

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | AUGUST 2018

TOASTMASTER®

Professional organizer
Star Hansen
speaks on the
meaning of messes

10 Tips for
**Global Speech
Introductions**
How to connect with
audiences anywhere

**Give a
Memorable
Presentation**
The science behind
standing out

I See Something in You

In 2003, I led a select group of Toastmasters on a grand mission to spread word of the organization across Sri Lanka and South Asia. Our main aim was to build clubs, but the journey yielded unexpected results.

I received a call from a distressed gentleman who worried about his son. He requested details of our club meetings and asked for help to guide his son in the right direction. He ended the call by asking me to “please make a man out of this boy.”

Soon after, a young man walked into one of our club meetings. He was tall, dark and handsome—confident but misguided, self-assured but a little arrogant, determined but lacking in direction. As soon as I saw him, I realized there was something different, something special about him. I shook hands with him and said, “I see something in you ... but I don’t know what it is.” I urged him to join the Smedley Toastmasters Club so we could embark on a journey to uncover his talents and discover his greatness.

“What does it really mean to believe in someone?”

That simple line, that special moment, remains etched in my mind to this day. It was the start of a meaningful relationship. We spent several years together, smoothing the rough edges and peeling off layer after layer to unearth the talents he had within. His competitive speaking career started in Toastmasters, and despite nine years of consecutive failures, through tenacity, determination and hard work, in 2014 Dananjaya Hettiarachchi became the World Champion of Public Speaking!

Having traveled across the globe visiting clubs and districts, I have seen the immense potential within our members throughout the world—that special something within each individual.

I feel something for you. My fellow Toastmasters, what is belief? What does it really mean to believe in someone? What does it take to really *feel* for someone whose life can be changed? In a world where we expect quick results and quick fixes, it is a rare act to have faith in another person—to genuinely *feel* for that person.

Here in Toastmasters, I believe this expression is still alive. In my world travels I have urged leaders to have faith in people, to genuinely *feel* for them. Belief can do a lot for an individual. Genuinely *feeling* for the individual can be life-changing. In the case of Hettiarachchi, the boy I mentored in Sri Lanka, it produced a World Champion.

Inside each of us is a unique quality, a hidden talent. I have seen and felt this in Toastmasters across the world. The Toastmasters program, particularly with Pathways, is life-changing. If you believe this, as I do, then you can bring out the best in yourself as well as in everyone around you.

I see something in you, I feel something for you, and I know what it is! It is your true potential! Cultivate it, and let it shine.

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM

International President



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Clubs from United Arab Emirates, Japan and Malaysia enjoy outdoor meetings.



Members of the Desert Divas club of Dubai, United Arab Emirates, relax in the shade while hosting a meeting at a local park.



Sasebo Fleet Activities Toastmasters in Sasebo, Nagasaki, Japan, hold a special Table Topics session in Hananomori Park on April 1 to celebrate the annual "Hanami" tradition of meeting under the cherry blossoms in the springtime.



Motorola Penang club members host a special Table Topics session outside Station 5, a popular hangout near George Town, Penang, Malaysia.



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) and size of at least 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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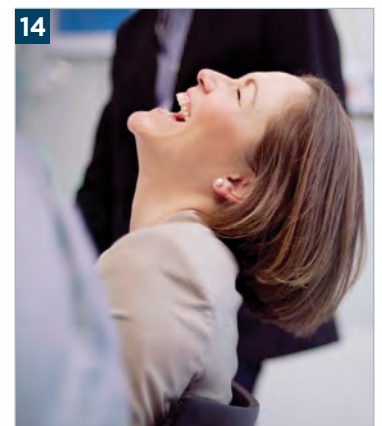
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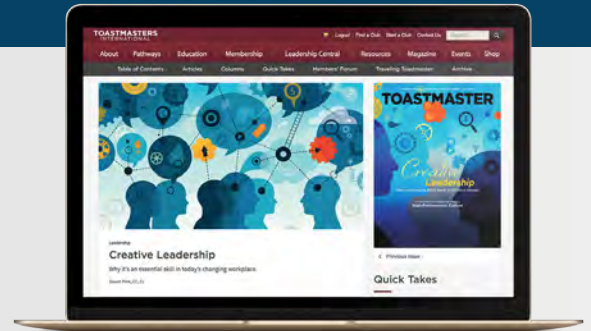


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See more photos, videos and links online at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine

August Online Extras:

- **Decluttering Homes—and Lives**—Learn about Star Hansen through extra photos and a video.  
- **The Science of Being Memorable**—Discover more information on how to make your message stick through hyperlinks. 
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Photo by Adam Hendershott Photography



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▶ MEMBER MOMENT



A Teacher of Hope

In Memory of Past International President
Robert “Bob” Barnhill, PIP (1996–97), DTM, AS

Past International President Robert “Bob” E. Barnhill III, DTM, AS, passed away in May at the age of 61 after a seven-year battle with ALS. He was a fifth-generation native of Lubbock, Texas, where he lived with his wife, Jana Barnhill, DTM, AS, also a Past International President (2008–09).

Bob Barnhill’s theme as 1996–97 International President was “A Passion for Eloquence.” He adopted former U.S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan’s definition of eloquent speech as “a thought on fire.” Barnhill said in his introductory interview for the *Toastmaster* magazine, “Each of us has a special gift to share with the world; however, most people fail to let their song be heard.” All those who remember Barnhill heard his song loud and clear, and benefited from the gift he shared with the world.

Barnhill earned his B.A., MBA and Doctor of Jurisprudence degrees—all in a span of just five and a half years—from Texas Tech University, where he taught as an adjunct professor since 1986. After graduating magna cum laude with a law degree in 1980, he joined the Lubbock Toastmasters club in 1983 and became the club’s president the following year. He made a career as an attorney, certified public accountant, personal financial specialist and certified financial planner specializing in retirement, estate and individual income tax planning. The Robert Barnhill PFP student and faculty Toastmasters club was chartered at Texas Tech in 2014 to honor his “extraordinary contribution to the Personal Financial Planning Department” as well as “to ensure the teachings of Professor Barnhill are passed down for all future generations.”

Barnhill championed teaching and mentoring in his career and through his involvement in Toastmasters, saying in a 2013 video interview of past international presidents that “as mentors you open doors; it’s up to the mentee to walk through the door.” In 1990 the Barnhills founded L.I.V.E. Speakers Inc., a training and consulting company offering continuing education courses and conducting seminars for professional associations across the United States. In 1991–92 the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants named Barnhill Outstanding Discussion Leader for Texas, and in 1992 he earned the coveted Toastmasters designation of Accredited Speaker. He was passionate about leadership and instrumental in advancing the Toastmasters leadership track. When Barnhill became the 1996–97 International President, he said to the *Toastmaster* magazine, “We must be tenacious in our quest to make leadership development as much a part of Toastmasters as communication training is today.”

Past International President (1993–94) Neil Wilkinson, DTM, who served with Barnhill on the Toastmasters Board of Directors, remembers Barnhill’s “sincere desire to help people find the passion

and courage to achieve their dreams.” “He did this throughout his entire life,” Wilkinson says, “without any expectation of reward for himself. I will miss his boisterous laugh, his wise counsel, his keen sense of humor and his outstanding ability to help others.”

Barnhill was a leader in many areas, including as a past president of the West Texas Chapter of the Financial Planning Association, as a past chairman of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce Small Business Committee and as a member of the boards of directors for the American Cancer Society, Big Brothers Big Sisters organization and Lubbock Community Theatre. He embodied the spirit of embracing all opportunities life had to offer, saying in an interview with Toastmasters Past International President (1999–2000) Tim Keck in 2013: “A little thing with me is no regrets. You don’t want to get to the end of life and regret not having done something, tried something. ... I think the people who fail to take advantage of the opportunities Toastmasters has to offer are the ones who lose out.”

Even when Barnhill fell ill, he did not miss an opportunity in Toastmasters. His wife, Jana, says even after 37 years of marriage, “We were still on our honeymoon.” As past international presidents, the couple remained very active in Toastmasters and attended the annual International Conventions, with last year being no exception even though Bob could no longer fly on an airplane. They drove from Texas to Vancouver with a second car trailing them with equipment and caregivers. “He did not let anything stop him,” Jana says. “Not once during his illness did Bob complain about anything.” She remembers her husband burning the midnight oil during the recent tax season, despite being physically unable to work except through special computer software. “He would not have it any other way.”

When asked in the 2013 interview how he’d like to be remembered, Barnhill said as “a teacher of hope.” “I want people to sit back and say, ‘You know, he put hope in my heart. He gave me the ability to believe that tomorrow can be a better day, and not to quit, not to give up. ... And because of that, I have a light.’”



Robert “Bob” E. Barnhill III

▶ SNAPSHOT



Taking an Anniversary Adventure to New Heights

Members of Smedley Toastmasters club in Kalubowila, Dehiwala-Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka, celebrate their club's 14th anniversary on the 2,243-meter/7,359-foot Mount Sri Pada (also known as Adam's Peak) in Sabaragamuwa Province.

▶ NEWS FROM TI

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- ▶ President's Inauguration

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Christine Mamuad

Christine Mamuad, DTM, is a technical program manager at NVIDIA Corporation in Santa Clara, California, United States, a company developing technology for artificial intelligence and self-driving cars. Christine collaborates with multiple cross-functional engineering and operations teams to develop and execute plans for new technologies. She is a member of the company's corporate club, nSpeak.

Christine's mentee, Yifang Xu, works as an engineer for the same company. When Yifang saw a flier posted in the corporate breakroom announcing a Toastmasters meeting, she attended and joined the nSpeak club.

Yifang, why did you choose Christine as your mentor?

In 2015, I watched Christine deliver a prepared speech at the nSpeak club meeting. Her vivid description, smooth delivery and precise choice of words touched me. I wrote a note on the evaluation form I filled out for her: "I liked every aspect of your speech. Could you be my mentor?" My journey in Toastmasters started there.

What was it like to give your first speech?

In preparation for my Ice Breaker, Christine encouraged me to make my ordinary story colorful—to think in details, paint a picture and structure my main points. After several iterations, I was able to deliver that first speech.

Every time I speak, she commends my achievements and points out the next workable area, raising the bar to a higher level. She has taught me to believe that I am interesting, to focus on a vision for my future and to remain passionate about what I do. I have learned to observe things around me beyond myself. And I have learned from her how to have a big heart.

▶ MENTORING TIPS

Why Become a Mentor?

With busy lives, speeches to write and club meetings to attend, Toastmasters may hesitate to take on duties beyond the typical club roles. If you are considering mentoring a fellow club member but worried about assuming this commitment, consider the rewards:

- ▶ **Learn from your mentees.** By engaging with someone less experienced, you get to view a challenge through their eyes, gaining fresh perspective.
- ▶ **Maintain momentum.** Continue to sharpen your own knowledge and skills as you learn by teaching.



Christine Mamuad, left, and Yifang Xu

How are you improving?

The best thing Christine has helped me with is believing in myself. I often looked at my weaknesses, which damaged my confidence. Christine helped me change my mindset to see that everyone has both weaknesses and strengths. Since I started paying more attention to my strengths, I've found that public speaking is more fun.

My emotional intelligence has grown dramatically. I feel much more willing to communicate with my family members, my kids' teachers, my loan agents, etc. Basically, I feel encouraged to speak to people.

What do you hope to accomplish in the future, with Christine's help?

I hope to become a DTM one day, just like her.

Mary Nesfield is a former associate editor of Toastmaster magazine.

WANT TO NOMINATE AN EXCEPTIONAL MENTOR?

Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.



- ▶ **Giving feels good.** Having gained skills enough to guide someone else is a significant accomplishment. Observing a fellow Toastmaster's growth—thanks to your personal guidance—is rewarding.
- ▶ **Stay on track.** Helping others to communicate and lead helps hone your own skills and assess whether you are practicing what you preach.
- ▶ **Receive recognition.** Club members and others celebrate those who take the time to foster growth in others. Not to mention, mentees are grateful for your guidance.

▶ **ADVICE FROM THE PROS**

Advice for Your Next Negotiation

Although it may seem intimidating, negotiating, like public speaking, is a skill that can be mastered by anyone. One simple thing to remember in any negotiation is to use objective factors when making your point. Look at these two requests for raises. Which one is easier for a stingy boss to deny?

“On my last performance evaluation, I received the highest marks possible. Compensation for my position and experience meets average salary expectations for this position. Since my performance is above average, I’m asking for a 10 percent raise.”

“I’ve been working here for a while now, and I always do excellent work. I get along with everyone, and I’ve really helped the company’s profitability. That’s why I’m asking for a 10 percent raise.”

The second request would be easier to deny. That’s because the entire request is based on subjective statements. The boss

is free to disagree with how “excellent” the employee’s work is and how well the employee can “get along with everyone.”

The first request, however, uses only objective factors and is therefore harder to turn down. The boss can’t deny what the average salary is or that the employee has scored above average on performance evaluations. The natural conclusion is that the worker deserves a raise.

It takes effort, but you can almost always find objective factors to use while negotiating. Some examples would be the value of a car when negotiating the price, the occupancy rate of an apartment when negotiating a lease and a study on produc-



PHOTO BY TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

tivity when trying to persuade your company to implement a four-day work week.

Objectivity, along with the confidence and communication skills learned in Toastmasters, goes a long way toward enhancing your negotiating success.

Michael Conklin, ACG, CL, is a freelance writer from Grand Junction, Colorado, and author of the book *The 30-Minute Guide to Negotiating a Raise*.

▶ **MEMBER CONNECTIONS**



Joy of Recognition

Members of Gaborone Toastmasters in Gaborone, Botswana, celebrate the club’s 25th anniversary with representatives from Thornhill Primary School, which provides a meeting place for the club, and Botho University, which offers space for conferences and trainings. They used the celebration as a way to involve the larger community and to recognize the club’s stakeholders. “Recognition is one of the cornerstones of the Toastmasters program,” says Thato Masire, ACB, ALB, vice president membership. “Recognition in various forms—ribbons, formal awards and certificates—serve to acknowledge, applaud and inspire recipients.” Gaborone Toastmasters was the first club established in Botswana and has directly or indirectly given birth to all other clubs in the country.



Members previously traveled to South Africa for trainings and conferences, but today club officer training is in Botswana by accredited trainers. Gaborone Toastmasters has held Distinguished Club status every year but one since 2004 and has also been recognized as President’s Distinguished and Select Distinguished.




1 | SARVESH NAIK of Houston, Texas, smiles in front of the Louvre Museum's Glass Pyramid in Paris, France.


2 | ANA POPE of Islington, London, England, takes in the breathtaking scenery of Kyoto, Japan.

3 | MARISA WHITTINGTON, ACS, ALB, of Draper, Utah, hangs out of her off-road Jeep in the desert.

4 | ALEX WANG, CC, of Hacienda Heights, California, and his friend Melody visit Grand Palace in Bangkok, 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!

The Breakfast Club

Transforming lives in an urban homeless shelter.

BY CORBETT KLEIN

One of the benefits of turning off your cellphone is the opportunity to look around and observe your environment. You may strike up a conversation with a colleague or stranger to learn something new or develop a friendship. In my case, I conversed with a colleague from Merck Pharmaceuticals, Lue Drummond, DTM, while we both waited for a train to take us home.

Lue and I met at a Merck West Point Toastmasters club lunchtime meeting in Pennsylvania. One day I spoke to him about my experience volunteering at the Rescue Mission of Trenton, New Jersey. The mission provides a safe, clean and warm refuge for the homeless, the hungry, the transient and the addicted. Although I found the people to be respectful and nonjudgmental, it seemed my attempts at teaching resume building, goal setting, time management and interviewing skills fell on deaf ears. The people being served expressed feelings of frustration and hopelessness, saying how nothing they could do would improve their situation.

Lue suggested we start a Toastmasters Gavel club for the shelter residents. I contacted the mission's teaching administrator, and she was receptive. She had been a Toastmaster herself!

We recruited members of Princeton Toastmasters club in New Jersey, which I later joined, to donate supplies and manuals and help lead meetings. In March 2012 the Trenton Rescue Mission Gavel Club, which members affectionately called The Breakfast Club, was up and running.

Members typically stayed at the mission about three months, and in that time we recognized them with a ribbon if they completed the first five speeches in the *Competent Communication* manual. Those who progressed through all 10 speeches earned the Competent Communicator designation.

We sometimes piled the members into a bus to attend a Princeton Toastmasters



The author, Corbett Klein, is pictured second from right with members of the Trenton Rescue Mission Gavel Club, a counselor from the mission and fellow Toastmasters volunteers.

meeting. They enjoyed the speeches and the club's quarterly lunch celebrations, and delivered their own Table Topics speeches.

Trenton is a small town. When Gavel club members left the mission and went into the community, they introduced themselves when they saw me (usually in a store or restaurant) and thanked me for my contribution. Because of my experience at the mission's Gavel club, I joined Princeton Toastmasters. Between the two clubs I have improved my own speaking skills and am learning to be a more flexible leader.

Toastmasters is much more than an organization that assists members in public speaking. Participation in clubs gives everyone the opportunity to improve their communication skills in any environment, whether at an interview, job presentation or family gathering—in the courtroom or during a telephone conversation. We learn skills like time management, leadership and coaching

in a positive, friendly environment. Best of all, we develop self-confidence and make friends with others who strive to improve.

In the Trenton Rescue Mission Gavel Club, members have challenges, just like in other clubs. Some of the members do not prepare well for their speeches, and many speak of their difficult life experiences. While this can be moving and heartrending, there comes a time when they must seek out opportunities to conduct research and advance to topics beyond their personal experiences.

I appreciate Toastmasters; it seems like a bit of a throwback to another era when perhaps people were more polite and concerned about presenting themselves in a proper way to progress in a civil society. But my experience with The Breakfast Club proves its relevance in all walks of modern society as well. **T**

CORBETT KLEIN is a member of the Princeton Toastmasters club in New Jersey.

Cracking the Laughter Code

Want to be funny? First learn why we laugh.

BY TESS IANDIORIO

Anyone is experienced in public speaking can easily recognize that the funniest speakers are often the most memorable. But how do some speakers manage to keep an audience in stitches for an entire presentation? It is not an innate gift. Veteran comedian Jerry Corley says the key to using humor well is understanding why people laugh. When you understand what triggers laughter, you can then learn techniques to weave humor into speeches, presentations and everyday interactions.

Corley has studied what makes people laugh from the most intense platform from which to glean this information—standing behind the microphone in comedy clubs. “My whole life I’ve been dedicated to finding out the ‘why’ of comedy,” he says. He has spent 30 years learning what triggers laughter by gauging audience reactions to his own material as well as studying other performers.

Now a comedy coach and founder of the Stand-up Comedy Clinic in Los Angeles, California, Corley has written jokes for comedians Bill Hicks and Chris Rock and worked for eight years as a writer for the popular *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*. His friends refer to him as “the joke doctor” for his ability to dissect a joke, rework it or tweak it for maximum effect.

How Do You Learn ‘Funny’?

A common debate among comedians is whether or not a person is born funny. Famous comedians have intimated that comedy can’t be learned. Sure, some people may be born with a quick wit or a sharp tongue, but Corley asserts that, like any other skill set, comedic skills can be practiced and improved upon.

Corley knows firsthand, because he taught himself. In September 1991, while waiting for a cab during a rainstorm in New York City, a kind stranger with a gruff voice offered to share his taxi. Relieved to escape the downpour, Corley joined him in the cab. He recognized with a start that the generous stranger was his idol, legendary American comedian George Carlin. Throughout his 50-year career, Carlin made audiences laugh at the most mundane experiences and the most complex philosophical questions. He gracefully played between lighthearted material, like the difference between the way cats and dogs blink, and weighty observations like man’s tendency toward materialism and vanity.

“You can take any sentence and ask, ‘What’s the audience assuming here? Do they see a picture in their minds? How can I change that picture?’”

That serendipitous taxi ride to the airport led to a friendship that provided Corley several chances to pick his hero’s brain on comedy. When Carlin claimed that he knew with 98 percent accuracy whether a joke would get a big laugh before he ever performed it in front of an audience, Corley wanted in on the secret. But Carlin simply said, “I don’t know, kid. You’ll have to find that out for yourself.”

Study the Sources

Corley set out to do just that. “I decided to get every tape I could find ... I watched all the comedy shows. I studied day and night,

five or six hours a day,” he says. Corley also set his sights on a specific goal: to be a writer for *The Tonight Show*. “I started watching *The Tonight Show* and writing out all their jokes, longhand,” he says. Corley studied their structure and told the jokes to himself aloud over and over. “Eventually, I started to get it,” he says.

What he learned is that any sentence can be funny. Whether you are writing a speech or a monologue, the lesson is the same: “You can take any sentence and ask, ‘What’s the audience assuming here? Do they see a picture in their minds? How can I change that picture?’” Corley says learning to use humor is as simple as sharpening your awareness of opportunities to shatter expectations and create surprise. “If you take any statement or piece of dialogue and you suddenly change the perception of what is being said or change the perception of the meaning of a word, you’ll have surprise, which will result in funny,” he explains.

Corley learned to listen for which words in a sentence could lend themselves to double entendre. He learned how to shatter assumptions that the audience would likely make. He learned to listen for instances of two dissimilar ideas converging. When he felt he understood how to deconstruct and analyze what made him laugh, he could better see how to build his own material. “When I first committed myself to writing and studying the structure, it didn’t take me long to really start to master it and ... to get my job with Jay Leno.”

Learn the Laughter Triggers

Studying funny people along with the ways audiences reacted to different types of humor, Corley learned the “science behind why we laugh” and says it all boils



down to psychological laughter triggers. These triggers, he says, are “hard-wired in our DNA” to incite laughter. To weave humor into your speech or presentation, include these laughter triggers.

Surprise. Much of what strikes people as funny does so because it is surprising. Misdirecting the audience to assume you’re going to say one thing and then saying something unexpected is a great way to harness the power of surprise.

Embarrassment. Speakers can use this psychological laughter trigger by poking fun at themselves—perhaps by sharing an embarrassing experience or discussing their flaws or shortcomings. Sharing your personal mishaps will invite the audience to laugh with you.

Superiority. The audience feels superior to the speaker and thinks *thank goodness that’s not me!* Superiority plays on people’s insecurities. Allowing the audience to feel superior to you can help them laugh *at* you. Being self-deprecating is one way to use this laughter trigger to weave humor into a presentation.

Recognition. Recognition draws on experiences that make the audience think *Yes! I’ve done that too.* Observational humor relies heavily on the audience’s recognition. Discuss something that will

cause the audience to recognize having had similar experiences or feelings. Toastmasters could discuss, for example, the nervousness they felt before giving their first speech or the shock of hearing a high number of filler words reported by the Ah-Counter. These topics could lead to a laugh from fellow Toastmasters because they understand how you feel.

Incongruity. Using incongruity means imposing characteristics of one thing onto another. An example of this is anthropomorphizing an animal or an inanimate object. An object having thoughts or an animal speaking can be funny simply because those are characteristics they don’t normally possess.

Release. To use this laughter trigger, try telling a longer story that creates tension, and then provide relief with a funny conclusion. An example of this might be a story that causes the audience to pause and question whether you’re being serious; when you laugh or explain that you’re not, the audience laughs from release. This tension, followed by the release of laughter, will help make your point memorable.

Make Them Laugh ... and Remember

Humor is one of many tools to help sow the seeds of your message in the audience’s

minds. For anyone giving a presentation, the chief goals are to deliver a memorable message clearly and effectively—and, hopefully, to entertain all the while.

George Carlin theorized why laughing helps an audience retain information in his book *Last Words*. “When you’re in front of an audience and you make them laugh at a new idea, you’re guiding the whole being for the moment,” he writes. “They are completely open, completely themselves when that message hits the brain and the laugh begins. That’s when new ideas can be implanted. If a new idea slips in at that moment, it has a chance to grow.”

Corley says that a sense of humor is like a muscle. The more you flex it, the more you will recognize humorous opportunities in speeches and in conversations. As with public speaking, you won’t wake up one day and possess all the skills you yearn for, but learning to be funnier is indeed possible. “You just need good, solid structure, surprise and to understand what triggers laughter,” Corley says. ■

Tess Iandiorio is associate editor of the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Jerry Corley is a stand-up comedian, screenwriter and comedy teacher. To learn more about him and his strategies on using humor, visit his website at www.standupcomedyclinic.com.

3 Steps to Adding Humor to Your Speech

If you're having fun, your audience will too.

BY NICK PAPPAS



Everyone wants to be funny. It starts with memories of the grade school class clown causing fits and giggles and taking eyes and ears away from the lesson at hand. We all learned early that, when it comes to getting attention, humor is foolproof.

That's what started me down the path of stand-up comedy, and, 10 years later, toward working at Comedywire, a startup in New York City that helps companies and individuals add humor to their messages. Studies have found that when a good line makes someone laugh, that person is three times more likely to retain the message. Funny bones are directly connected to our brains.

With speechwriting, however, being the class clown isn't always the best approach. It's not just about getting attention; it's about getting the right kind of attention. In many cases, you're much closer to the teacher desperately trying to keep students' interest than the class clown trying to shift their focus.

Here are three simple steps to consider as you write your next speech.

Step 1: Don't Be Funny.

Seems counterintuitive, right? But the advice I offer my clients is to avoid adding humor at all when they write their first draft.

Why? When you're giving a speech, your focus should always be on presenting a clear, concise message. Too often, speakers try to shoehorn a joke into their speech because they want their audience

to laugh, but the outcome is more disjointed than complementary.

A common approach is starting the entire presentation with a joke, hoping to lighten the mood. Consider, however, that the first lines of your speech are crucial. That's valuable real estate to give to a joke that may hit or miss. If you tell a bad joke, the entire structure of your speech could come crashing down.

Always think of humor as decoration. Your message is your foundation.

Step 2: Look for the 'Handles.'

After your first draft is written, take a second look and find opportunities to insert jokes that augment your message. Joe Toplyn has been a head writer for former American television show hosts David Letterman and Jay Leno, and in his book *Comedy Writing for Late-Night TV* Toplyn talks about looking for the "handles" in a headline. Handles are words you can hold onto as you look inside your speech for opportunities to add wit.

One of my clients is a neuroscience professor. He, more than many, understands the value of humor on influencing minds. The problem is, neuroscience can be quite boring. Making complex terms relatable is a skill.

For example, read this line from one of his lectures: "The hypothalamus makes up less than 1 percent of brain mass, yet it is perhaps the most important 1 percent."

In this case, we grasped onto the handle "1 percent" and considered what else his

students might know about that reference. We added this line:

"The other 99 percent of the brain was responsible for the Occupy Hypothalamus Movement a few years ago."

Referencing the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement that started in New York City isn't the funniest line in the world, but it did get laughter from a very tough crowd of college students.

Step 3: Know Your Audience.

When it comes to writing humor, I can't think of a more important rule than knowing your audience. As you punch up your speech, consider who you'll be speaking to. What age is your audience? Do they share a common profession? Are there cultural barriers or nuances to consider?

People tend to laugh most at what they can relate to. A joke about econometrics will usually fall on deaf ears, but it will get you a standing ovation in a room full of economists. Keep in mind that the only thing that makes your speech different from everyone else's is you. A common insight for stand-up comedians is that the one thing everyone in the room has in common is that they're all staring at you. That's why their first joke is almost always about themselves.

Always remember, if you're having fun, your audience will have fun too. **T**

Nick Jack Pappas is a comedy writer, stand-up comedian and one of the founders of Comedywire in New York City.

Wise Words on Humor

Perspective on the power of laughter and wit.

When we laugh together, we are sharing much more than a moment's pleasure—humor connects us, disarms us and reinvigorates us. What makes us laugh varies from person to person and culture to culture, but humor is a universal tool for communicating and understanding one other. These memorable words from influential people around the world and throughout history highlight the value of humor in all aspects of life.

“We learn best in moments of enjoyment.”

—RALPH C. SMEDLEY

“Humor is laughing at what you haven't got when you ought to have it.”

—LANGSTON HUGHES

“Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.”

—MARK TWAIN

“The secret to humor is surprise.”

—ARISTOTLE

“A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done.”

—DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

“No mind is thoroughly well-organized that is deficient in a sense of humor.”

—LANGSTON HUGHES

“What is funny about us is precisely that we take ourselves too seriously.”

—REINHOLD NIEBUHR

“I'm not funny. What I am is brave.”

—LUCILLE BALL

“Everything is funny, as long as it's happening to somebody else.”

—WILL ROGERS

“Humor is something that thrives between man's aspirations and his limitations. There is more logic in humor than in anything else. Because, you see, humor is truth.”

—VICTOR BORGE

“When humor goes, there goes civilization.”

—ERMA BOMBECK

“Comedy is simply a funny way of being serious.”

—PETER USTINOV

10 TIPS FOR Introducing YOUR SPEECH Globally

How to get your talk started anywhere in the world.

BY DEAN FOSTER

It's a big world, and people who travel and work in a country other than their own quickly discover there is much to learn about international culture and customs. Understanding cultural differences and their impact on communication is essential—what works in Wisconsin might fail in Frankfurt.

A successful speech introduction is different in Paris, Perth or Peoria. This is as true for speakers on the international circuit as it is for the international business manager.

Knowing the cultural “do’s and don’ts” of any audience is essential for delivering effective presentations. Knowing what makes an effective introduction—what will help you succeed in the first few minutes of your talk—can ensure your presentation in Britain will be a “bomb” (that’s British English for a great success!) and not the “flop” that word means in New York.

How can you get started on the right (cultural) foot? Here are the top 10 tips from my 30-plus years of giving presentations in more than 100 countries.

10 Great beginnings depend on what you want to achieve.

Is the purpose of your talk inspirational, motivational or instructive? Is it to entertain or to provide cutting-edge information? Is the format a talking head, a panel or an interactive experience? Your responses will indicate your preferences and skills as a presenter. But you may need to adapt your answers to the cultural preferences of your audience, because they vary by culture too.

For example, if your purpose is to present cutting-edge information in Germany, unless you understand the deeper elements of German humor it's best not to mix in too much “entertainment.” German culture clearly compartmentalizes “facts” from “fun” in a professional environment, and too much “fun” mixed into a serious fact-focused talk can raise doubts about your credibility and believability. On the other hand, if your presentation is in Nigeria, your professional credibility and believability will be enhanced if you make your fact-based points through human-focused stories, anecdotes and metaphors.



9 Show who you are from the start.

Audiences appreciate a presenter who is personable, affable and interesting, but how does that translate across cultures? Give your audience an immediate picture of you.

In some cultures (United States, Israel, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) “personal” means demonstrating behaviors that are informal, friendly and egalitarian (de-emphasizing differences between yourself and your audience); however, “personal” in other cultures (China, Singapore, India, Mexico) requires demonstrating behaviors that are more formal according to role, status and expertise—and that emphasize differences between yourself and the audience.

In either case, it is important to reveal who you are with humility. Deftly establish your authority in your introduction while acknowledging that it is based on your desire to serve your audience. In cultures that de-emphasize role and status difference, do not focus on your accomplishments in your introduction. Instead, provide examples of how you are just like everyone else, with similar experiences and goals in life.



8 Demonstrate your admiration of their culture.

Use the introduction as an opportunity to endear yourself as an admirer of the country’s achievements. All too often speakers are seen as parachuting in, paternalistically sharing their advanced wisdom and technology, and just as quickly leaving with little or no awareness of the culture they have just addressed. Actively undermine this preconception by stating some facts about the culture or quoting from some key cultural contributors (authors, scientists, politicians), especially if the quote has relevance to the topic of your talk. Nothing will defuse the expectation of you being yet another incurious outsider than acknowledging the culture’s contributions to the world in your introduction.

7 Consider the language trap.

No matter how engaging your introduction is, if the audience cannot understand what you are saying, your message won’t get through. Despite the apparent, and advancing, ubiquity of English—at least in the global business world—never make assumptions about your audience’s English language proficiency. Despite your best intentions, what you *say* is often interpreted quite differently from what you *mean*. When your audience does not speak English as its first language, what you say may not be understood at all, or only in bits and pieces. When language gets in the way, audiences often won’t let on that they don’t understand, out of respect for both the presenter and themselves. To

overcome language traps, try to adjust the pace of your speech, avoid multisyllabic words and remove all abbreviations and acronyms from your talk.

6 Meet with your translator.

If your audience requires translation, always request simultaneous translation, where the translator is translating as you speak, and you do not have to take breaks in order for the translator to speak. If possible, meet with the translator ahead of time to review the content of your talk, giving them the opportunity to ask about particular words and concepts you will be using. This is also the time to establish rapport with your translator, important from the moment you step on stage. As soon as you start to speak, the translator will also be speaking, and your mutual goal

is to put the audience at ease with the fact that they are experiencing a translated session.

5 Watch your nonverbal message.

People make decisions about you within the first 10 seconds of your walking on stage. So, while managing any spoken language differences is critical, understanding how your body language could be interpreted, or misinterpreted, based on cultural differences is also critical. Hand gestures, smiles, facial expressions, posture (informal or formal) all combine to provide information that can either engender a warm reception or put your audience off to everything else you have to say. Become familiar with any peculiar cultural meanings to hand gestures, facial expressions and body composure so you don’t inadvertently express something nonverbally that you don’t mean.

“A successful introduction is different in Paris, Perth or Peoria.”

For example, the “OK” hand gesture in the United States (tip of forefinger meeting tip of thumb) is offensive in Brazil. The “V-for-Victory” sign in the United Kingdom must *only* be done palm facing outward, never inward. In general, reduce your body language with East Asian and Middle Eastern audiences (e.g., Japan, China, Korea, Gulf Arabia). If there are others on stage with you, use appropriate culture-specific body language to greet men and women (i.e., in some cultures it is inappropriate for men and women to touch in greeting; in other cultures, “air kissing” is the norm).

4 Your introduction also indicates the way you think.

Some cultures (France, Germany, continental Europe, Japan) prefer talks that clearly and logically start with a well-defined premise; provide substantial, evidence-based, sequentially connected facts that advance that premise; and lead irrefutably to a self-evident conclusion. Other cultures (the United States, United Kingdom, the Netherlands) put more emphasis on hearing your conclusion first and then hearing one or more stories illustrating how you got there. Many cultures fall somewhere in between, requiring some degree of logical “plan” or “road map,” some more, some less, for what and how they will learn from you.

3 Master the technology.

Technology—in the form of graphics, slides, instant audience feedback techniques and more—is as essential to your introduction as to the rest of your presentation. If you’ll be using technology throughout the rest of your talk, engage your audience right from the start so there’s no “techno-hump” (“oh, now we look at the slides”) for them to get over once your presentation begins in earnest.

If language gaps exist, it is critical not only from an aesthetic and engagement perspective but also from a comprehension perspective to keep text on slides to an absolute minimum. Some cultures prefer developing understanding through pictures, images, graphs and numbers. The written script of many East Asian cultures, for example, is itself based on characters, and not letters; these characters evolved from pictographs of the actual concept they represent (remember the old saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words”). Comprehension and understanding in these cultures unsurprisingly is more “holistic,” based on synthesizing data and information from numerous sources, and is not necessarily the result of Western-style analysis, deconstruction and linear thinking. For all the right engagement reasons, and for cultural reasons in East Asia, use images, pictures, graphs and limited numbers—and almost no text in your slides. Keep all the images culturally neutral—or at least culturally sensitive—avoiding colors or symbols with religious or political connotations and pictures of people dressing or behaving in ways contrary to the culture’s accepted norms.

2 Have a game plan for cultural ‘damage control.’

No matter how “culture-wise” you become and how much

you research ahead of time, unless you are “of” the culture or have significant firsthand experiences, there will be a gap between what you know and what the audience expects. Even the most prepared speaker may inadvertently make a culturally inappropriate remark. How you handle this is key to whether your talk will be a success.

Cultural knowledge is not about trying to behave like someone else, but should be used to inform your presentation so what you do or say is not interpreted as offensive. During your speech, if you sense something culturally offensive has occurred, immediately address it. Overlooking it may be efficient, but the “event” will always be there, like a ghost in the room. *How* you address it is the key. Taking responsibility for the cultural mistake is critical, but you can do so by clearly making yourself the guilty party, based on your ignorance. Then thank the audience for teaching *you* something, and making you a better person for it.

1 Be humble.

The final, and perhaps most important, tip is: No matter what you do in those first few minutes on stage and throughout your talk, do it with humility and gratitude. Humility that you have the opportunity to speak about something so many are presumably

eager to hear and gratitude for the possibility of making new friends and learning new things about them and their country. While you might be the expert, the real gurus are those who learn from others, and in so doing, share something of themselves. You are not only the speaker, the expert or the thought leader; you are also an ambassador of your country and its people. You may be the first person from your country some members of your audience have ever met. They also have preconceptions about your country, and you have the privilege and responsibility to either change or reinforce those perceptions. Your audience is not just judging you; they are also judging your country and all that you represent—from the minute you step onto their stage. ■

Dean Foster is the executive strategic consultant for Dwellworks International and the founder of DFA Intercultural Global Solutions. Learn more at www.deanfosterglobal.com.

Decluttering Homes—and Lives

Professional organizer and productivity coach uncovers the meaning behind messes.

BY MISSY SHEEHAN

Star Hansen encourages people to listen to the monsters in their closets. “Monsters are real, and the bogeyman? He’s in your closet,” she said at the beginning of her TEDxTucson talk in January 2018. “My job is to hunt them down and bring them into the light.”

As a certified professional organizer, productivity coach and speaker, Hansen helps people declutter their homes—and their lives. Her work goes beyond simply helping others organize their stuff: Hansen seeks to see through the chaos of clutter and uncover the underlying issues people are facing. She says she can walk into someone’s home and see the state of their life just by looking at their space. “I know who’s on the brink of a divorce, who’s doing well financially, and who’s about to file for bankruptcy,” she says. “It’s because the stuff tells our story, whether we mean it to or not.”

Hansen, an American who hails from Tucson, Arizona, and now lives in Carmel, California, uses her insights to help clients make peace with their clutter, so they can make peace with themselves. “The monster in your closet seems to be clutter, but when we delve deeper, we discover that *we* are the monster in the closet, because the clutter is actually an expression of us,” she says. “It’s not just stuff—it’s our inner storm; it’s our history; it’s our passion, interests, hobbies, joys and experience.”

Through her business, Reveal by Star, Hansen consults, teaches workshops and gives motivational speeches about

organization to corporations, nonprofits, government agencies and professional associations. She has appeared as an organization expert on TV networks and is currently writing a book and preparing to launch online courses.

Hansen, CC, draws on both her love of public speaking and her Toastmasters skills to captivate her audiences. She’s been a member of three different clubs in addition to her current club, the Monterey Peninsula Toastmasters.

What made you join Toastmasters?

I had just started my organization business when I had my first appearance on a major U.S. TV show, *The Tyra Banks Show*, and it was so much fun. I remember getting on that stage in front of a live studio audience, and it just felt like a second home. It was so thrilling, and I wanted more of it. I think a lot of people join Toastmasters because of a fear of public speaking; I joined because of an obsession with public speaking. I just loved it. It acknowledged that there was an entire world where speaking was considered an art and a craft, and that was very exciting for me.

What is your definition of ‘organizing’?

Organizing is the process of gaining clarity and empowerment in ourselves with regard to the stuff and commitments of our lives, and then consciously setting our spaces, time and life in a way that supports our purpose, values and goals.



Star Hansen

How did you become a professional organizer and productivity coach?

It was about 13 years ago: I was an actor at the time, and I didn’t love it. It just didn’t feel like me. I loved a lot about it, but I didn’t like sitting on set all day waiting for my minute to be on. I wanted to do something where I was being of service and locked into my purpose. I knew I was a healer, and I knew I wanted to find something that would let me help others in a powerful way, but that also blended emotional healing with a practical task where people could see measurable change. Initially, I thought I would do interior design, but organizing actually found me. I had people who recognized my skills in organizing and asked for help, and suddenly, within a few short months, I had a full-fledged career.

What do you like about what you do?

What I love the most is helping people discover their organizing genius. Even if someone hoards or lives in a high level of disorganization, my job is to help them realize they’re powerful and capable of change, and to start to tune in to their natural instinct for organization.

Most of my clients come to me feeling down after countless efforts to get organized, and my job is to help them key into their own unique organizing style. Clients will often ask me to help with a specific room (garage, kitchen, bedroom, office, etc.) but once they see the ways that organization



Star Hansen presents her talk “Listen to the Monster in Your Closet” at TEDxTucson in January 2018.

sets them free in all areas of their lives, we move into the other spaces of the home. Almost all my clients start organizing with me, but then they finish on their own because they have mastered the skills and really owned that organizer within.

How can organization help improve someone’s life?


Whatever we are surrounded by shapes our experience, so it’s vital that we’re surrounded by things that lift us up and propel us forward in a direction we want to move. Most of us want to be surrounded by things that align with our values and priorities, but doing that often requires moving through painful places. If we can make peace with the painful places, and at least know how to navigate them or let them go, we can then allow ourselves more room for the happiness, clarity, success and freedom we’re really looking for. A clear space acts as a powerful launchpad for every area of our lives. Clutter acts as a distraction from living in the present moment because it is always pulling us back into the past or forward into the future.

“First you need to gain clarity of what is in the space, then you can reflect on how these items align with your vision for the space and your daily life.”

How do you help people become ‘masters of their time and space’?

I have two different methods for helping: A 10-step home organizing protocol for getting your physical state organized, and then a four-phase method for productivity that encompasses email, task management, time management and paper management. Both these structures guide people through the process of getting organized in a practical way.

When you organize a space, list what activities you would like to have take place in each space (three to five is ideal) and how you want the space to feel when you

are there. These simple words will act as a road map for you as you choose what items will fill your space, and what items are free to go. If you feel overwhelmed and are not sure how to get started in the organizing process, start by categorizing. Look at your items neutrally (as though you were a stranger) and simply categorize them. This will help give clarity on what you have so you can make solid decisions about what you want and need. After you categorize, then you can make decisions. Too often I see people trying to jump from categorizing to creating systems ... don’t try to solve everything at once. First you need to gain clarity of what is in the space, then you can reflect on how these items align with your vision for the space and your daily life. 

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



ONLINE EXTRAS: Learn about Star Hansen through extra photos and a video.

The Science of Being

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

Memorable

A memory expert's
advice for making
your message
'impossible
to ignore.'

Common wisdom tells us that storytelling is the most effective way to get audiences to remember our messages—that telling tales is a surefire way to make an indelible mark on listeners' minds and get them to respond to our calls to action.

But a cognitive neuroscientist who has made a career of studying what people remember from speeches says memory is far more complex. Influencing audience recall requires a deeper understanding of how memories are formed and how they influence decisions.

Being memorable, it turns out, is about more than just having a good story.

Carmen Simon, Ph.D., is the founder of Memzy, a company based in San Francisco, California, that uses neuroscience and cognitive psychology to help organizations create memorable messages. She holds doctorates in cognitive psychology and instructional technology and authored the book *Impossible to Ignore: Creating Memorable Content to Influence Decisions*.

Simon's science-based approach to improving what audiences remember from presentations has been applied by the likes of Scott Adams, creator of the popular American cartoon *Dilbert*, who used the techniques in developing an online presentation to help promote his book *How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big*. Adams' presentation was honored by the online site SlideShare as one of the best of 2014, topping a multitude of contenders for the honor.

Simon's research into presentations began as she studied scores of speeches and found much of the content to be forgettable, even when accompanied by well-designed slides. In one of her most well-known studies Simon asked 1,500 research participants to view a 20-slide presentation with one core message and then followed up two days later to ask what they recalled from the presentation. People remembered only four of the slides on average, a confirmation that presenters need to approach content design and message delivery in innovative ways to make them more memorable.

What Makes a Presentation Memorable?

Simon says speakers can use techniques to improve the odds of audiences remembering—and more importantly, *later acting on*—their key messages. Here are a few of those tactics.



“If you think your content is not intrinsically compelling, you as the speaker have to become the source of emotion.”

—CARMEN SIMON

Give them something they anticipate ... and then surprise them.

Simon’s research shows speakers should use a combination of *recognition* and *surprise* to embed themselves in audience memory. One of the best ways to capture attention is to break a pattern after audiences’ brains become “habituated.” People begin to disengage from presentations when messages or slides become too predictable.

Instead, the neuroscientist suggests breaking patterns by alternating between slides that are visually intense and slides that are visually simple, for example, or moving from a routine of seriousness to something funny.

Create the right blend of the ‘Big 3’ elements.

When Simon studied what made some stories more memorable than others, she found the best had the proper mix of three components: *perceptive*, *cognitive* and *affective*. Perceptive includes sensory impressions made in context and actions described over a timeline. Cognitive refers to facts, meaning or abstract concepts. Affective includes the elements of emotion.

A combination of the three components proves memorable because it activates more parts of the brain as opposed to a message filled primarily with facts and abstract concepts, which activates only language processing and comprehension areas.

Simon points out that many speakers struggle in the affective area because they think their content is too dry or technical to engage audiences on an emotional level. “But emotion doesn’t just come

ABOVE AND AT RIGHT: Carmen Simon, founder of Memzy, speaks about science-based techniques for creating memorable messages.



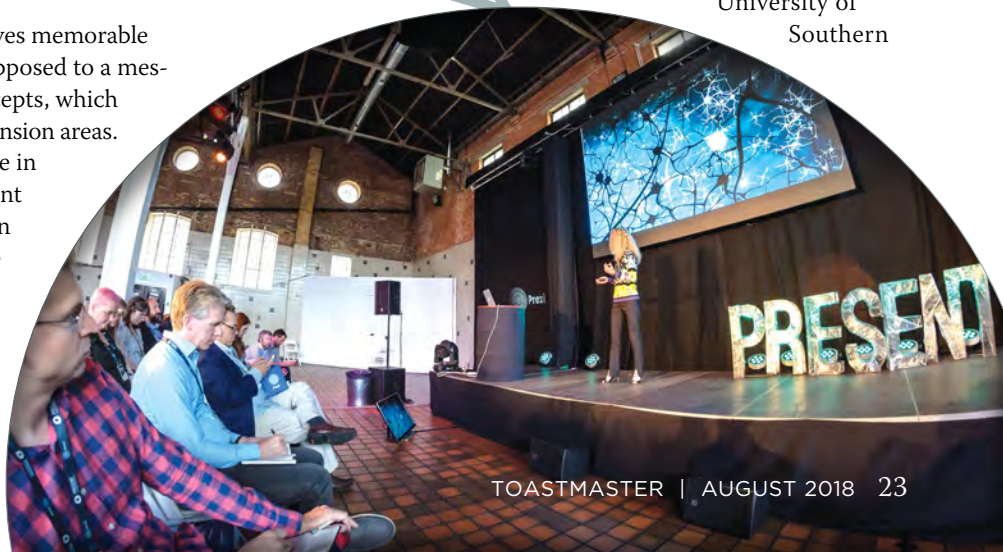
from the nature of your content,” she explains. “If you think your content is not intrinsically compelling, *you* as the speaker have to become the source of emotion.”

Simon offers the example of two engineers she watched present on the benefits of predictive analytics software. “They were so excited and passionate about the topic that I built lasting memory traces just from their emotion, even though I had no natural interest in the topic,” she says.

Don’t shy away from repetition.

One of the most overlooked tactics for boosting audience memory is simple *repetition*. Simon views many presentations each month and is usually surprised at how infrequently content is repeated. This is because speakers fear appearing too premeditated in their approach or feel they need new information for the novelty of it, Simon observes.

On the other hand, songs that top the pop charts constantly revisit the same phrase. For example, one study by Joseph Nunes of the University of Southern



3 TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE MEMORY

The following three tactics help improve your audience's retention of key messages as well as the probability of your audience taking future action.

1 Attention triggers. These are stimuli that attract and keep audience attention in areas where it matters most. During a presentation the brain typically stops paying attention when it has “habituated a stimulus,” meaning we pay less and less attention to things that are predictable. Allow the brain to detect a pattern first, and then break that pattern. For example, consider dropping a stunning photo with a powerful quote in the middle of a sequence of text-heavy PowerPoint slides.

2 Memory magnets. These can be visual elements of text or graphics that make content memorable. Use them to appeal to audiences' mental models or to

build associations. Emotions also drive action and can be memory magnets. When you experience something emotional, the brain encodes a marker. Later, when you see or experience something similar, you remember that feeling. While research shows that the human brain is wired to remember stories, it's just as easy for the brain to forget them. Simon explains: “How many stories told to you over the past month do you actually remember? ... The question should be what makes for a *memorable* story.”

3 Decision drivers. It's one thing to get people to pay attention and remember, but will they act on your messages in the future? Persuasion requires mastering the skill of appealing to human motivational drivers. Those drivers can include things like achievement, efficiency, autonomy, affiliation, prominence, freedom from worry and other factors. Do some research to determine what drives a particular audience.

California found that hit songs repeat lyrics up to 20 percent more than songs ranking lower on the charts. While you don't want to go overboard with repetition, you also don't want to avoid it.

Be ‘future focused’ with memory techniques.

Many problems connected to audience recall are “not about forgetting the past but rather forgetting the future,” Simon explains. While speakers may have what they consider a strong message at Point A (during the speech), if the audience doesn't remember or act on it later at Point B (when they're facing a buying decision or other important choice), the speaker's mission has failed.

While *retrospective* memory, or remembering the past, is useful, Simon says it is *prospective* memory—remembering to act on a future intention—that “keeps people in business” and makes speakers' messages more influential in audiences' future decisions.

Speakers need to build in audiences' minds stronger associations or “cues” between the content shared at Point A and actions they later take at Point B. For example, before making a sales



Carmen Simon, Ph.D.

presentation on analytics software, a presenter could think about something potential clients might use daily. It could be a tool like Salesforce, for example. Then the presenter might ask, “How can I associate concepts I want prospects to remember about my product with Salesforce?” One solution would be to associate features of the analytics software with functions of Salesforce that the prospect uses on a regular basis.

The presenter would then repeat the association throughout the sales pitch. As Simon advises on her blog, “You prime your prospect's brain to remember what is important and, with enough repetition and the promise of a strong reward (e.g., ‘sell more when you use this’), they will think of you each time they visit that particular functionality in Salesforce.”

Understanding how and why our brains retain content is key to making our own speeches stand out from the crowd. By creating stronger associations between our presentation content and subsequent triggers, we make our message more memorable and actionable. **T**

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



ONLINE EXTRAS: Discover more information on how to make your message memorable through hyperlinks.



Are You Ready for an Advanced Club?

Experienced members seek in-depth feedback, raise the bar on club experience.

BY BILL BROWN

As we grow in our Toastmasters experience, we sometimes see the need for a greater challenge. And that frequently involves receiving a stronger level of feedback after our speeches. If that sounds like you, then you might want to consider joining an advanced club.

What exactly is an advanced club?

When we start as Toastmasters, we learn the basic speaking skills. As we grow in our speaking abilities, we take those basic skills to the next level. Advanced clubs are primarily made up of experienced Toastmasters who want to grow more rapidly than those in a typical club. They are Toastmasters who want to set a higher bar. The main difference between a basic and an advanced club is the level or type of feedback.

In a typical club, the evaluations are focused on encouragement. You get a lot of praise and then a gently stated suggestion or two. In an advanced club, the feedback can be more direct. As a veteran Toastmaster, I prefer the advanced clubs that are what I describe as “kind but candid.” You receive positive feedback, but you also hear what you need to hear. And if you have excellent speakers in the group, the feedback is that much better.

In addition, the evaluation is frequently presented in a different way in an advanced club. I have been a member of four advanced clubs, and each has its own unique format. Powerhouse Pros (a humor club), has the standard 2- to 3-minute evaluation, plus a 1- to 2-minute humor evaluation. Second Stage club starts with three 30-second comments from selected members, followed by the standard evaluation. Pro Toastmasters

starts with the standard evaluation, followed by three minutes of round-robin comments, where any member can give feedback. And then there’s Jackpot Speakers. When you finish your speech at that club, you sit down in a chair at the front of the room and receive 10 to 15 minutes of round-robin comments. This is not for the faint of heart.

“The main difference between a basic and an advanced club is the level or type of feedback.”

If you think an advanced club sounds like what you’re looking for, visit one to see what it is like. You can search the Toastmasters International website through “Find a Club” and check the “Advanced Club” box. But recognize that many regular clubs also provide a higher level of feedback. They just don’t call themselves “advanced.” Your real goal is to find a club that fits your interests and personality, regardless of its label.

The area, division and district speech contests are another source of information about advanced clubs. No, they don’t advertise there, but it is quite common to see members of those clubs making it to the higher levels. Attend those contests. If you like a speaker’s style, check out that person’s club.

When you visit a club, ask yourself two questions. The first is, “Am I comfortable with their form of feedback?” The second

is, “Will I receive the level of feedback I am looking for?” I suspect you will know right away if the club is for you.

If you join an advanced club, should you leave your primary club? Absolutely not. First of all, you have the opportunity at the regular club to help newer members. That is part of leadership, and they can benefit from what you are learning at the advanced club. In addition, your current club provides opportunities to speak. The more you speak, the more you grow. On top of that, I have found that the newer members will give you different feedback from the experienced ones, helping you grow even more.

Furthermore, if you like to compete in speech contests, you probably don’t want to limit yourself to just an advanced club. Let’s face it, if all the best speakers in your area or division are in one club, only one of you will advance to the area level. A second club gives you a second opportunity to compete.

Advanced clubs are not for everybody, but they are perfect for many experienced Toastmasters. If you visit advanced clubs and don’t find what you’re looking for, consider starting one yourself. You’re probably not the only one wanting to reach for the next level.

I have found advanced clubs to be a rewarding experience, and perhaps you will too. We learn best when we are challenged to grow. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of Pro Toastmasters. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Create a Culture of Candor

Honest and open communication creates high-performing teams.

BY KEITH FERRAZZI



Many of us are wary of opening up, even to close friends, let alone to colleagues in a business meeting. People often keep opinions to themselves, fearful of having them rejected. But being straightforward and candid can have an enormous impact as a high-return practice in successful organizations.

In my work with more than 50 large companies over the past five years, we identified “observable candor” as the behavior that best predicts high-performing teams. But asking people to be candid in the absence of a supportive organizational culture is a challenge. Here’s how to go about institutionalizing a culture of candor.

Two Sides of Candor

In our studies at Greenlight Research Institute, part of Ferrazzi Greenlight in Los Angeles, California, we learned there are two key leverage points in creating a culture of open communication: meetings and individual interactions. The good news is that adopting one or two key-stone practices can make candor a habit in both. And the payback is evident.

Management teams that structure meetings around candid, collaborative problem-solving make better decisions, move with greater agility and give executives access to a wider range of information. Management also comes away with

a better understanding of the issues and a broader set of possible solutions.

Individuals who seek out and act on candid feedback from the people most crucial to their personal success find that it is both a valuable tool for self-improvement and a path, through greater trust and intimacy, to deeper relationships, including mentorship. The way to embed candor into both your personal and organizational reflexes is through repetition. Only a habit of true relational collaboration ensures your organization won’t fall back into a more insular process when the chips are down.

A seminal study in safety makes the value of habitual collaboration clear. NASA researchers conducted a study on how to improve flight safety. The research focused on cockpit crews made up of a pilot, copilot and navigator who participated in flight simulations in which a potential crash situation occurred. Researchers found that pilots who acted swiftly and decisively based on their own gut feelings were much more likely to crash the plane than the pilots who consulted other crew members for their reading of the situation before deciding how to respond.

In a look at underlying causes, the researchers found that the pilots who spoke up had a history of open exchanges with their crew. And crew members were more

likely to voice their opinions to pilots who had habitually solicited their input. In other words, without an established culture of candor, pilots found themselves on their own when they most needed assistance.

Best Practices for Meetings

In order to build high-impact teams, forthrightness should be encouraged and epitomized from the top down. The following three techniques make it easier for coworkers at all levels to interact more directly in meetings and group settings.

1 Break meetings into smaller groups.

When five or more people meet, those with confidence and commanding voices will dominate. Even strong speakers may find it hard to take risks in front of a larger audience. One solution is to break a big meeting into groups of two or three to brainstorm for a few minutes, and then have a spokesperson from each group report back to the entire team. Smaller groups promote higher degrees of risk-taking and increase the odds that more voices will be heard.

2 Flatten your hierarchy.

Encourage the free flow of information at all times, not just in meetings. Among the available mechanisms are forums, having senior staff approach individuals for

input and establishing a “make a difference” award that allows any employee to recognize a colleague for speaking up and making a difference.

3 Designate a “Yoda.” We all remember the wise Jedi master from *Star Wars*. In our research, we asked for volunteers or picked one or two people in the room to be the official advocate(s) of candor. A Yoda’s job is to notice and speak up when something is being left unsaid. (The Yoda may also call out anyone whose criticism is unconstructive or disrespectful.) If the Yoda has not spoken up for a period of time, the leader should ask the Yoda if the group is missing anything.

Best Practices for Candid Individual Feedback

Some people fear giving others candid individual feedback, preferring to tiptoe around uncomfortable truths even when candor—delivered with generous intent and received gracefully—would help drive personal and organizational improvement as well as foster deeper and more valuable relationships. The most valuable relationships are those in which we give each other permission to be candid and honest. The best way to understand how others perceive you, your work or your performance is simply to ask them, giving them sincere permission to be honest with you.

Leaders can coach the most rewarding approach to candor in meetings by encouraging “caring criticism.” Negative feedback can hurt, but not when it is offered and understood as a gift aimed at helping the recipient improve performance or avoid mistakes. In order to deliver and receive it that way, encourage your team to use phrases like “I might suggest” and “Think about this.” Evaluation and feedback are cornerstones of the Toastmasters education program. No one improves without understanding how they are perceived by others. A best practice for business leaders is to require their teams to regularly ask for private feedback from those most critical to their success.

Here are five key ideas to remember when requesting candid feedback:



1 Give clear permission. The person from whom you’re soliciting feedback must know for certain that he or she can feel safe being candid with you.

2 Watch your emotions. Try not to be defensive or upset when presented with unexpected feedback. Really listen to what you’re hearing and seek to understand it. This is an opportunity to learn how you look through a different pair of eyes.

3 Be generous and strive for greater connectedness. Asking for someone’s candid appraisal is flattering. Tell the person providing feedback why you respect his or her opinion and insights. Encouraging candor can accelerate intimacy in a relationship and often results in a reciprocal request.

4 Say “thank you.” No matter how you feel about the candid feedback you receive, remember to say thank you, restate the feedback given and promise to take it into consideration along with other data points you’re gathering. Follow up at a later date and describe how you’ve used the feedback constructively.

5 Make it a habit. Requesting candid feedback is a great way to stay in touch with your environment. It is a skill that few have the courage to practice, but it’s a crucial practice to master if you hope to take advantage of valuable mentors in your life.

True collaboration is impossible when people don’t trust one another to speak with candor. Solving problems requires team members to be unafraid to ask questions or propose wrong answers. It takes work to create a candid environment supported by respectful, honest relationships, but it’s a challenge every leader should embrace. **T**

Keith Ferrazzi

will be honored with Toastmasters’ most prestigious award, the Golden Gavel, this month at the 87th Annual International Convention in Chicago, Illinois. Watch his presentation On Demand at www.toastmastersondemand.com.



Keith Ferrazzi is chairman and founder of Ferrazzi Greenlight, a research institute focusing on behavioral science and its effects on business. To learn more about 2018 Golden Gavel recipient Keith Ferrazzi, his research and techniques, visit www.ferrazzigreenlight.com.



How to Disagree Diplomatically

Why it's always good to have an opinion—and know how to share it.

BY MICHELLE TILLIS LEDERMAN

When I worked in finance, I saw my main responsibility as crunching the numbers that would help others evaluate a potential acquisition by our investment firm. The first time I brought my analysis to the executive floor and was asked, “What do you think?” I must have looked like a deer caught in headlights; I had not thought to form an opinion. Sure, I had calculated the answer, but I didn’t think about the decision being made with that information. That is when I learned *always have an opinion*. It took a little longer to learn that I needed to know when and how to share that opinion.

Different opinions are necessary and valuable; they broaden our perspective, advance our thinking and spark innovative solutions. How we share that difference of opinion can open or close a conversation. Here are three things to remember when you disagree with someone that will ensure a productive and painless exchange.

1 Depersonalize. Even when you think your opinion is “just business,” you can become wedded to your ideas and form emotional attachments to them. Everyone wants to be right, but a need to be right above all else may lead to favoring information that proves your point—even though it may not be the most accurate information.

There are many reasons you become emotionally invested in your opinions. Perhaps you or fellow club members feel strongly about what is appropriate attire or which topics are too sensitive for club meetings. These disagreements could quickly escalate if everyone sees each issue as personal. When discussing these topics as a group, it is important to keep your emotions in check.

In a work setting, your professional self-worth is founded on your contributions, your impact and the credit you receive. When collaborating with coworkers you may feel competitive or have a

difference of opinion, which could result in your inability to separate the person from the problem. When this happens, you may become more concerned with winning the argument than solving the problem at hand.

To disagree effectively, take a problem-solving approach. The person with whom you disagree is not your adversary or your friend; they are simply a colleague or contributor. Try to share credit and responsibility. Depersonalizing a decision can enable you to remove the “win” from the equation and enjoy the exchange of ideas.

2 Acknowledge and add. Typically, we first agree or disagree with what the other person offered before presenting a counterargument. That often sounds like, “Yes, but ...” or “You’re wrong. What we should do is ...” Most of us don’t realize that we are doing this, because during the conversation we are focused on our opinion, not on how we are going to

deliver it. People listen best when they feel they have been heard. So, it follows that if you want someone to listen to you, show that you heard them first.

“People listen best when they feel they have been heard.”

You can do this with a technique I call “Acknowledge and Add.” When you implement this approach, you do not dismiss, offend or shut the other person down. You also don’t agree. You simply add. The next time you find yourself having a conversation involving a difference in opinion, try responding with, “That’s an interesting perspective. Another perspective is ...” or “I hadn’t thought of that. What I was thinking was ...” By doing this you’re not discounting or dismissing someone else’s opinion. You’re simply adding your own to the conversation.

3 Use “I agree” cautiously. It’s obvious why flat-out disagreeing can be a bad approach to getting your idea across. It may surprise you that agreeing

with someone can have the same effect. Nothing is wrong with agreeing if you agree with everything a person is saying, but this is rarely the case. You may agree with their first point and completely disagree with their second.

To ensure that what you want to add is not lost, be careful with the phrase, “I agree”—especially at the start of a sentence. When you start a sentence with “I agree,” it doesn’t matter what comes after it. The person speaking heard you say that you agree, which one would assume applies to everything they just said. They will be so busy mentally congratulating themselves that they forget to listen to anything you add to the conversation. Therefore, you want to be careful how you respond so you can successfully communicate your opinion. Place the phrase “I agree” in the middle of the sentence. For example, “On the point you just made, I’m in complete agreement. On this point my perspective is ...” Then you have acknowledged their perspective and added your own. When you put the “I agree” in the middle and caveat what you’re agreeing to upfront, they are more likely to hear you.

At work or in a club setting you are expected to form your own opinions, but they must be delivered in a way that feels constructive, not judgmental. The next time you have a disagreement, try these techniques for disagreeing diplomatically. They will enhance collaboration so all participants feel heard, decisions are made based on the best information, and relationships are strengthened. ■

Michelle Tillis Lederman will be presenting an education session titled “How to Get What You Want: Influencing Others Into Action” at Toastmasters’ 87th International Convention, taking place August 22–25 in Chicago, Illinois. The CEO of *Executive Essentials*, she was named one of *Forbes’ Top 25 Networking Experts* and is the author of several books. Learn more at www.michelletillislederman.com.



ONLINE EXTRAS: Watch a short video by Michelle Tillis Lederman for quick tips on how to disagree with others.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS: 5 STRATEGIES TO LEAD A TEAM THROUGH CONFLICT

Team members look to leaders and decision makers for creative solutions and answers to sensitive issues. Here are five ways to lead a team through a conflict:

1 Let it go. Ask yourself if the disagreement is worth the trouble of getting involved. If it’s a trivial problem, ignore it. In other cases, simply ignoring a problem won’t work and could exacerbate a conflict.

2 Listen and rectify. If the people at odds believe the issue to be important, but you or other team members don’t see the issue as critical to the team’s goals, then it may fall on you to simply be a good listener. Allowing both parties to vent and express their opinions will work to salve any sore feelings.

3 Make a decision. If you are in a position that allows you to make a decision, then decide what needs to happen to end the dispute and execute. If a quick decision is required, this could be the easiest solution. Be aware, however, that ruling in favor of

one side over another without weighing input could lead to resentment.

4 Reach a compromise. To come to an agreement that both parties can accept may mean that people on both sides of a conflict will have to sacrifice on one or more of their terms. Everyone may not be thrilled with the outcome, but everyone will understand and agree to the terms of the compromise.

5 Work together. Collaborate and brainstorm solutions that benefit both parties. If you have the time to work through it together, you will ensure that all are pleased with the solution and everyone leaves the table satisfied.

For more information on dealing with conflict, see the *Resolving Conflict* manual in The Leadership Excellence Series.



Leadership.

Follow me! I'll be right behind you.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I was 7 years old when I decided I did not want to be a leader. At the time my reading consisted solely of comic books about aliens, and while the stories were different, they all shared certain commonalities. One was the way these intergalactic visitors looked—misshapen, oval-headed, with multiple limbs, tentacle-like antennae and glowing red eyes. The second—and this was the problem—was that, upon landing in some farmer's corn field, they would always emerge and say, "Take me to your leader." Always. It happened in every story, so I knew it must be true. And I decided right then that, while I enjoyed the thrill of being scared by these malevolent creatures, I was *not* going to be the person who had to entertain them for the weekend.

If I needed any more convincing, there was the high school history lecture about some famous naval battle in which the teacher happened to mention how maritime tradition dictates that the captain always goes down with his ship. I raised my hand and asked, "The captain is the leader, right?" Hearing my question answered in the affirmative, I thought: *Well, that does it. No leadership for me.*

Please understand: I am not disparaging leadership. We need leaders. Humans crave the reassurance that someone is in charge. More than that, we *really* need to blame somebody when things go wrong. Leaders courageously assume this role. Leaders are willing to do what 99.9 percent of humanity is not: make decisions and take responsibility for them. I personally can't think of a worse way to spend my day.

If I have any problem with leadership, it is the issue of good leaders versus bad ones. How do the very best and the very worst somehow attain the same level of power? Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, Joan of Arc—great leaders all. Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, Vlad the Impaler—not so much. What's the difference? I think it's those attributes commonly referred to as "leadership qualities." Apparently, if you have them they are self-evident and easily recognized, causing people to follow you without being asked. On the other hand, if you *don't* have the qualities that cause people to follow you willingly, you have to make them obey. Vlad the Impaler was particularly effective in this regard. His famous speech beginning "Follow me, or I'll skewer you on a stick" doesn't have quite the same ring as "Four score and seven years ago," but the effect is equally compelling.

"Leaders are willing to do what 99.9 percent of humanity is not: make decisions and take responsibility for them."

Where do these leadership qualities come from? Shakespeare gives us a possible answer with the oft-quoted line from *Twelfth Night*: "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em." You might put England's Prince Charles in the first category. Through simple accident of birth

he possesses the DNA of kings and is thus assumed to be innately qualified to govern. Now, whether greatness truly runs in his veins remains to be seen, given his astoundingly robust 92-year-old mother's reluctance to pass him the crown. But one thing's for sure: He's got a great shot at longevity.

Then there are those who achieve greatness, sometimes quite unintentionally. New Zealand's Sir Edmund Hillary is considered great for being the first man, along with his Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay, to climb Mount Everest. But Hillary wasn't really concerned with greatness, as evidenced by the entry in Norgay's diary for May 29, 1953: *A hard day's climb, made even harder by this whiner Hillary. In addition to fighting ice, cold and wind, I have to listen to him saying, 'Maybe this wasn't such a great idea.'*

My deepest sympathies go to those who have greatness "thrust upon them." I see this as the ultimate instance of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. You're going along minding your own business, and history taps you on the shoulder and says, "We need greatness. You're it!" The ancient Egyptian architect Imhotep comes to mind. He was the first guy who was told he had to build this great new idea called a pyramid—and the pharaoh was hoping to see something in a couple of months. Nothing like an impatient monarch to get the greatness juices flowing. **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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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 that 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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