce it. (For example, "My best holiday ever was in Tibet, and there are three reasons why.") You don't need them all before you start: Instead, you can think of the first point while answering the question, then think of the second point while talking about the first, and so on. It's surprising how often this works.

6 Remember the six honest serving men. Alternatively, you can develop your argument by using British writer Rudyard Kipling's "six honest serving men" (*what, why, when, how, where and who*) to trigger ideas in your mind. (For example: What was my favorite holiday? Why did I go there? When did I take the trip? How did I travel? Where did I stay? Who did I meet?) By actively looking for answers to these questions, we can give ourselves both material and the framework to put together a well-structured speech.

7 Know when to stop. Try not to ramble your way through a long conclusion. Instead, recap your answer and the main points of your speech, finish with a punchy ending and hand it back to the Table Topicsmaster.

8 Prepare something in advance. You can often use the theme of the topic to suggest a framework for your speech, a style of delivery or a direction to take it in. When your question arrives, you can fit your answer into the framework you've already thought of.

9 Draw on your own experiences. When you're given a Table Topic, you can ask yourself if there's anything in your own experiences that will answer the question or illustrate your argument. As well as making it easier for you to answer the question, a personal reply will often sound more heartfelt than other answers you might give.

10 Be eccentric. The best Table Topics responses are often those where the speaker avoids a serious or conventional answer, and instead tries something unusual or entertaining. For example, you can deliver your speech in character, or deliver an unexpected or contrarian argument. By doing this, you can grab the audience's attention and free yourself from the constraints of a conventional approach.

And a bonus tip:

11 Keep doing Table Topics. Finally, keep practicing. The more you do it, the less nervous you'll become, the easier you'll find it and the more you'll enjoy it. ■

Christopher Cox, DTM, is a past winner of the District 71 Humorous Speech and Evaluation contests, and a Table Topics finalist. He is a member of Cambridge Speakers club in Cambridge, England, and works as a freelance trainer and consultant in telecommunications.

How to

GROW

from Your
**Toastmasters
Evaluations**



Lessons from a positive psychologist.

BY KRISTEN HAMLING, CC

Ken Blanchard (renowned leadership consultant and Toastmasters' 1992 Golden Gavel recipient) once said “feedback is the breakfast of champions.” Evidence shows this to be true. People who can take all kinds of feedback and grow from it tend to be more successful in most aspects of life.

Microsoft founder and CEO Bill Gates is a good example of this. He has continued to achieve incredible success throughout most of his life, in part due to his inclination to seek feedback. In his 2013 TED Talk, Gates said, “We all need people who will give us feedback; that is how we improve.”

Indeed, isn't this why we all attend Toastmasters meetings, “to improve”?

Although each of our particular reasons for joining Toastmasters are unique and varied (e.g., to speak more confidently, write persuasive speeches, gain confidence in social settings), we all share an underlying intent—to become better, to improve.

To aid us in our journey of self-improvement, Toastmasters teaches us how to give and receive an effective evaluation. However, far more time seems to be spent in teaching us how to *give* an effective evaluation than in how to *receive* one. For instance, the *Effective Evaluation* manual dedicates far more instruction to “when you are the evaluator” (four pages) than “when you are the speaker” (just under one page).

In my experience, effective evaluations will get us only so far in self-improvement. We also need personal skills and tools to be able to act on the information. In other words, diagnosing the areas where we need to improve is only half the battle; we also need the tools to act on the diagnosis.

Using the tools that I have learned in my career as a psychologist, a Ph.D. student and a mother, I welcome and embrace all sorts of feedback. These tools have helped me to successfully navigate feedback from my 9-year-old son (“You talk too much; I'd love to take you to a land where you wouldn't be able to talk.” He has a point.), an advanced Toastmaster (“Your pants and boots enhanced the ‘goose step’ parading that you adopted on the stage; you want to avoid looking military.”), and a man, unknown to me, who was in jail for murder (“You ought to practice what you preach—if you're supposed to be so compassionate, come and visit me in jail.”).



When receiving an evaluation it is important that you focus your attention on the facts more than anything else.

Although receiving feedback can sometimes take us outside our comfort zone and away from the safety and security of an intact self-esteem, if we want to improve ourselves then we have to take notice of how other people see us and willingly consider what they say. To that end, I'm going to share with you three tools to help you make the most of your Toastmasters evaluations while keeping your self-esteem intact.

1 Believe that you can change! Some people don't accept that they are capable of significant change, thinking that their abilities are fixed. Either you're good at something or you're not, you're smart or you're not, you've been born a certain way and there is nothing much you can do about it. You may hear people who think this way say, "I'm not going to try for the speech competition; I'm just not good enough." Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset: How You Can Fulfill Your Potential*, refers to this attitude as a fixed mindset.

On the other hand, there are people who believe that their skills, abilities and successes come from practice, perseverance and learning—not just from natural ability. They will give anything a go, knowing that all experiences (including failures) present an opportunity for learning. You will hear people of this mindset say, "I'm entering the speech competition to see how I do

and learn where I need to improve for next time." They have what is called a growth mindset.

The type of mindset that you have will greatly influence how you view critical feedback. For example, if you have a fixed mindset, you may view any critical feedback as a condemnation of your character. Your ego is threatened and you deploy sophisticated defense mechanisms to protect yourself (e.g., "*The evaluator just doesn't like me; that is why he gave me a bad evaluation.*"). If you have a growth mindset, you tend to view feedback as data, or pieces of information that you take into consideration to help you grow, learn and improve. You view feedback not as a threat but as valuable input into your journey of becoming an effective speaker.

The next time you receive an evaluation, try to approach it from a growth mindset. I think you'll find it makes a big difference in what you learn from it.

2 Learn to tolerate discomfort and vulnerability.

It can be tough at times to hear critical feedback. Despite years of working on this, I sometimes still feel a blow to my self-esteem when someone criticizes me. But then I remember Buddha's wise story, which helps me understand, accept and move on from any negative feelings associated with being criticized.



Buddha described our pain and suffering as being hit by two arrows. The first arrow is an event that actually happened, something that we have little control over. Consider this being a negative piece of feedback in your evaluation. The second arrow is then shot by ourselves. We focus on our reaction to the feedback and how it makes us feel (e.g., “I hate when people say that to me.” Or “I always get the same feedback. This sucks. I’m never going to get better at this.”).

If you have a growth mindset, you tend to view feedback as data, or pieces of information that you take into consideration to help you grow, learn and improve.

In life, we can never stop the first arrow from firing, but we can do a lot to stop the second arrow. As Haruki Murakami, a Japanese author, writes in his book *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*: “Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional.”

Mindfulness is a way of understanding the emotions that arise when we are criticized. We become curious about what those feelings are and where they come from. We don’t need to act on them or deny them, just observe them. Observe the emotions non-judgmentally, as if you are trying to describe to others how you are feeling.

Most emotions come at us like a wave. They build and peak but with enough time and calmness they will subside. Our goal is not to react at the top of the wave, but to tread water until the wave of emotion passes. When the emotion passes we become far more capable of thinking clearly and responding to feedback clearly and rationally.

We will always experience critical feedback as long as we live. As American author and meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein puts it, “You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” Try to approach your evaluations mindfully by surfing any waves of negative emotions that may first arise from an evaluation so that you can then openly listen to the feedback that is being delivered to you.

3 Listen to feedback with FIRE. Let’s say you’ve just received an evaluation that goes something like this:

The purpose of the speech was to be persuasive; it should focus on the self-interest of the audience. ... Unfortunately, you did not use any logic to support your viewpoint. In fact, you bombarded us with technical jargon that was not easily understood by a layperson. Your speech was quite monotonous and boring, and you certainly didn’t appeal to the audience’s self-interest. I would encourage you to do this speech over again.

No question—this is tough feedback, so use mindfulness to first deal with any negative emotions you may be feeling. Next, take a growth mindset and believe you can learn something from this feedback. Lastly, try to see, specifically, what it is that you can learn.

Consider such feedback by using Mark Murphy’s FIRE technique: Facts, Interpretations, Reactions and Ends (FIRE).

The Facts

Facts are the things that you can see, hear and validate. Facts are objective, provable and verifiable. When receiving an evaluation it is important to focus on the facts more than anything else. For example, fact: In the speech you delivered that drew the above evaluation, you did not use logic. You presented no facts, research or rationale. Fact: You used technical words. To learn the most from the evaluation, try asking the evaluator to provide you with more specific information. Specifics can include things such as: “You used 10 ums and technical words like ‘social constructionism.’ And when you said that ‘X’ had the highest rate of ‘Y’ in the world, you gave no reference to support the facts.” With specific factual information at your disposal you are likely to learn far more.

The evaluation you received also contains some non-factual information, such as, “You didn’t appeal to the audience’s self-interest.” This is non-factual because it is one person’s opinion, and there is no evidence to say that the entire audience really felt this way. However, if a few people concur with the feedback, or you’ve been given similar feedback in the past, then it makes sense to examine the criticism more closely. So let’s stay focused on the parts of the feedback you can actually learn from, which are *the facts*.

Interpretation

Once we observe a fact, our mind uses our own life history, previous experiences and personality to interpret it, to put it into context and give it meaning. That’s *interpretation*. This is why

we all take something different from a speech. On this occasion the evaluator interpreted the speech as “not appealing to the audience’s self-interest,” but this may not have been everyone’s experience. So unless you get similar feedback consistently, try not to get too bogged down in this part of the evaluation. Again, look to the facts for what can actually be verified.

Reactions and Ends

Once a fact has been interpreted, we tend to *react* to it emotionally. In this case, the evaluator said they found the speech to be “quite monotonous and boring.” The evaluator’s emotional reaction has caused them to pursue some *end*, which in this case is to suggest that the speaker repeat the speech. But again, remember, this is one person’s evaluation. So unless the feedback is consistent, be mindful that it is one person’s opinion and not a fact.

To get the most out of an evaluation it’s best to seek out and concentrate on the facts, and try not to get dissuaded by the interpretations, emotional reactions and end.

Feedback systems are what give life to everything on this planet. Feedback systems occur in our bodies (to maintain homeostasis) and in nature (positive and negative feedback systems form ecosystems). Feedback systems also play a role in how any society forms. By using the three tools I have outlined— 1) a belief in your capacity to change, 2) tolerance for discomfort and vulnerability, and 3) categorizing evaluations



with FIRE—you will give yourself the best chance of getting the most out of your Toastmasters evaluations and grow as a person *and* a speaker. **■**

Kristen Hamling, CC, is a mother of two young boys and a registered psychologist who is undertaking her Ph.D. on wellbeing in Whanganui, New Zealand, where she is a member of the Whanganui Toastmasters club. She is collaborating with a local primary school to build a growth mindset into the school culture.

PATHWAYS IMPROVES EVALUATION PROCESS

Stronger speech evaluations

are a key component of the Pathways learning experience. Evaluation criteria have been enhanced and standardized, which will help evaluators provide constructive, relevant feedback.

In the new education program, you will still give and receive verbal and written evaluations in your club meetings, but you’ll do it in a different way. For one thing, the new evaluation form will be customized for each individual project assignment. And when members give speeches in Pathways, they will all be evaluated by the same objective standards. Speaking

skills will be scored on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being the highest score. Categories on the evaluation form include “vocal variety,” “eye contact,” “gestures” and “clarity.”

Scores are based on how the speaker meets specific criteria related to the content and delivery of the speech. For example, in the “vocal variety” category a score of 5 is given for using “the tools of tone, speech and volume to perfection.” A score of 1 means you showed “ineffective use of tone, speed and volume.” In the “gestures” category, a 5 is given if you “fully integrate physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech.” Receiving a

1 means you use “very distracting gestures or no gestures.”

These objective standards will help make the evaluation experience more consistent in clubs around the world. It’s important to remember that evaluators and speakers alike benefit from a strong evaluation. Learning to give constructive criticism is a skill, and providing valuable feedback to a fellow member is one of the best opportunities in Toastmasters.

For more information about Pathways, visit the Pathways learning experience webpage at www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.

High Performance Leadership Hits Home

How I started a club in my homeland, Cameroon, Central Africa.

BY DONALD BALIABA, ACS

Two and a half years ago, I joined Toastmasters. The experience has been so valuable that I only wish I had joined sooner. Last year, I decided to embark on a High Performance Leadership (HPL) project.

HPL projects can help Toastmasters, your community, a professional group or some other organization. They enable members to grow as a leader by developing goal-setting, planning and team-building skills. I chose an HPL project that had deep meaning for me: starting a Toastmasters club in my homeland—Cameroon.

I was born and raised in this Central African country, and then I lived in France for about eight years. I moved to the United States 10 years ago and became a U.S. citizen in 2014. I'm currently a member of two Toastmasters clubs in Southern California.

After joining Toastmasters, I discovered there were clubs all over the world, including in many African countries. However, there were none in Cameroon. That's when I began exploring the possibility of starting and sponsoring a club there. I knew my fellow Cameroonians would benefit greatly from the program.

I started talking to my friend, Baba Wame, a journalist and university lecturer in Cameroon, about Toastmasters. "I was immediately sold, and was open to the idea of a new club in Yaoundé [the capital of Cameroon]," he says.

In December 2015, I traveled to Cameroon on vacation, and during the trip I talked to a group of Baba's students about Toastmasters. Their interest and enthusiasm motivated me even further to start a club there. Baba and I agreed to

work on this plan. Since I live in Southern California, I knew it would be a challenge, but I delved into my HPL project with determination. My friend, Lionnel Yamentou, DTM—a Cameroonian native—and I made weekly calls via Skype to Baba and prospective members in Cameroon, talking to them about how Toastmasters works and the many membership benefits. They were all very excited.

"I believe leadership and speaking skills taught through Toastmasters will truly make a difference here in Cameroon."

— BABA WAME,
2016–2017 PRESIDENT OF THE
MOUNT CAMEROON CLUB

I visited many clubs in Southern California to talk about my project. A number of members in Founder's District happily came together for a demonstration meeting that we recorded on video and sent to the Cameroonian group.

From these efforts, the Mount Cameroon Toastmasters club in Yaoundé was born. It held its first meeting on July 22, 2016. Baba was the club's first president, and Kim McFee, ATMG, ALB, and I are the club sponsors. Starting this club was deeply fulfilling to me. The club has about 20 members and they are all eager to learn. "As a teacher, I believe leadership and speaking skills taught through Toast-

masters will truly make a difference here in Cameroon," says Baba.

Cameroon's two official languages are French and English; however, many of the country's residents do not speak both. Mount Cameroon club meetings are conducted in both French and English so members can improve their language skills.

A number of people helped me significantly in my HPL project, including my Toastmasters mentor, Chris Gregory, DTM, a member of two clubs in Southern California; my friend Lionnel Yamentou, a member of the All Nations Toastmasters club in Anaheim, California; Baba Wame in Cameroon; and several others. I learned a great deal about leadership and working with others toward a goal.

More Clubs in Cameroon

The Mount Cameroon club is part of a larger Toastmasters movement in the country. In addition to Mount Cameroon, two other clubs formed in Cameroon last year. The country's first club, Yaoundé Toastmasters, was started by Nadine Mbikina, ACB, ALS, at the beginning of 2016.

Nadine's story is interesting: She joined Toastmasters in 2010 after realizing how it could help her become more confident, especially in her career. She currently works for the United Nations as an operations officer in the Cameroon office of the World Health Organization.

"I wanted to be more confident, and now I am confident enough to push open doors," she says. "Before Toastmasters, I was waiting for doors to be open. Today I am waiting no more; I am opening doors."

Nadine belonged to a couple of clubs in the African country of Burkina Faso,



FROM TOP, CLOCKWISE: Donald Baliaba (in front, holding the sign) organized a demonstration meeting held by Founder's District members to help start a club in Cameroon; 2016–2017 Area Director Jock Adammado (left) talks with Baba Wame, first president of the Mount Cameroon club; club presidents and district leaders at a club officer training in Cameroon.

and when she moved to Cameroon she started the Yaoundé club, which now has nearly 35 members. Because of her experience as a Toastmaster, she also helped guide the Mount Cameroon meetings when the club first started—a huge benefit to the new group.

She is a passionate advocate of Toastmasters. Nadine joined to improve her communication skills, but she has also developed as a leader. “Today I am helping others improve *their* communication skills,” she says. “My [job] promotions in the past two years are proof that Toastmasters works.”

At the end of 2015, Sylvie Ngompe, CC, ALB, began discussing the idea of a Cameroonian Toastmasters club with her American friend Doline Peterson, ACB, ALS, a member of three clubs in San Diego, California. With the help of many, the Langa Douala Toastmasters held its first meeting in September. The club currently has about 20 members. Sylvie, Langa Douala’s first president, says the members are highly motivated and enjoying their experience.

“Before Toastmasters, I was waiting for doors to be open. Today I am waiting no more; I am opening doors.”

— NADINE MBIKINA,
2016–2017 PRESIDENT OF
YAOUNDÉ TOASTMASTERS

Future Growth

The three Cameroonian clubs are officially part of District 94. In October, 2016–2017 District Director Ganiatou Sambaou, DTM, and 2016–2017 Area Director Jock Adammado, DTM, visited Cameroon to conduct the first club officer training program there. They conducted a second one two months later.

“I was really proud of our leaders who are discovering Toastmasters for the first time,” says Ganiatou. “They were

very happy to meet, connect and learn from us. We shared wonderful learning moments together. The interest is there. I felt the willingness, the curiosity and the desire to learn.”

What a wonderful development: As of 2015, there were no Toastmasters clubs in Cameroon—and now, because of the fantastic leadership of the club sponsors and presidents, there are three clubs. And there is the potential for many more. The three clubs are in the country’s two biggest cities—Yaoundé and Douala—but there is growing interest in other parts of Cameroon, as well, and the country’s Toastmasters leaders are ready to spread the word!

Cameroon’s members are extremely excited to be part of the Toastmasters family. **T**

Donald Baliaba, ACS, ALB, is a member of the Helmsmen Toastmasters club in Huntington Beach, California, and the Money Talks Irvine Toastmasters club in Irvine, California.

Member Achievements

Four Toastmasters reflect on their rewarding experiences.

Michael Sloan, CC, CL

Talking Point at Docklands • Victoria, Australia



How Toastmasters Made Me a Great Dad

Caring for babies comes with a host of challenges for new parents, but unlike in Toastmasters, there are no manuals to follow. Toastmasters has helped me in my professional development but as a bonus, it also made me a great dad!

When I'm with my daughter, Zoe, all my Toastmasters skills are on display. My Table Topics training comes out when she points at a random object and expects an on-the-spot explanation. My vocal variety oscillates between highs and lows as I bring characters like Miss Piggy and Hippo to life before her eyes. And anything within her grasp becomes a visual aid with which I can teach, entertain or distract. I get the same joy and adrenaline rush in the day-to-day moments with Zoe as I get from an invigorating Toastmasters meeting. The only difference: My energy needs to last much longer with her.

My daughter has also taught me how to be a better Toastmaster. My speaking has improved as I incorporate more emotion into my talks and I am better attuned to listening and observing things because of her. I've collected amusing anecdotes, pondered life changing decisions and made lifestyle adjustments—all great material for new speeches.

In parenting there are no ribbons, awards or applause for completing a task, but it is such a rewarding experience, full of laughs and tender moments. So thank you Toastmasters for teaching me not only speaking and leadership skills, but also providing me a loose parenting manual. And thank you Zoe for teaching me what life is all about.



Michael Sloan and daughter Zoe



Gloria Adaba (center row, second from left), fellow Toastmasters and students celebrate the completion of the Youth Leadership program.

Gloria Adaba, CC, ALB

DA Toastmasters • Lagos, Nigeria



Training Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples." This saying rings true for any Toastmaster who has taken part in a Youth Leadership program (YLP) to mentor and foster the next generation of leaders.

I coordinated the first Toastmasters YLP at the Victoria Island Junior Secondary School located near my home in Lagos, Nigeria. My club, the DA Toastmasters, served as a sponsor.

Twenty-five students between the ages of 11 and 14 participated. They initially found it challenging to prepare their speeches and play roles, but they became increasingly confident as the program progressed. During the first election of officers, the students were amazed that they could be elected as leaders. This awakened a remarkable awareness in them as they realized they one day could actually become leaders in their families, societies, nation and world. What a rewarding and fulfilling experience for me to see!

The YLP is a great tool for self-discovery. It offers our youth the opportunity to kick-start their innate potential. The inconsistency of good leadership that has lingered in our world for centuries can be curtailed by training tomorrow's leaders today.

Alicia Butler Pierre

Northlake Toastmasters • Tucker, Georgia



Alicia Butler Pierre

Timing Is Everything!

Shortly after receiving a master's degree from Tulane University's A.B. Freeman School of Business in 2004, I started my own company—an operations management firm specializing in business infrastructure.

Almost 11 years later, I joined Toastmasters. Since then I have held many roles in my club, but perhaps my biggest role to date came in September 2016 when I was commissioned by the chief strategy officer of a publicly traded company to help facilitate a strategic growth planning meeting for the company in Cancun, Mexico. It was particularly important for the meeting to flow smoothly since six presentations were planned for the board of directors in one day.

Leveraging my Toastmasters skills, I monitored the flow and timing of each presentation while simultaneously recording meeting minutes. This included helping to: 1) craft the timing of each presentation for the agenda, 2) explain the timing rules at the beginning of the meeting, 3) monitor each executive's timing as they presented and 4) give visual cues to indicate when time was running short.

The meeting flowed extremely well, with the board remarking on how efficiently the information was presented. Timing was everything! Thanks to my club's reporting and evaluation methodology, I was able to structure the final report in the form of "what I heard, what I saw and what I felt," along with the timing of each executive's presentation and tips for improving the presentations and overall meeting.

The protocol used to assign, monitor and report on timing will now be used for future executive meetings. A precedent has been set. And I have Toastmasters to thank for this very satisfied client!



Leland Schwartz surrounded by (from left) his daughter Ruthie, granddaughter Anna and daughter Ali in a photo taken before his club rebranded.

Leland Schwartz, CTM

Covina Breakfast Club • Covina, California



Remembering a Special Man

Leland (Lee) Schwartz was a beloved Toastmaster. Those of us in the Covina Breakfast Club have warm and vivid memories of this kind-hearted man, who died December 5, 2015—at the age of 100.

According to his family, Lee joined a club in Inglewood, California, in 1949 and remained a Toastmaster for nearly 65 years! He belonged to several different clubs in California over the years and served as a club officer many times. Trained as an engineer, he worked for aerospace firms for nearly 30 years and started a Toastmasters corporate club at General Dynamics when he worked there. A former college instructor, Lee was certainly like a teacher in Toastmasters, patient and supportive and always happy to help.

Lee, who joined the Covina Breakfast Club in 1994, gave speeches about road trips his family took when he was a child and about his original home, which has been designated a National Historic Site, in St. Louis, Missouri. One club member was so intrigued by his speech that he traveled there to see the house for himself.

Lee's wife of 69 years, Lois, was—before she died in 2009—a longtime member of the Covina club. His daughter Ruthie Hennies has also been a longtime Toastmaster. Lee was still attending the Covina Breakfast Club meetings in his late 90s. As he became more fragile, his daughter Ali brought him to the meetings and helped him write his speeches. But he still delivered the speeches on his own—and charmed us with his sweet spirit. All of Lee's Toastmasters friends will miss him greatly.

Contributed by Leslie Martel, ACS, ALB, 2016–2017 president of the Covina Breakfast Club in Covina, California. T

Do you have a Toastmasters success story you'd like to share about yourself or another member? Write it in 300 words or less and send with a high-resolution photo to submissions@toastmasters.org.



Senior Living

Welcome to your new home! You're the problem and we're the solution.

BY JOHN CADLEY

Having worked in advertising for 33 years, I find it hard to look at a piece of marketing communications without wondering how I would have done it, especially if I feel it misses the mark. I've noticed it particularly in the signs outside senior living facilities, perhaps because the day is not so far off when I will be ensconced in one myself, eating lime Jello® and being entertained by an amateur magician who twists balloons into the shapes of small domestic animals.

The one that bothers me the most is just down the street. I pass it every day—a large sign perched on a little mound of grass emblazoned with the words *Senior Living Solutions*. Could they be any less tactful? It's true, of course—taking care of aging parents *is* a problem. But you don't *say* it! It's like pulling up with mom in the car and shouting, "See that sign, Ma? Isn't it great?! You're going to get *solved!*" It doesn't get any worse.

Some, however, come close. On a recent drive to a neighboring town I passed several more facilities for the aged. There was *Elder Choice*, for instance. Let me guess who's doing the choosing. Probably not the elder. Then there was *Sunrise*. If I were in my 80s or 90s and my children put me there, I would sneak out in the middle of the night, scratch out the "rise," write "sets" in its place and leave a note saying: "Who do you think you're kidding?" Another such facility got to the point like a hammer hitting a nail: *The Home. Adult Care*. Never mind that "adult" always makes me think of something dirty. The

Home? That's a punch line! *Hey Pop, you better behave or we'll stick you in The Home. Ha, ha, ha!* Good grief.

Traveling a little farther I came upon *Maple Downs*. Why would they pick a name so evocative of a racetrack? You get the feeling the staff are all inside laying odds on who's the next to go. *I've got Ethel Schwartz at 5-to-1 crossing the Finish Line by October!*

Farther on still was *The Athenaeum*. I liked the classical ring—until it conjured up images of my 93-year-old father walking around in a toga. I nearly drove off the road.

It's like pulling up with mom in the car and shouting, "See that sign, Ma? Isn't it great?! You're going to get solved!"

Only one place got it right, in my opinion—or almost right: *Walden Place*. Doesn't that sound nice? You immediately think of the tranquility and beauty of Thoreau's Walden Pond, nestled snugly amidst the verdant poplars and swaying birch trees of the Massachusetts woodlands. Unfortunately, this place was surrounded by a rock quarry and a giant parking lot. Still, you have to give them credit for trying.

Of course, if I don't like the names of these places I can start my own. There's a gentleman on the internet who, for

\$17,500, will teach me how to run a successful nursing home business. (If I had \$17,500 to spare I'd already be successful, but I don't so here's my chance.) The name of the facility is up to me, but in case I'm stuck he offers some thought-starters, like *ResCare* and *TruCare*. Can't find any fault there. I can't find any meaning either, but maybe that's the point. Or I could try *Unlimited Care*. I just couldn't deliver it. Who gets unlimited healthcare besides members of the United States Congress?

The gentleman's course also suggests catchy slogans to go with the names, such as *We Are Like Family*. I'm not sure if that would reassure an elderly resident or scare them half to death. Another one is: *Insured. Trusted*. Difficult to ascertain the meaning here, but I'll take a guess: *You can trust us because we're insured, so if we mix up your meds and you go into anaphylactic shock you'll make some serious money.*

If I had to choose one of this gentleman's suggestions I would probably go with *Always Here for You and Them*. Not only does it suggest continuous support and caring, it refers to relatives the same way the resident does upon their arrival for a visit: "Oh no, it's *them* again!"

So what *would* I name a senior living residence? Oh, I don't know. How about ... *Senior Living Residence?* **T**

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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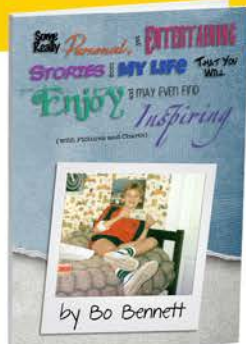
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

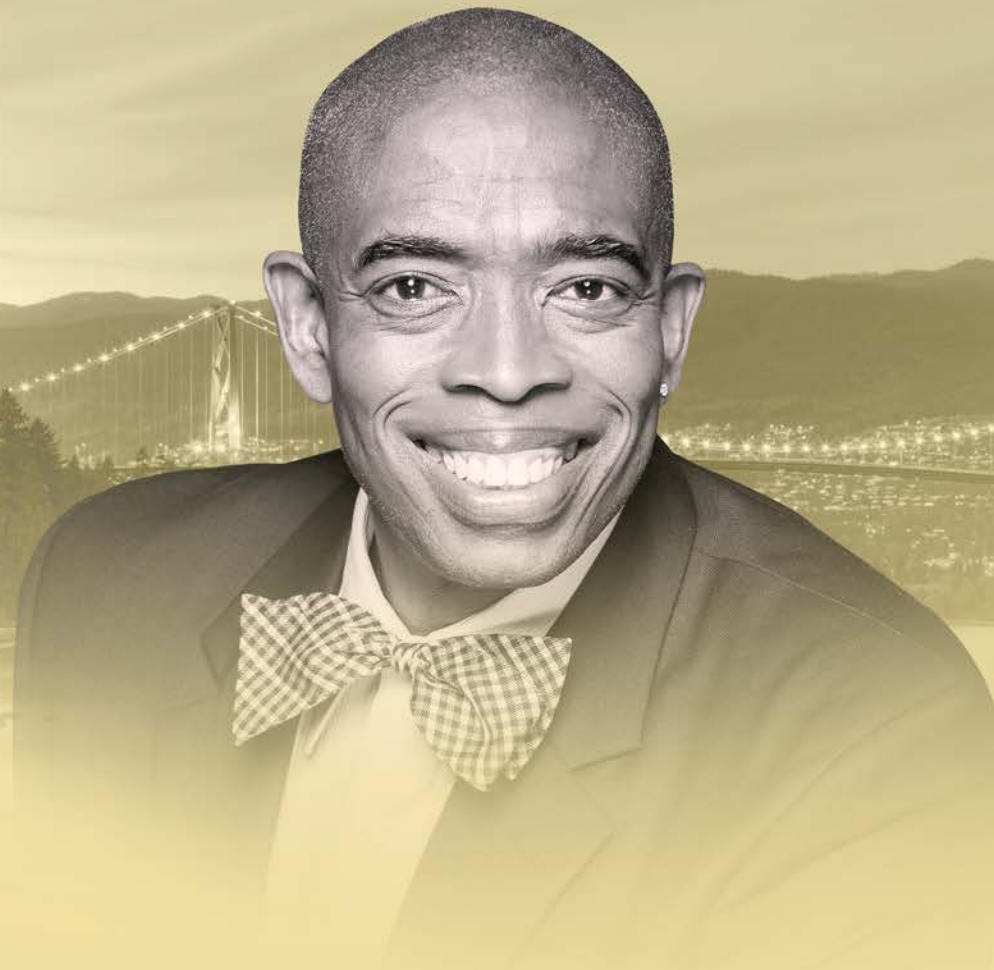
You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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– Mark Brown, 1995 World Champion of Public Speaking

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