

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JUNE 2018

TOASTMASTER®



Peter Dhu

No Longer Silenced by His Stutter

Digital Dependence

The cost of constant connection

How to Be Funny Across Cultures

Laughter is universal; jokes are not

May Your Cup Be Ever Empty

Our success in life is closely tied to training. Whether we train ourselves to become better at our jobs, at cooking or at running marathons—or train others in a club or district setting—training presents the opportunity not only to achieve our goals but to help someone else reach theirs.

I've been a Toastmaster for nearly 30 years, and if I had to describe our organization's learn-by-doing approach in one phrase it would be: Toastmasters makes ordinary people extraordinary.

Last August during my inaugural address I mentioned that my parents taught me the important lesson of putting people first. In my personal relationships, business relationships and in Toastmasters, this principle has been paramount. It is also an integral part of training. A trainer must put people first.

Mahesh Vipula Jayasinghe, DTM, a friend of mine and a former top executive at one of the largest insurance firms in Sri Lanka, became charter president of a Toastmasters club at his workplace. The more involved he became, the more he learned. He accepted all opportunities that came his way, serving as a club officer as well as area and division governor. He entered speech contests, conducted Speechcraft and Youth Leadership programs, and became a trainer.

“It's an old adage that we must empty our cup to get new tea.”

In 2011 he attended his first International Convention, held in Las Vegas, and was so inspired that he decided to become a full-time trainer. Today Mahesh is a successful trainer, coach and consultant—and owns a soft-skills development company.

His example demonstrates the power of good training. As Toastmasters, we have an obligation to be prepared, to be knowledgeable in both the theory and practice of our subject, and to offer our audience an extraordinary experience.

It's an old adage that we must empty our cup to get new tea. When speaking or training, envision all attendees entering the room with an empty cup. It is not our responsibility to fill every cup, but it is our responsibility to add something of value to each cup.

When attending a speech or training, it is imperative that we arrive with an empty cup. Drop all preconceived ideas and be neutral. Arrive with an open mind—willing and eager to learn—rather than expecting to validate existing knowledge. Be engaged in the training and be open to new ideas.

Go through life and through Toastmasters, holding an empty cup, collecting the knowledge and wisdom of those who have gone before you and sharing it with those who come after you. Seize every training opportunity you have in Toastmasters and beyond! Continued training leads to continued success.

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM

International President



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Clubs from South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Haiti celebrate their milestones.



The Algoa Toastmasters club in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, celebrates change, including the introduction of Pathways, on the beach at Shark Rock Pier on the Eastern Cape.



The Horizon Toastmasters club in Al-Khobar, Saudi Arabia, celebrates 10 years together at Half Moon Beach Resort in Saudi Arabia.



Members of the Amaryllis Toastmasters club in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, gather for their 600th meeting.



Send your fun club photos to photos@toastmasters.org. Include a description and your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) or 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the Toastmaster magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if Toastmasters materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

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Toastmaster Magazine Online

See more photos, videos and links online at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine

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- **Finding His Voice**—Learn more about Peter Dhu’s journey from elective mute to professional speaker through video and photos.  
- **Digital Dependence**—Discover additional hyperlinked content about how the technological revolution has changed the way we connect.
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South African Stroke Survivor Champions Youth Education

“I now walk with a major limp, but I am walking.”

Dinesh Maharaj, DTM, a facilitator and youth education enthusiast from South Africa, spoke these words a little more than a year after suffering a debilitating stroke in January 2017. Left completely paralyzed on the right half of his body, he spent almost four months in a wheelchair and totally dependent on his family.

Born in Durban, on the east coast of South Africa, Maharaj grew up no stranger to challenges. His father was unable to work as a result of a severe stroke, and his family lived on a farm without electricity or running water. But his mother played a pivotal role in developing his character, encouraging him that education was the only way to a better life. He now encourages his own children and other youths to strive for an education.

Despite a new set of circumstances resulting from his stroke, Maharaj is determined to live his life to the fullest. He lives with his wife and two sons in Westville, Durban. He joined the Umhlanga Club in 2005 and is heavily involved in the Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) and Youth Leadership programs.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I enjoy the educational aspect. In 2009, four years after I joined, I became a facilitator—a change in career motivated by Toastmasters. I enjoy the professionalism, support and camaraderie at my club meetings. Our unofficial slogan is “The best club in the galaxy.”

What happened after your stroke?

Initially, I lost most of my memory. Gradually, and fortunately, that returned and I am still able to lecture. I spent many hours in tears and anger. Eventually I taught myself the simple basics again. I could hardly speak, but after only a few weeks I was back to educating youths—this time from a wheelchair. My speech became clearer over time, with almost 90 percent ability currently.

I relearned those lessons of never giving up in Toastmasters. I call it Toastmasters therapy.

Describe your career.

I am an adult-skills facilitator, constituent assessor and subject-specific moderator focusing on electronic and mechatronics engineering and various business and management studies. I lecture nationally to varied audiences and enjoy traveling and meeting new people. My audiences range from five people to 50, and most want to advance their careers. I work at various



Dinesh Maharaj

companies like GUD Filters and Engen Petroleum six days a week and at schools in the evenings or mid-afternoon on Saturdays.

I also train 11th grade students in Toastmasters Youth Leadership. I was the District 74 Youth Leadership coordinator and look forward to being in the position again.

What do you like about working with students?

Whenever I graduate Youth Leadership students, I see a warm glow on their parents’ faces, and that motivates me. I appreciate the opportunity to guide youth. The Toastmasters Youth Leadership program becomes so much more than a speaking program; it is a torch in the darkness of vocational ignorance. Table Topics reveals the laughter that young people have and many of us have lost.

What do you appreciate most about Toastmasters?

Toastmasters is my test bed for vocational presentations, and I appreciate the feedback that continues to hone my skill. I am also a Toastmasters Leadership Institute trainer and enjoy imparting my knowledge to other members.

The aspect I enjoy most is the opportunity to understand the indomitable human spirit. For example, I recall a club speaker breaking down in tears over the loss of her father. She stood there, and we all looked on with empathy. She then proceeded to dry her tears, finish her speech and receive a standing ovation. I learned bravery that day, and now when I feel like breaking down I remember that woman, her strength and her perseverance.

What’s next for you?

Recently, I gave a presentation on managing depression at Life Entabeni Hospital in Durban for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I will continue to motivate anyone with a debilitating ailment, be it a heart condition, some form of cancer, or even a stroke. The spirit of “No retreat, no surrender” burns strong in me, and I want to evoke it in others so they can begin or continue their journey.

SHANNON DEWEY is the digital content editor for the Toastmaster magazine.



Right Place, Good Time

Members of Bamako English Toastmasters Club gather under the Place de l'Indépendance monument in Bamako, Mali.

▶ LEADERSHIP

5 Tips for Finding a Prospective Leader

One of the biggest challenges for club officers is finding future leaders. Identifying these members involves planning, teamwork and collaboration with the leadership team. Here are a few tips to help with the search:

1 Pay attention to members who are responsive, take action and are consistent with keeping their word. There's a good chance these members already have leadership experience in their personal and professional lives.

2 Look for members who are showing improvement in their leadership skills. Plant the seed and tell them

specifically where you see improvement. In follow-up conversations, tell them why they would make good leaders and eventually ask them to take on a leadership role. This allows a member to consider the idea well before being asked to commit to lead.

3 Explain to members the benefits you personally have experienced in your role. For example, you could describe how it continues to build your confidence and leadership skills. You might also share your story about how and why you became a club officer.

4 Make members aware of opportunities. It's important to talk about

future open positions at your meetings to let members know prior to election time what roles are available and which ones they might find interesting.

5 Ask members what area of their lives they would like to improve.

Tie their answers into the skills they would learn as a club leader. For example, if their goal is to build confidence in decision-making, suggest that they assume the role of club president.

Although it may not be easy, building your club officer team can be rewarding for both you and your members.

QUICK TAKES

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Jannet Yang

Jannet Yang, ACB, ALB, former president of the Pu Dong Toastmasters club in Shanghai, China, works as a compliance lead for an international electronics company. Her mentee, Wikum Hettiarachchi, CC, ALB, from Sri Lanka, works for Nokia in Shanghai. Wikum met Jannet when a colleague introduced him to the Pu Dong club. Wikum went on to join a second club, Shanghai Imagine Toastmasters, and volunteer as a Pathways Guide and Ambassador.

What is it like to be mentored by Jannet?

Jannet is a calm, quiet person and a beacon of Toastmasters values. Her critical analysis and extensive experience guide me and provide the pillars of my Toastmasters journey. She shares her knowledge of speech development and helps me see the importance of speech structure and a clear message.

Because our cultural backgrounds differ, Jannet sometimes finds it difficult to identify with my personal stories. She takes extra care to embrace the value of my stories as they relate to Sri Lankan culture, and she proposes appropriate adjustments to help my Chinese audience relate to my message.

What have you accomplished because of her?

I was the second runner-up in District 85's International Speech Contest. And when I was elected club president, she helped me in that role.

What do you value most about Jannet?

Not only did Jannet nurture me as a speaker and leader; she also helped me become more passionate. She planted in me the seeds of confidence, which allow me to handle any situation.



FROM LEFT: Wikum Hettiarachchi and Jannet Yang

How does that enrich your life?

My perspective has changed in many ways. Sometimes, without realizing it, I use my new skills to empower my colleagues and friends. Last year I introduced five young friends to Toastmasters, and they are thriving. And I even found interesting new ways to talk with my young son. My wife thinks it is a wonderful change!

Mary Nesfield is a former associate editor of *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.

▶ THE CLUB EXPERIENCE



Book Swap

Members of the Super Speakers Toastmasters club in Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia, hold a themed meeting titled "Life is Like a Book." Members brought used books to exchange with others. Leftover books were donated to a local bookstore.



► PRESENTATION SKILLS

Never Wear a Name Tag When Speaking Outside the Club

If you are invited to speak at a conference or other event, you will likely receive a name tag when you register. It will usually be in a plastic envelope that you attach to your clothing with a pin, or that you hang around your neck on a lanyard.

Name tags are useful. They tell us a bit about the people we meet and can get us out of a jam when we have forgotten the name of someone we met earlier during the coffee break! But onstage, name tags have no place.

Speakers often wear name tags when they go up to speak. They shouldn't. Name tags serve no useful purpose when a speaker is onstage and can actually detract from a presentation. Here's why:

- Nobody can read your name tag from that distance. Besides, you will have already been introduced—or will introduce yourself—and you'll be listed in the program if there is one. So the audience will know who you are.
- Even if your name tag can be read by people, often it will flip around.
- Name tags can interfere with microphones, especially lapel microphones.
- Name tags on a lanyard swing when you move and can make noise when rubbing against buttons or fabric.



- The plastic envelope can reflect the stage lights.
- They just look bad on a speaker.

The solution is simple. Before it is your turn to speak, remove your name tag and put it in your purse or pocket, or just leave it on your seat. Once you have finished your talk, you can put it back on. Of course, if you are amazing onstage, you won't need a name tag for people to remember you.

John Zimmer, ACB, ALB, is a member of the International Geneva Toastmasters club in Switzerland. He is an international speaker and a seven-time champion of Toastmasters district speech contests. John writes the public speaking blog www.mannerofspeaking.org and is the co-creator of Rhetoric—The Public Speaking Game™.

The fear of speaking keeps many people from being heard.

If you stutter or know someone who does, visit us online or call for help and information.



800-992-9392

www.StutteringHelp.org

► NEWS FROM TI

New District Reformatations Begin

Starting July 1, several district reformatations will take effect around the world. When a Toastmasters district becomes too large—typically, more than 240 clubs—it can split into more than one district, provided the Board of Directors approves.

In the United States, District 6 will separate into districts 6 and 106: The former will encompass south Minnesota, the latter north Minnesota and south Ontario in Canada. In Mexico, District 34 will reform into districts 34, covering the southern part of the country, and 113, encompassing the northern part. District 72 will break into districts 72 in south New Zealand and 112 in north New Zealand.

The most dramatic realignment is taking place in Europe, where two districts are reforming into six. Districts 59 and 95 will become districts 59 (Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands), 95 (Denmark, Germany, Norway, Sweden), 107 (Andorra, Spain, Portugal), 108 (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland), 109 (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, Republic of Macedonia, San Marino, Switzerland, Vatican City) and 110 (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine).



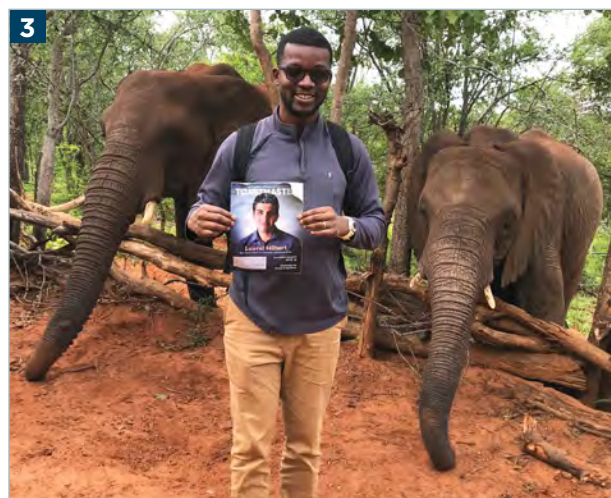



1 | PENÉLOPE SERRANO SERRADILLA, CC, ALB, from Gelves, Spain, visits a penguin colony on Martillo Island in the Beagle Channel in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.


2 | LAURA ALLEN, DTM, from Berlin, Maryland, stays warm at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

3 | GREGORY GABRIEL, CC, from West Palm Beach, Florida, poses with elephants at the Wild Horizon Elephant Sanctuary at Victoria Falls National Park in Zimbabwe.

4 | JACK LIU, CC, and ROSE YU LIU, CL, from Guangzhou, China, enjoy their holiday on Kata Beach, Phuket Island, Thailand.



 **View additional photos** in this month's *Traveling Toastmaster* photo gallery at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

 **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!

I Don't Like Change!

And that's what Pathways is all about.

BY JAMES WANTZ

When I heard about the Pathways learning experience, I turned my face to the sky and shook my fist at the gods. Whenever anyone mentioned Pathways I left the room in a huff! I knew I wouldn't like it. I don't like change.

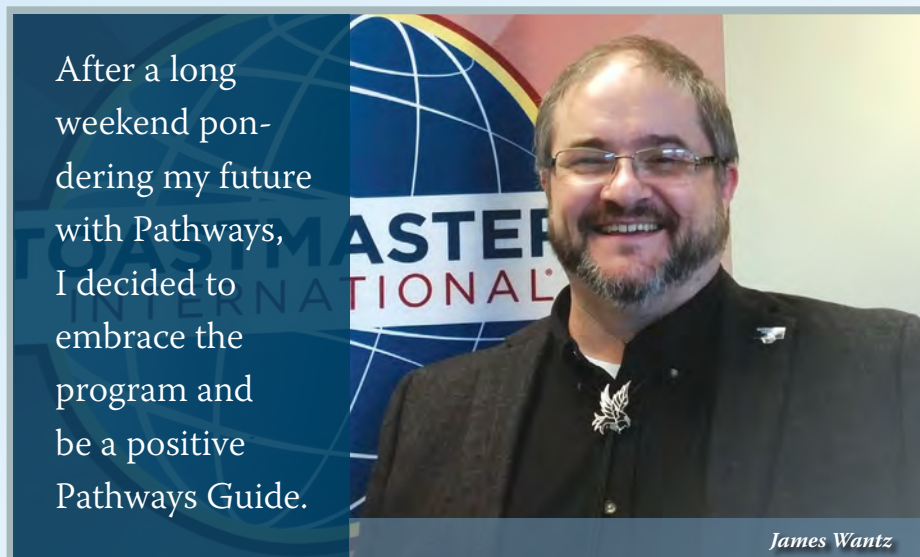
My better half (and by that I don't mean a partner, no, I mean the better half of me) signed me up to be a Pathways Guide so I could be on the leading edge of change (instead of its posterior). I grumbled and moved forward, certain I would hate the new program.

When Pathways rolled out, I discovered immediate roadblocks: navigational issues on the website, unfamiliarity with the terrain and plain old stubbornness on my part. Darn that better half of me. Now that I was a guide, I'd have to learn Pathways. Grrr.

But why was I so negative toward Toastmasters' new education program? Well, because it's new! I want things to be predictable, comfortable and old! I joined Toastmasters in 2008 in a radiant burst of energy to do something new in my life, to try a new skill and clean the mold off my old self. But since that time, the traditional Toastmasters program had become as comfortable as my favorite slippers, bathrobe and pajamas (in fact, my home club, New Horizons Toastmasters, in Hillsboro, Oregon, had a pajama meeting, so I was completely comfortable on that day). I like comfort. The world hurls discomfort at me; I want Toastmasters to be the place where I am certain to know what is going on, how to handle it and feel no challenge at all.

Yep, my 2008 radiant burst of energy simply went "poo!" My excitement for Toastmasters was gone. My home club had become my comfort zone—the one place I could go to escape the demands of change, technology and (ugh) social networking.

But Pathways is here to stay. My better half thought: *Your problem is that your*



James Wantz

Toastmasters experience changed, and you are annoyed. But it never was YOUR Toastmasters.

Darn it, I was right. I made it mine because I liked what I saw, heard and felt at every meeting. I invested myself in Toastmasters, found a mentor and never looked back. After a long weekend pondering my future with Pathways, I decided to embrace the program and be a positive Pathways Guide. And, wow, am I glad I did! I love the new program. I'm now on Level 4 in Presentation Mastery, and I've been pushed in ways I hadn't anticipated, such as putting together videos and posting them on YouTube and becoming a Pathways advocate. I am doing it. Pathways is for me!

No, I didn't drink the Kool-Aid. It's not all peace, love and puka shells. The program has challenges aplenty, but that's why I joined Toastmasters in the first place—to be challenged.

In the meantime, I am finding really cool features and projects in each level. The project that challenges me now is

Creating a Podcast. I bought a microphone, webcam and software, and I recorded content, but I find communicating via video different from speaking in person. Well, duh! Video flattens affect and speech. To not sound boring on video, I need to appear larger and more animated. I also must figure out the software and where to post videos, and determine who might be interested in my content. All of that is way outside my comfort zone!

I've gone from being a Pathways curmudgeon to a Pathways evangelist. I like the new program. I hope you give Pathways a chance to challenge you. Get started and find your own ... uh, well, path. **T**

JAMES WANTZ, DTM, is a member of three clubs in Oregon. He is the 2017–2018 District 7 public relations manager and a Pathways Guide. He is also the 2015–2016 D7 recipient of the Herb C. Stude Award for educational service.

Finding His Voice

A severe stutter caused Peter Dhu to stop speaking. For a decade. He now helps others overcome their fears.

BY MISSY SHEEHAN

For 10 years, Peter Dhu hardly spoke. He didn't speak at school. He didn't even speak at his wedding. "I didn't do any wedding speech. I didn't do any wedding vows—my vows were a nod," says the Australian native. "The priest read out, 'Peter, do you take Violet to be your lawful wedded wife?' And I nodded." But he had known his wife since he was 5.

"We grew up together. We went to school together. So she knew about my stutter. Dating was playing squash once a week."

He now earns a living as a public speaker.

Dhu retains a stutter that for much of his life caused embarrassment and ridicule. "My stutter was so bad, it took me one minute or longer to say one word," he recalls. His schoolmates teased him and called him "Dumb Peter." He performed well on exams and even sang in the school choir because, he says, people don't stutter when they sing. But when teachers asked him questions in class, he would shrug his shoulders or say he didn't know the answer—even when he did. "I was assumed to be not very clever."

At age 15, he attended an all-boys boarding school in Perth, Australia, and quickly learned the safest way to hide his speech impairment was not to speak. Upon his arrival, he immediately met an impatient enrollment clerk: "He asked me my name, next of kin, my address, my medical history, and I was struggling to speak," Dhu recalls. "He got really frustrated and said, 'I don't have time for this.

Here's the form. Fill it out yourself.' So I filled it out myself and realized this was easier for me than speaking." He became an elective mute; instead of speaking, he relied on writing, gestures and body language to communicate. Still, he was successful in obtaining a master's degree, and he found work as a clinical microbiologist at a hospital.

Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation of America, says Dhu's situation is not uncommon. "Fear of speaking in any situation is perhaps the biggest challenge for many people who stutter," she says.

"By the end of my first few months as a Toastmaster, I had found my drive. I found my purpose in life; I found my true calling, so there was no holding me back."

—PETER DHU

Now 60, the man has done a complete 180-degree turnaround: He speaks for a living and trains others to overcome challenges in their lives. While he still stutters, he no longer lets that silence him. "I've learned to embrace my stutter," says Dhu, ACS, a member of Curtin GSB Sundowner Toastmasters in Perth. Now when he stutters he's able to recover seamlessly.

The more you try to hide something, the harder it is, he reveals. "This is my speaking career, and what's unique about me as a speaker is that I stutter," he says.

Dhu says joining Toastmasters helped him make this radical transformation. "By the end of my first few months as a Toastmaster, I had found my drive," he says. "I found my purpose in life; I found my true calling, so there was no holding me back."

Taking Control

Overcoming his inability to speak was a long journey, and Dhu points to a couple of tipping points in his life that inspired him. The first happened when he was 25.

After working five years as a clinical microbiologist, he thought he had been getting away with not speaking much at work. "My job was just looking at the microscope, and diagnosing and writing reports, so I didn't need to speak." However, he noticed he wasn't getting the same opportunities to advance that his colleagues were. "People younger than me with less experience were getting promoted over me, so they were getting all these opportunities to become senior medical scientists and laboratory managers, while I was staying as a level-one medical scientist down in the basement," he says.

When Dhu plucked up the courage to ask his boss why he wasn't being considered for promotions, he was told his communication skills were so bad that he would never succeed. This experience led him to see a speech pathologist, something he'd avoided prior to that point.



Photo by Pille Repnau

While speech therapy didn't eliminate his stutter, he says it helped him get some control over it. Through a technique called fluency shaping (or "smooth speech" in Australia), he learned to slow down, breathe deeper and use "soft contacts" to make his speech smoother.

Using soft contacts is a way to soften words such as "dog" that start with hard, plosive consonants by blowing air before forming the word, Dhu explains. "Soft contacts include the 'h' in 'hello,' where the lips don't touch and the 'h' is often silent—just a little exhale of air. So if you put an 'h' before 'dog,' you can soften the contact and are less likely to block or stutter on the hard contact."

After speech therapy, Dhu was promoted at work, and other career opportunities opened up. But he still wasn't keen on

speaking—he didn't volunteer to speak in meetings, for example. "I still played it safe and did everything to avoid being in the public eye," he says.

While speech therapy helped him improve the mechanics of his speech, it didn't rid the quiet scientist of his fear. "I hadn't changed my mindset, so my mindset was still that of fear, avoidance and hiding," he says. "While I wasn't an elective mute anymore, I wasn't growing or expanding or taking on challenges."

AT RIGHT: *Peter Dhu and his wife, Violet*



Photo by James Young



Peter Dhu gives a presentation to 250 speech pathologists and speech pathology students at Edith Cowan University in October 2017.

Photo by Pille Repnau

Facing His Fear

The next tipping point came when he was 40 years old. His father had died, and Dhu decided to honor him by giving the eulogy at the funeral. It was the first time he stood up and spoke in front of a group of people. “I owed it to him,” Dhu says. “It was something that I felt compelled to do to thank him.”

Dhu’s father also stuttered, but he still accomplished great things in his lifetime. “Dad was a past president of the Lion’s Club, he was a life member of the football club, a life member of the cricket club, senior citizen of the year, and he did all these things—these great achievements—without his stutter,” he says.

As he prepared the eulogy, with his mother’s help, Dhu saw a comparison between two men: “One was my dad. One was myself,” he says. “My dad lived a life of possibilities, no limits. I lived a life of self-limiting beliefs. I realized how I had been hiding.”

After he delivered the eulogy, Dhu received praise and encouragement from his audience. “People came up to me and said, ‘Peter, if you can do that, you can do anything in your life.’” He was inspired to change his mindset. Instead of avoiding public speaking, he now wanted to face his fear. “I decided to never again allow fear to stop me,” he says. His first step in achieving

that goal was reading Susan Jeffers’ self-help book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. He also attended more speech therapy.

In 2004, at age 46, Dhu joined the Curtin GSB Toastmasters club in Perth. It was there that he found his voice.

Unlocking His Potential

At first, club meetings were a challenge. “It took me five or six meetings to do the Ice Breaker speech,” Dhu says. “By speech five, I was feeling really confident.”

Before long, Dhu volunteered as an Evaluation Contest test speaker. He used those opportunities to deliver the last five speeches in the *Competent Communication* manual in less than a month.

“I decided to never again allow fear to stop me.”

—PETER DHU

Not long after joining the Curtin GSB club, he served as vice president education. In the following 14 years, he held several Toastmasters leadership roles, including area governor. He also joined three other clubs and mentored new clubs. He even won several speech contests, including the statewide Humorous Speech Contest in 2008.

Leonor Ragan, DTM, met Dhu when he joined the Curtin GSB club and says he is a role model for others. “Peter has gone through an amazing transformation,” she says. “I still remember when Peter joined Toastmasters and how far he has excelled in his confidence—and most notably how he found his voice.”

Redefining Himself

At age 50, after four years as a Toastmaster, Dhu made a momentous decision: He quit his job as manager of Western Australia’s statewide organ donation agency to become a professional public speaker and speaking coach. “It was really scary,” he says, “but my Toastmasters colleagues and friends kept giving me the belief and encouragement that I should do this.”

Dhu founded his consulting business, Corporate Communication Experts, in 2009. Today he helps people in diverse professions—from mining engineers to politicians to nurses and doctors—become better speakers.

At conferences, workshops and through one-on-one sessions, he teaches the basics of public speaking, but he also helps people overcome challenges. “People pay me to inspire them to play a bigger game, to unlock their hidden potential and not let fear hold them back in their lives, in their journeys and in their businesses,” he says.

Dhu’s own experience is a powerful example and teaching tool. He encourages his audiences to face their fears and accept themselves for who they are.

“I am a person who stutters,” he says. “The first 40 years of my life, I could never utter those words. I could never tell people that I stutter because there was pain, there was embarrassment, there was humiliation. Now, it’s just part of who I am; it doesn’t define who I am.” **T**

Missy Sheehan is a freelance writer, copy editor and proofreader. For more information, visit her website at www.sheehanwriting.com.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Learn more about Peter Dhu’s journey from elective mute to professional speaker through video and photos.

Want to Lead the Way? Be a Region Advisor

RAs help districts grow and succeed.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Servant leadership is the lifeblood of the Toastmasters experience. Clubs have officers, districts have directors and regions have region advisors. There are Pathways Guides and Chief Ambassadors, translation reviewers and international directors. Leaders at every level of the organization serve their fellow members, helping them boost their confidence, build their skills and accomplish their goals.

If you relish making a difference for others while honing your leadership skills, consider applying for the position of region advisor (RA). The role is far-reaching: Each advisor supports several districts in their region by mentoring the leaders, supporting their ideas and efforts, and helping the districts expand their clubs' membership.

"It's an incredible experience working with district leaders and learning all the amazing things they are doing to make our organization more successful," says Lark Doley, DTM, a two-time RA and now the Toastmasters International President-Elect.

Region advisors around the world are selected each year by the Toastmasters Board of Directors. Region advisors serve a 15-month term, beginning April 1 and ending June 30 of the following year. Drawing on their experience and knowledge as Toastmasters, region advisors guide leaders in many ways: communicating consistently with district leaders, helping them plan, providing marketing advice, coaching them on how to meet their district goals, facilitating teamwork among the leaders and serving as a link to World Headquarters.

Most importantly, says Doley, they help leaders focus on the district mission

of club- and membership-building and why it's so important. A Toastmaster for 25 years, she is a member of two clubs in Texas and was part of Toastmasters' first group of region advisors in 2010. She served in the role for Region 3 in 2010–2011 and then again in 2011–2012.

RAs don't fix problems for districts or dictate to leaders the steps they should take. They mentor, facilitate and help leaders develop their own strategies and solutions.

"Servant leadership is the lifeblood of the Toastmasters experience."

And RAs truly make a difference, say district leaders. Mohamed Makhoulouf, DTM, the 2017–2018 District 20 Director, says the support from his region advisor, Aletta Rochat, was invaluable. She held virtual meetings with district leaders and provided constant encouragement and advice for overcoming challenges. "This helped all district leaders to easily achieve the District Success Plan," says Makhoulouf.

Rochat, DTM, a member of the Cape Town Toastmasters club in South Africa, served two terms, from 2016 to 2018, as the region advisor for Region 11. James Taruc, DTM, District 79 Director in 2017–2018, also cited the impact of Rochat's guidance, praising her generous sharing of her Toastmasters knowledge. He recalled a webinar she presented on "What Leaders Learn from Speech Contests."

"She goes beyond the norm to help her leaders succeed," says Taruc, a Pathways Guide.

The contributions of region advisors embody servant leadership and are key to the success of Toastmasters International. The volunteer role is challenging and demanding, says Doley, but the rewards are worth it. Not only do RAs help others flourish as leaders, she says, they improve their own leadership skills in the process.

"We want individuals who want to grow in their skills," says Doley, "and who want to lend their skills to help others." **T**

Paul Sterman is a former senior editor for the Toastmaster magazine.



MORE INFORMATION

For information on how to apply to be an RA for 2019–2020, including links to the RA Handbook and Policy Protocol 10.0, visit www.toastmasters.org/leadership-central/region-advisor-tools/application-process-and-selection-timeline.

For a list of the 2018–2019 Toastmasters RAs, go to www.toastmasters.org/leadership-central/region-advisor-tools/2018-2019-region-advisors.



Digital Dependence

The technological revolution has connected us around the world, but at what cost?

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

Galya Westler is a social media expert who has spoken and written about the dangers of digital dependence, warning of how spending too much time connected to our smartphones and the online world can often lead to psychological and medical maladies. But Westler also is a hard-working CEO who runs Plazus Technologies in Vancouver, a position that demands she spend large amounts of time on her phone communicating with clients or employees working remotely from other countries.

That irony isn't lost on Westler and illustrates the struggle many of us face as we weigh the advantages of being tethered to our mobile devices against the costs of dependence and of damage to relationships with those around us. The scope of the challenge becomes apparent when someone as well-versed in the dangers of digital addiction as Westler wrestles with finding the proper balance between online and offline worlds.

"Because of the nature of my job I can get sucked into technology, and I have to discipline myself how and when to detach," says Westler, ACB, a member of the Vancouver Entrepreneurs Toastmasters club. Westler now makes a point of shutting off her phone before work in the morning and again at night, replacing that screen time with tactics that help her slow down, refresh and connect in other ways with the offline world around her.

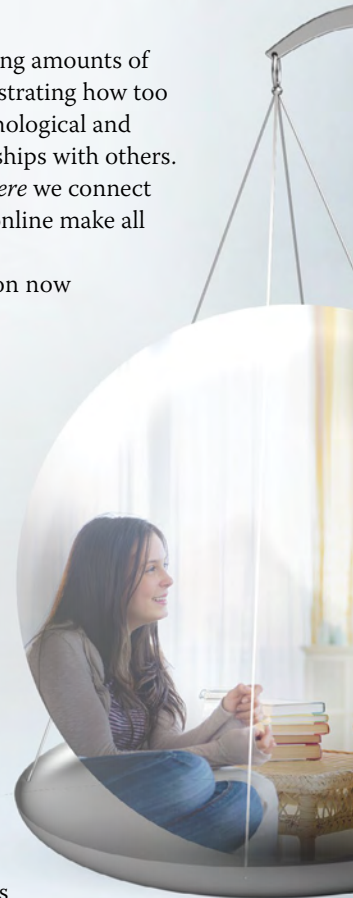
Dangers of Digital Dependence

As people around the globe spend increasing amounts of time online, research has mounted demonstrating how too much "screen time" can threaten our psychological and physical well-being, as well as our relationships with others. Many of these studies also suggest that *where* we connect with one another and *how long* we spend online make all the difference.

More than half of the world's population now uses the internet in some form. About a quarter of a billion new users came online for the first time in 2017, according to the 2018 Global Digital reports from the organization We Are Social. This trend was driven by more affordable smartphones and mobile data plans. The number of people using the top social media platform in their respective countries also has increased by almost 1 million new users each day (globally) over the past year, the Global Digital reports found.

According to a 2018 survey from the Pew Research Center, more than 26 percent of adults in the United States now go online "almost constantly," up from 21 percent in 2015. Younger adults in particular were trending toward being "constantly connected." About four in ten 18- to 29-year-olds in the United States now go online almost constantly, and 49 percent go online multiple times per day.

There's no denying the benefits the world has derived from the evolution of the internet and the advent of smartphones



nice



“The trick is to become more aware of when we’re overusing technology and find creative ways to escape from our screens, even for small moments.”

and tablets. People living in far corners of the globe now have access to research, educational resources, music, images, online communities and much more at the tap of an icon or swipe of a screen. Mobile devices allow us to text, email, Skype or FaceTime from anywhere at any time. The technological revolution clearly has delivered impressive benefits.

But that access has come with costs. Studies show growing problems with increased isolation, loneliness, depression and even dangerous detachment from reality resulting from the over-use or misuse of modern technologies. When people spend too much time online at the expense of connecting face-to-face with family, friends or work colleagues, a significant price is often paid, experts say.

One study recently published in the periodical *Clinical Psychological Science* found that between 2010 and 2015, 33 percent more teens in the United States reported feeling “useless and joyless” than in a previous study and that teen suicides rose by 31 percent in the same period. The study’s authors argued that this increase in depression is likely due in large part to the rising use of smartphones and the decrease in interpersonal connections.

“Adolescents who spent more time on new media (including social media and electronic devices such as smartphones) were more likely to report mental health issues,” the study’s authors wrote. “Adolescents who spent more time on non-screen activities (in-person social interaction, sports/exercise, homework, print media and attending religious services) were less likely.”

Another recent study published in *Emotion*, a journal from the American Psychology Association (APA), found that teens who spent more than two hours per day interacting with their mobile devices were less happy on average than those who had more non-screen, face-to-face time with others.

“If we become too attached to our phones and the internet there also is a danger of losing the barrier between the virtual world and the real world,” Westler says. “Social networks allow people to create a stylized version of themselves in an effort to entertain others as well as themselves, but often at the cost of not being mindful and focused on their identities in real life.”

Moderation in Online Use is Key

As with many things in life, moderation in online use is key to achieving balance. The *Emotion* study discovered that teens with *zero hours* of screen time had higher rates of unhappiness than their peers who logged on a few hours a week. Other research



has found that moderate use of social networks and online activity is not innately harmful and can even enhance social skills. In addition, individuals from often-marginalized groups like those identifying as LGBT can often find support in online communities in ways they can’t offline, experts say.

Westler says there is considerable value in putting down the phone and meeting face-to-face in business situations, as well as in our personal lives. In her business she employs developers in the Ukraine who work remotely, as well as employees who work on-site in her Vancouver office. Westler typically checks in every day with her remote staff via phone, text or email, but also strives to have face-to-face meetings weekly or monthly, either via Skype or in-person gatherings.

“That’s important to build a sense of rapport, connection and teamwork,” Westler says. “We don’t have to abandon our smartphones, just learn how to use them more selectively. The more that people learn how to connect authentically with others offline, the less I find they need to use their phones.”

Ann Van Eron, Ph.D., founder and owner of Potentials, a global coaching and organization development consulting firm based in Chicago, says business leaders she consults with around the world constantly struggle with balancing the execution of work tasks and cultivating better relationships with their subordinates and peers.

“Tobacco goes after your lungs, sugar goes after your pancreas, and the online world and big data go after your entire nervous system.”

—MICHAEL GELB

“It’s easy to become a slave to your phone or email to the point where you become unbalanced in focusing on performing tasks over building relationships,” Van Eron says. “I work with executives to help them see the value in connecting with others in the workplace, which is still best accomplished through in-person meetings. There are a lot of meta-studies that show it’s that face-to-face interaction—where people feel listened to, connected and supported—that is the greatest source of human satisfaction.”

The Art of Connection

Developing rapport with others through in-person connections is not just a business tool to enhance productivity or client service, says Michael Gelb—a pioneer in the fields of executive coaching, creative thinking and innovative leadership—but an invaluable

end in itself. “By connecting in a meaningful way with others, we broaden our own humanity as well as connect with a deeper part of ourselves,” Gelb says.

Gelb is author of the book *The Art of Connection: 7 Relationship-Building Skills Every Leader Needs Now*, which argues that in today’s world too many people find it easier to avoid face-to-face contact in favor of “technological shortcuts,” which keeps them from having meaningful relationships with others.

Gelb says technology companies that rely on the internet or social networks for success often want users “so addicted that they never shut their devices off and rarely leave the online world,” he says. “Tobacco goes after your lungs, sugar goes after your pancreas, and the online world and big data go after your entire nervous system.”

There is no shortage of disturbing images, hateful commentary, conspiracy theories and other negative influences online, Gelb says, and users need to be discerning in how they set their web or RSS feeds and in choosing what links they click on. Gelb has a chapter in his book about how emotions are contagious, stressing that people need to be careful what they “catch and spread,” both online and off.

“If you get caught up in a world of ugly imagery or hateful dialogue, it’s not going to help you catch and spread courage, joy, creativity or positivity, which are so vital in the world today,” he says.

There also are oft-overlooked physical costs to digital addiction, Gelb says, including maladies like “texting neck.” For his book, Gelb interviewed a leading spinal surgeon in New York who reported seeing an influx of new patients with neck-related issues. “These are the kind of problems that in the past he would only see in people in their 60s, 70s and 80s,” Gelb says. “But now there are teenagers and patients in their 20s coming in with the syndrome from being addicted to their devices.”

Business Costs of Digital Addiction

Being too digitally dependent also can have bottom-line consequences for businesses.

“People who have grown up tethered to their smartphones often find they don’t have the interpersonal skills to deal with clients or even coworkers,” he says. “They haven’t practiced these relationship skills, and they don’t come naturally in business settings.”

Gelb works with one business executive who has come to realize the power of making face-to-face connections. As the head of engineering for a large corporation, this leader often took clients out for expensive dinners to entertain them and thank them for their business. But one day he decided to change that approach.

“He now gives those clients an hour of his undivided attention over coffee, is fully present, doesn’t check his phone and

really listens and reflects back what the clients say,” Gelb reports. “As a result, many of his clients now pay a premium to do business with him, because they aren’t the low-cost provider in their market. That level of attention and concern is something clients aren’t often getting from the company’s competitors.”

“We don’t have to abandon our smartphones, just learn how to use them more selectively.”

—GALYA WESTLER

To better manage digital dependence, Gelb suggests turning off your phone and putting it away when you’re meeting with anyone one-on-one. In business meetings, ask that everyone both *turn off* and *turn in* their phones and place them out of sight for the duration of the meeting.

Another option is considering a “digital sunset,” a reasonable time when you turn off your phone or tablet every night and don’t turn it on again until morning. Or you can hold a digital “fast” once a week by disconnecting from your phone for an entire day; if that’s not realistic because of family or business responsibilities, turn it off for a few hours.

“It’s not easy to detach,” Gelb admits. “I personally need to check my phone regularly to stay in touch with clients. But if you can discipline yourself to do things like take a short walk in nature instead of playing with your phone for another 30 minutes, you’ll find it renewing and often energizing.”

It’s easy for even the most vigilant among us to become hostages to our phones or tablets in the rush of everyday business or when managing the responsibilities of our personal and family lives. The trick is to become more aware of when we’re overusing technology and find creative ways to escape from our screens, even for small moments. The result often will be better physical health, improved relationships with those around us and a greater sense of well-being. **T**



Dave Zielinski is a freelance journalist in Minneapolis and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Member Achievements

Members pay homage to Toastmasters for their triumphs.

Allan Kaufman, DTM

Randallstown Network Toastmasters • Baltimore, Maryland



Reflections on My Club's 30-year Anniversary

The year was 1987 and I was teaching a series of public speaking workshops as part of my requirements to become a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM). I conducted the first one with my longtime friend and colleague Allan Misch, who was also in the process of becoming a DTM. We held it at the headquarters of the U.S. Social Security Administration in Washington, D.C., where we both worked for many years and attended a workplace Toastmasters club together.

I went on to conduct several sessions by myself, at Randallstown High School, as part of a Baltimore County (Maryland) adult education program. I remember that my father, Samuel Kaufman, attended some of my classes and would eventually become a DTM himself.

At the last workshop, many of my students decided they wanted to continue practicing public speaking, since they were having so much fun and learning a lot. So I said, "Let's start a Toastmasters club in this area."

We did indeed start a club, receiving our charter from Toastmasters International in January 1988. We found a place to meet close to the high school, at Church Lane Elementary School. I'll always remember how we sat on the school's little chairs.

Today the club still bears the same name—Randallstown Network Toastmasters—but its meeting place has moved nearby to a different suburb of Baltimore (Pikesville), and we now meet at Woodholme Elementary School (where we still sit on little chairs!).

I've seen club members come and go over the years, but we've always maintained a large, robust, vibrant roster of active members (which has included Craig Valentine, who went on to become the 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking).

We may sit on little chairs, but we are achieving big things. It's been a wonderful journey, and I look forward to the next 30 years!



Allan Kaufman



Katrina Shawver, ACB, ALB

In Ahwatukee Toastmasters • Phoenix, Arizona



How Toastmasters Helped Me Launch My Book

I joined Toastmasters four years ago with two clear purposes in mind. First, I knew I needed to improve my impromptu speaking. Second, I was finishing a book and knew I would need to promote it through speaking engagements. My book, *HENRY: A Polish Swimmer's True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America*, is a nonfiction biography that was 15 years in the making. It was published in November 2017 to outstanding praise.

At my book launch, I faced a standing-room-only crowd of 85 people, including members of my In Ahwatukee Toastmasters club. As I was introduced, I knew that without my Toastmasters training I would not have had the confidence or skill that I did at that moment. I truly enjoyed giving the presentation and answering questions from the audience. Based on my talk, I was referred to seven other organizations and book clubs as a good speaker. As the presentation drew to a close, the applause was resounding, genuine and incredibly validating. Many people bought multiple copies for their holiday gift-giving.

As I reflected the next day, I realized the leadership roles for completing the *Competent Leadership* manual had contributed to building my confidence and speaking skills as much as all my prepared speeches had. Every role, from Ah-Counter to Evaluator, is regular

practice for developing critical listening and speaking skills. Every speech evaluation is an impromptu three-minute speech. I look forward to our club meetings at 7 a.m. every Tuesday. There is a powerful energy in that room of goal-oriented, supportive friends; it carries me through the day.

I know Henry Zguda, the subject of my biography, is smiling down on me. Count me as a Toastmaster for life!



Chris Boron

Chris Boron, ACG

Eastern Shore Toastmasters • Mornington, Australia



Putting My Skills to Use

In the December Viewpoint article in the *Toastmaster* magazine, “Make an Impact With What You Learn,” Toastmasters’ International President Balraj Arunasalam, DTM, asked how we, as members, have put our Toastmasters skills to good use.

In early 2003, I commenced the Toastmasters communication and leadership program (and journey) to improve my communication and technical presentation skills for my employment role, which was regulating and facilitating offshore oil and gas exploration and development.

Then, in April 2005, tragedy struck when my 21-year-old son suddenly passed away. Parents are not supposed to outlive their children. Without the Toastmasters learning experience I would not have been able to—or capable of—effectively giving a grieving father’s eulogy.

The skills and confidence I achieved in the Toastmasters program allowed me to volunteer for work presentations and chair and lead groups and meetings. I also volunteer for various community focus groups and organizations and successfully lobby authorities on environmental, safety and social justice issues.

My communication and leadership initiatives resulted in me being selected to represent my department, state and country at several specialized national and international conferences and forums, and I was head-hunted for industry feedback, comments and recommendations.

None of this would have been possible without the skills, experience and knowledge that the Toastmasters program provides its members. Thank you, Ralph Smedley, for your life-changing vision, which empowers individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.

Sarah Beasley, ACG, ALB

Words Worth Speaking • Longmont, Colorado



Sarah Beasley

From Introvert to Extrovert

I have always been an introvert. I could talk to people if I had to, but I stayed away from those I did not know. I was shy and felt uncomfortable, worried that I would say something inappropriate. After thinking about it for almost seven years, I reluctantly joined Toastmasters in November 2015. I had no idea how much that would change me in less than two years.

I quickly went through several manuals and reached the point where I had to decide if I was going to continue my Toastmasters journey. I decided to take a huge leap and became an area director. I chaired speech contests and presented at club officer trainings. I built relationships with the club members in my area. I chartered a club in 28 days. To do all that, I had to force myself to be vulnerable. It was not easy at first, but it was worth it!

I am still an introvert, and need solitude to recharge, think and process, but I am now the first to volunteer to speak in group settings. My family and friends have noticed my personality change for the better. The shy, scared person I was before I joined Toastmasters is gone. I am miles from where I started but still not quite where I want to be.

This would not have been possible without the support from my clubs, my lifelong friends and mentors, and the opportunities I have been provided to challenge myself. My only regret? Waiting so long to join Toastmasters! 🇺🇸

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



HOW TO BE FUNNY

Whether presenting virtually or face-to-face, ensure your humor is universal.

BY DEAN FOSTER

“When in Rome ...” the saying goes, so if you use humor in your presentation (and who doesn’t?), that means what’s funny in Italy will not necessarily make them laugh in Los Angeles.



ACROSS CULTURES

Anyone who has made presentations in a different country learns this very quickly. As all good presenters know, humor is universal, but jokes may not be. So while using humor is always a good strategy, jokes can be a poor tactic because what makes a joke funny is often an aspect of the local context. If the audience does not know the context, the joke fails.

For example, I once prepared a presentation for an audience in Hong Kong. Just before I went on, a colleague reminded me

that in Asia, a great way to kick off a speech is to express humility based on the Chinese value of individuals humbling themselves. He suggested I apologize upfront in the event my speech would fail to meet the audience's expectations.

As an American, I viewed this strategy as the kiss of death for my presentation, wanting instead to open with a humorous anecdote about cultural differences: the topic of my talk. So I thought about this cultural dilemma. When I went on stage, I announced



is essential that we test humor in a live setting before using it in a virtual environment, whether or not we are crossing cultural lines.

Using Slides

Presentations with images and written words (e.g., PowerPoint) must be culturally appropriate for everyone. It can be difficult to create content free of culturally offensive references while not eliminating the local flavor and color that might be essential to understanding the information being communicated (or the joke being told). For example, I was once making a presentation in the Netherlands, and made a point about the use of English as a language of global business communication. My “humorous” anecdote had to do with a Dutch fellow working in the United Kingdom who, quite legitimately, had been complaining to his team about what he saw as disorganization in

that I understood that here in Hong Kong I would garner respect if I started my presentation with an apology of sorts. I also said that in my country, the United States, we would prefer to start a speech with a joke. To accommodate both cultures, I apologized for not having any jokes to tell. The audience got—and appreciated—the joke, and it was a great way to introduce the topic of my talk: making presentations across cultures.

The Challenges of Technology

While the tried-and-true “When in Rome ...” rule is still a good starting point for delivering humor across cultures, it is no longer enough. Presenters are now managing new virtual technologies in their presentations, and technology, like culture, presents new challenges to the use of humor in presentations. In today’s world, we not only communicate and make presentations face-to-face, but increasingly we do so virtually. We use technologies such as WebEx and Skype, and make our presentations and keynote speeches to groups both large and small around the world, often to audiences comprising many different cultural groups. And while using humor face-to-face in cross-cultural situations is tough enough, doing so virtually can be even trickier. Additional rules must be understood to successfully communicate via new technology.

However, technology isn’t really new to most presenters. After all, speakers have been using microphones, PowerPoint slides, lights and cameras for a long time. We know that being comfortable with our equipment is essential to successfully relaying a message. We had to learn how to use a camera and microphone, and we need to do the same with Skype and broadband.

However, while cameras are common in face-to-face presentation situations, most of the time the audience is still there, giving immediate feedback. In most virtual presentation situations, cameras do not allow us to see our audience, and the feedback we get is severely limited. We must be sure the humorous anecdotes we communicate are well-received and understood. Therefore, it

the company. It got back to management that he was complaining about the company, and not the disorganization he saw, since his Dutch accent made his comment, “I hate disorganization,” sound like, “I hate this organization.” While the joke worked in the United Kingdom and the United States, it did not go over well in Amsterdam, because it sounded as though I was making fun of the Dutch accent.

Be sure to review all graphics and text for cultural appropriateness. And if any of the elements are associated with a humorous anecdote or joke, they must not distract from the funny part of the joke. Despite your best intention, any glaring, culturally inappropriate graphics or text will immediately distract from, and undermine, the quality of your humor. For example, while a graphic of a physically attractive female in fashionable dress might work in a presentation in Italy, it would be offensive, if not blasphemous, in Saudi Arabia.

“It is essential that we test humor in a live setting before we use it in a virtual environment.”

While different spellings (“humor” in the United States versus “humour” in the United Kingdom) don’t often distract much from a presentation, a larger problem occurs when words have different meanings in different cultures (e.g., “fanny” in the United States refers to one’s rear end, but in Britain the word refers to female private parts, while the rear end is called the “bum”). Another issue can arise when using terms with no comparable meaning in other cultures. American sports clichés such as “ballpark figure,” “left field” and “step up to the plate” come to mind, as well as expressions in Indian English such as “do the needful” (meaning, do what needs to be done to advance or solve the problem). Care should also be taken when employing acronyms and abbreviations specific to only one culture or industry (e.g., “ASAP” or

“ETA” might make sense in the United States, but may not be understood by those of different cultures, even if they are familiar with English).

“As all good presenters know, humor is universal, but jokes may not be.”

Scrub your graphics of any culturally inappropriate images. Religious or political images are the obvious place to start, but also consider, for example, the use of color, as colors carry culturally different meanings (e.g., red is fine in Asia, green is fine in Muslim cultures, but green and yellow are not always appropriate for use in Thailand or the Philippines). Even the degree to which text and graphics are used varies culturally. In Asia, for example, the use of symbols, numbers, graphs and pictures is much more effective than text or words on a screen. However, in continental Europe, the use of bullet-pointed, logically connected text that represents concrete ideas leading to a final conclusion is highly effective.

Are You Speaking My Language?

And then there’s language, the fundamental element of every culture. It’s important to remember that individuals in other cultures may be speaking a kind of “global English,” and that their first or even second language may not be English. Therefore, English-speaking presenters must take responsibility for being understood. The best way to do that is to speak slowly enough to receive confirmation from audience members that they, in fact, understand your words.

This audience feedback can take the form of direct information; members of certain cultures are good at telling you exactly what they think and feel, including those in France, Nigeria, South Africa and Israel, among others. But with other audiences, you may have to tune in to what their silence implies, and whether they understand (including those in Japan, the Philippines, Mexico and others). Good presenters take these things into account when an audience is physically present. However, when speaking virtually, it may be difficult to get any feedback. Again, first test your content in a face-to-face situation. A friend told me the story of making a joke during a presentation in Japan, which, according to the audience feedback he was getting, he felt had gone over very well: as he was speaking in English, a translator was translating throughout. As he learned from a colleague after his presentation, the translator was telling the audience, “Now the presenter is telling a joke ... now he is getting to the punch line ... OK, everyone, now laugh.”

Solution: Always speak slowly and allow listeners the time they need to “translate” your English as you speak. Opt for words with fewer syllables when you have a choice, and always avoid ac-



ronyms and local terms that don’t translate well. Put your words through this “cultural neutralizer” process, especially when telling a humorous story. Nothing kills a joke faster than when listeners don’t understand you.

What’s Your Style?

Style is also subject to differences. Much of British humor is based on the ability to use the meaning of a word or phrase to its opposite intent. This is the heart of irony, a form of humor that is not as common, and therefore not as well understood, in direct-speaking cultures like Switzerland, Germany or the Netherlands. Sarcasm can be seen as hurtful in places like Latin America, but considered funny in India or Israel precisely because of its abrasive, in-your-face, over-the-top nature. Humor based on self-deprecation (making yourself the target of the joke) is appreciated in the West, but in Asia, instead of generating a laugh, self-deprecation will more likely elicit quiet empathy and discomfort with the unfortunate situation you are experiencing.

Differences in cultural preferences can even arise in what is visually funny. Pratfalls and physical humor play well in some cultures, but not well in others (yes in France and Italy; no in Malaysia).

It’s funny how culture plays a crucial role in determining what’s funny—and what’s not. As presenters, we can learn to be effective in telling a joke or funny story in our home country, but no amount of skill will ensure the success of a culturally inappropriate joke or humorous anecdote presented to an audience in another country. This is especially true when presentations—and the humor that should be an integral part of them—are dependent on technology. For those of us who earn a livelihood presenting today, this is no laughing matter. ■

Dean Foster is the executive strategic consultant for Dwellworks International and the founder of DFA Intercultural Global Solutions.

Mastering Body Language

Top 5 techniques to enhance your stage presence.

BY JESSE SCINTO

The conference hall buzzed as we awaited her arrival. Stacks of books sat ready for signing. Drinks flowed freely at the bar. When she finally entered, we all vied for a glimpse. “I’m going to make this as interactive as possible,” said our keynote speaker, joking comfortably with the people nearby. She gave the impression of supreme confidence. It all seemed so natural.

To a new Toastmaster, this type of performance may seem out of reach. It’s easy to assume that speakers who exude confidence are just born with something special. But just as actors adapt their behavior and mannerisms to play different parts, we too can learn to shape the impressions we make on others. Stage presence is a learned skill, for which many would-be leaders seek expert coaching. Here are some important techniques regarding body language, a key component of “executive presence.”

Impression Management

In our daily lives, we naturally try to manage the impressions we make on others—adapting our behavior to fit the situation and elicit positive perceptions. This can be seen in something as simple as choosing a flattering photo for LinkedIn or dressing up for an interview.

Researchers have studied this phenomenon at least since 1959, when sociologist Erving Goffman published his classic book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. In it, Goffman likens our natural efforts at impression management to a dramaturgical performance, in which we follow certain scripts for certain

situations. For instance, when we visit a restaurant, we expect the waiter to act like a waiter, politely taking our order. Back in the kitchen, he may drop his game face. There’s a front stage and a back stage in Goffman’s analogy, and we seamlessly move from one to the other.

“A key characteristic of executive presence is deliberateness.”

Similarly, executive presence is a type of impression management, with a script based on preconceived notions of how an executive should behave. A key characteristic of executive presence is deliberateness. It’s common to think that leaders should speak and move with purpose. Each gaze should be meaningful, each gesture directed. The idea behind executive-presence training is that, if we develop the mannerisms of a leader, we’ll be perceived as such. Our audience will take these outward signs as cues to credibility and strength.

Mastering Body Language

1 Leadership Gaze—When speaking to a group, focus on one person at a time for the length of a thought. When there’s a natural pause (e.g., at the end of a phrase), shift your gaze to someone new. San Francisco-based SNP Communications advises speakers to avoid sweeping the room with their eyes or letting their eyes dart up to the ceiling or to the side, which may signal uncertainty. If your lips are moving, your eyes should be locked onto

someone else’s. This type of eye contact is more deliberate and longer lasting than what most speakers are accustomed to. It’s also harder to maintain, because it *feels too long*.

2 Resolute Stance—Plant your feet shoulder width apart when you’re speaking. Avoid shifting from side to side. Also avoid pacing or speaking while walking. If you want to move to another area of the stage, walk there purposefully, plant your feet and make eye contact before you start speaking again.

To better understand stance, I spoke with James Vincent Meredith, an actor with Chicago’s Steppenwolf Theatre. He’s played many leaders during his career, including such legendary figures as Othello. “When I was younger, I tended to pace a lot, because I thought that was a way of showing my power,” says Meredith. But he eventually realized, “Moving around seems to signal a bit of unsettledness, a bit of uncertainty.”

Meredith adds, “Your real power comes from keeping your good posture, not shifting weight and not being afraid to simply just stand.”

3 Emphatic Gestures—Use gestures for emphasis. Bring both hands up simultaneously with open palms facing each other (as if you were holding a large ball). Gesture symmetrically, as though setting the ball down on important words. John Neffinger and Matthew Kohut, authors of *Compelling People*, refer to this style of gesturing as the “magic ball.” I call it the emphatic style, to distinguish it



Accredited Speaker Rochelle Rice presents an education session at the 2016 Toastmasters International Convention.

from the dramatic style, in which speakers use their hands and bodies to act out scenarios. It also differs from the orchestrated style, in which TV presenters use set pieces like the “spider on the mirror” (hands facing each other, fingers touching and pointed downward). The dramatic style may be unseemly for a leader, and the orchestrated style may come across as phony or stilted.

When you’re not motioning, keep your hands comfortably at your side. Avoid clasping them or placing them in your pockets. Eliminate extraneous movement like the “washing machine”—when your hands go around and around as you reach for words. Also avoid defensive postures (arms crossed). Again, this is harder than you might think, because it feels rather exposed to leave your hands at your sides.

4 Vocal Vigor—Be loud enough that people in the last row can easily hear you. This may feel embarrassingly loud, but sound dissipates quickly in a big or carpeted room. To project your voice to the last row, you have to breathe and speak from the diaphragm. Practice by

placing your hand on your stomach and taking a deep breath so your diaphragm expands. Use this air to support your words. Speaking loudly has the added advantage of forcing you to emote, according to SNP Communications.

5 Focused Feedback—Because impression management is central to professional presence, feedback is critical. Most trainers incorporate some combination of peer review and video recording. “We’re looking at how people react,” says Don Kaufman, co-founder of coaching firm The Kaufman Partnership, based in Philadelphia. “We videotape people so they can see their leadership presence, how they are in terms of the way they speak to people.”

Video is particularly useful for spotting uncontrolled gestures and eye movement. In time, we can become more aware of what we’re doing in the moment and coach ourselves to more useful behaviors.

Meeting Audience Expectations


To be sure, executive presence is only one style of self-presentation, and it’s not appropriate for every public-speaking situa-

tion. For instance, comedians often display frenetic energy during their performances. Some have built careers on nervous tics and neuroticism (I see Rodney Dangerfield adjusting his tie right now). These status-lowering signals tell the audience that the speaker can’t be taken seriously.

“The idea behind executive-presence training is that, if we develop the mannerisms of a leader, we’ll be perceived as such.”

In addition, leadership scholars are quick to point out that true leadership doesn’t reside only in mannerisms; presence of mind, respect for our listeners and good ideas are just as important.

But there’s nothing wrong with enhancing our performance through practice. As Kaufman, the noted sociologist, once said, “People are already managing their impressions, but the way they manage them may not be in their best interests.” As with most things in communication, it all depends on the goal and the audience. We’re most credible when we fit audience expectations. So try one of these techniques during your next club speech. Ask your evaluator to pay special attention to your executive presence.

Making a strong impression is within your reach! 

Jesse Scinto, M.S., ACG, ALB, is a member of Greenspeakers Toastmasters club in New York, New York, and a lecturer in Columbia University’s Strategic Communication program. He currently teaches at the American University in Bulgaria as a Fulbright U.S. scholar. Follow him on Twitter: @jessescinto.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Watch an exclusive Toastmasters video with tips on how to properly use gestures and body language.

Official Notice of Vote

On Saturday, August 25, 2018, you will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the International Convention in Chicago, Illinois, United States.

The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14. The Committee's selection is presented in accordance with the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII.

TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

2018 Annual Business Meeting

7:00 a.m.

Saturday, August 25, 2018

McCormick Convention Center
Chicago, Illinois, United States

Your 2018-2019 Officer and Director Candidates

Officer Candidates

To view details of each officer nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at: www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates



INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT-ELECT
Deepak Menon, DTM



FIRST
VICE PRESIDENT
Richard Peck, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Magnus Jansson, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Margaret A. Page, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Christine A. Temblique, DTM

Director Candidates

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at:

www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates

From Region 2

Pan Kao, DTM
Joan Lewis, DTM

From Region 4

Larry J. Marik, DTM
Kimberly Myers, DTM

From Region 6

Carol Prahinski, DTM
David M. Wiley, DTM

From Region 8

Shirley E. Daley, DTM
Anthony J. Longley, DTM

From Region 10

Tuire Vuolasvirta, DTM

From Region 12

Marilyn Freeman, DTM
David Templeman, DTM

From Region 14

Susan Y. Zhou, DTM

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the convention or by proxy.

If you are attending the Toastmasters International convention this August, you will have the opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting.

Cast Your Vote for Proposal A

Make your voice heard.

In August, at the 2018 Annual Business Meeting, every Toastmasters club will have the opportunity to vote on a proposed amendment to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International.

Proposal A

The Advisory Committee of Past Presidents (ACPP) is defined in the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VII: Committees, Section 4: Advisory Committee of Past Presidents. It is a standing committee of the Board, and the Board may prescribe policies for the governance and operations of this committee. The ACPP is further defined in Policy 11.4: Board of Directors Committees.

The quorum requirement for standing committees is defined in the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article XI: Quorum, Section 3: Committees, as “a majority of the members of any standing or other Board committee shall constitute a quorum ...”

Historically, the ACPP meets in person each August and periodically by conference call. The Committee discusses business and votes on matters that are presented to the Board for review and consideration. If the ACPP holds a meeting but does not reach quorum, then business may not be conducted by the Committee and recommendations may not be adopted or presented to the Board. Members of the ACPP requested that the Board review the quorum requirements and consider alternatives that would allow the Committee to conduct business.

The Board proposes amending the Bylaws of Toastmasters International to enable the Board of Directors to provide an alternative process for the ACPP to conduct business when a quorum is not present. If the proposal passes, Policy 11.4: Board of Directors Committees would be automatically amended.

FOR



The Board of Directors asks for your support and recommends that your club vote in favor of the Proposals.

To view the full text of the proposed amendment to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and Policy 11.4: Board of Directors Committees visit:

www.toastmasters.org/2018Proposal

The Board of Directors of Toastmasters International, at its March 2018 meeting, unanimously voted to present this amendment to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International at the 2018 Annual Business Meeting. **T**

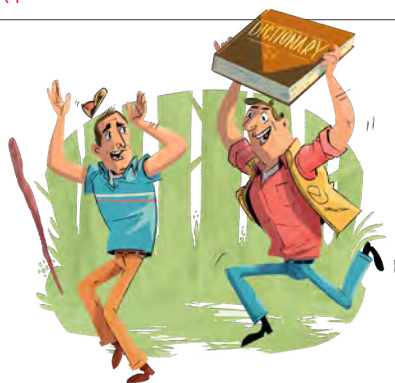
Toastmasters HQ Moves to Colorado

Melting snow slid off the young trees as a crowd gathered around the entrance of Toastmasters International's new headquarters in Englewood, Colorado, on March 19. To employees moving from California, Toastmasters' home since its founding in 1924, and to members of the Board of Directors visiting from warmer climates, the spring storm was a welcome novelty. What was left of the snow glistened in the sun that shines in this area, on average, 300 days of the year.

It was from the warmth of this “Mile High City,” at an elevation of 5,280 feet, that Toastmasters International President Balraj Arunasalam welcomed a new chapter for the organization. “Teamwork makes the dream

work,” he said. “This building is a testament to the longevity of the movement and the continued need for communication and leadership skills our organization provides to individuals around the world.”

Mike Fitzgerald, president and chief executive officer of the Denver South Economic Development Partnership, welcomed Toastmasters as “one of the most exciting companies” ever to come to the area. “Toastmasters International is an intimidating group to welcome here and to be speaking in front of,” Fitzgerald joked, “... but there is no more vital thing in this age of the world than to be able to be a good storyteller and to communicate.”



Bad Language

A few words on the words you just can't say in public.

BY JOHN CADLEY

No, I won't be talking about *those* words (the ones you couldn't say as a child for fear of having your mouth washed out with soap). For one thing, you *can* say those words in public now. Any time. All the time. I sat through a movie recently where I thought I might have to wash out my *ears* with soap.

The worst you can be called for using such language is a foul mouth. The words I'm speaking of can get you pegged as something far more odious: well-spoken. I am referring to words like "fungible" and "solipsistic." People don't like it when you use those words. That's because they've heard them and were too lazy to look them up, so now they feel stupid. And it's *your* fault. Yeah, you—the person who innocently says, "I always talk about politics and religion in the most anodyne (inoffensive) terms," only to find you've just offended everyone in the room.

I'm not talking about sesquipedalianism here (using big words for the sake of using big words). I don't like those people either—the ones who always say "utilize" instead of "use." I'm talking about the lapidary (elegantly precise) satisfaction that comes from using the most elegantly precise word. You can't do that if you want to have any friends. Maybe once or twice because they think you're kidding: "Hey, John, did you call me a flaneur? I'd get mad if I knew what that meant. Ha ha!" He should be mad. I called him exactly what he was: a charming freeloader.

Just don't make a habit of it. I went hiking with a friend once and remarked that

our outing was bound to be salubrious. He nodded but said nothing. A little farther on we were surprised by a deer running across our path, and I mentioned experiencing a frisson of fear. My friend gave me a funny look. On our return I referred to the setting sun as effulgent. That's when he said, "OK, knock it off." "What?" I asked. "The big words," he said. "What?" I replied. "All I said was the hike would be beneficial for our health, the deer gave me a momentary feeling of danger, and the sunset was radiant."

"When you come upon a word like 'solipsistic,' look it up—not to be a smarty-pants but because it can be so much fun!"

He hasn't spoken to me since.

That's not fair. The English language has more words than any other—close to a million. Am I not allowed to use more than a few hundred of them? It's not like I'm blatantly showing off by using foreign words. Now that's unfair. If I went with some friends to a production of, say, *Macbeth* and commented afterward, "I got tremendous delight in the way that actress captured Lady Macbeth's sinister quidditas so well," I would richly deserve the dirty looks I would be sure to get. However, if I said the same thing with perfectly legitimate English words—"I found tremendous delectation in that actress's ability

to portray Lady Macbeth's malevolent, rebarbative nature"—I would get the same dirty looks, probably with an "Oh, shut up" thrown in to boot. That's not fair, either.

Here's the problem: People who use "big words" are thought to be showing off how "smart" they are. This is not true. People who converse with verbiage of the polysyllabic variety simply have dictionaries—and they use them. That is the *only* difference. When you come upon a word like "solipsistic," look it up—not to be a smarty-pants but because it can be so much fun! Solipsistic means extremely egocentric. How many friends, acquaintances and family members could you use that on? Yeah, a lot. Wouldn't it be great to tell them exactly what you think with no fear of repercussion because they have no idea what you're talking about? I can tell you, the feeling will make you febrile with regalement (feverish with joy).

I am telling you all this not to appear "smart" (we already know what that means). My only intention is to spare you the ignominious (disgraceful) image of one who is shambolic (disorganized, confused) in his or her conversation ... and to assure that you receive at least a moiety (portion) of the approbation (approval) that comes to those who make an effort to ameliorate (enrich) themselves.

Do we understand each other? **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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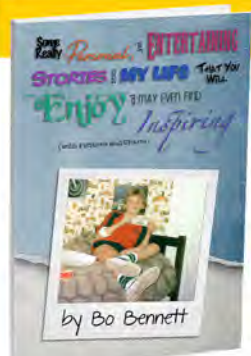
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM



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 

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs. Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.

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