

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | SEPTEMBER 2021

# TOASTMASTER®

ALSO INSIDE:

Is a Hybrid Meeting Right for Your Club?

Once Upon a Time in a Conference Room

A portrait of Margaret Page, DTM, International President for 2021-2022. She is a woman with shoulder-length blonde hair, smiling, wearing a red top and a necklace with a circular Toastmasters International medallion.

Meet  
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Page, DTM  
2021-2022  
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## Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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## A New World of Possibilities

Holding our organization’s highest office wasn’t on my radar when I joined Toastmasters in late 2003. Back then, I could barely bring myself to attend a meeting because I was terrified of speaking in front of other people. My first goal was simply to show up.

What happened? What changed and brought me to this point?

I found the strength and support I so desperately needed when I joined Toastmasters. The people who came before me paved the way for my growth and my success.

Whether you are a new or longtime member, the club is where you begin your path.

Clubs are the foundation of our success, and they are a safe space for new Toastmasters to comfortably stretch into the uncomfortable. The club is the starting point for real change on a personal and professional level.

What can your club do this year to grow and spread the Toastmasters vision? Perhaps you want to aim for President’s Distinguished status. Maybe you’d like to attract more members. It might be time to reset your club’s vision to make it more dynamic and attractive—not just for those who are curious about our organization, but for members who would like to take their skills and leadership to the next level.

**Clubs are the foundation of our success, and they should be a safe space for new Toastmasters to comfortably stretch into the uncomfortable.**

There has never been a better time to be a Toastmaster. So often, we’re led to believe that our age of exploration is over—there are few, if any, unseen areas on Earth, the moon has multiple flags planted on its dusty soil, and the space beyond Earth’s orbit will soon be a playground for billionaires.

But we still have endless ways to explore our connections with fellow humans and limitless worlds within ourselves. As Toastmasters, we are in the midst of a great expansion of our thinking and practices, and it’s thrilling.

Imagine if the first Toastmasters could experience our world now! Yet even through wars, economic crises, social and political upheaval, and technological revolution, those first members would recognize our core values and club model.

So dream big. Explore every “what-if?” Search for like-minded thinkers and doers. Do it and know that each one of us is a guardian of the member experience. We cannot go wrong if we hold true to our organization’s purpose and framework. Let’s step forward into the future while holding tight to our standards.

For the new members you’ll attract over the next year, it’s the beginning of a new world of possibilities. I can’t wait to see what all of you do next.

**Margaret Page, DTM**  
International President



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The Official Toastmasters International Members Group on [Facebook](#) is always filled with conversations started by and for members. Below are a few posts and comments that may help clubs across the world or spark some inspiration.

### Snacks and Speeches

Accredited Speaker [Paul Artale, DTM](#), of Genesee Toastmasters in Flint, Michigan, asked members a fun question:

*“What is the most delicious snack you’ve ever had at a Toastmasters meeting?”*



You might laugh, but it was beef jerky.

**John Morrow** • Lakeland, Florida

Stuffed fried tofu.

**Harlina Indra, DTM** • Depok, Indonesia

Kokis with chili sauce! Part of a game we played.

**Yasangi Randeni, DTM** • Colombo, Sri Lanka

Vanilla ice cream a member made while demonstrating how to do it and then serving it to us as part of his speech.

**Susan Swope, DTM** • Redwood City, California



Applause—fulfilling and calorie-free!

**Lynne Harris** • Baulkham Hills, New South Wales, Australia

We once had homemade baklava.

**Frank Briggs** • Post Falls, Idaho

We used to meet at Lima Cricket Club at noon, so many of us had lunch there. My favorite: Peruvian chicken soup.

**Pilar Cama** • Lima, Peru



### Table Topics® Tips

Looking for inspiration, Vanessa Hughes of Seymour Johnson Toastmasters in Goldsboro, North Carolina, asked,

*“What are the best Table Topics questions you’ve heard?”*

It was Victoria Day in Canada. The Table Topicsmaster at Early Risers Toastmasters Club asked me, “You are Queen Victoria and near the end of your reign. What are you most proud of?”

**Margaret Bygrave** • Stirling, United Kingdom

Bring in a bag of 15 pennies, each from a different year. For each speaker, read the year on one of the pennies and ask the speaker to give a Table Topics speech on something related to that year. It could be a story of something the speaker experienced that year. It could be a history lesson. Whatever the speaker wants to do.



**Eldred Brown, DTM** • Portland, Oregon

What is your favorite sound?

**Michelle Willemse** • Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia

At times in life we encounter brick walls. Tell us about a brick wall you overcame.

**Jim Squires** • Glendive, Montana

If you were a kitchen appliance, what would you be and how are you relevant?

**Karyn Silenzi** • Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Join the conversation! Search for the group on Facebook or use [#talkingtoastmasters](#) to share your thoughts and tips.

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Listen for tips from the author of *Toastmasters Toolbox*.



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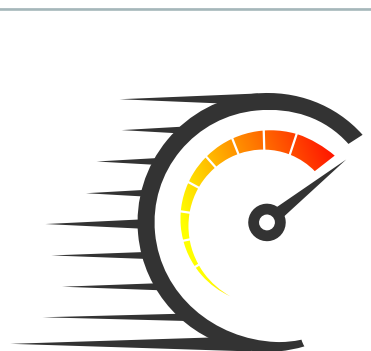


## Meet Margaret Page, DTM

Want to learn all about Toastmasters International's new president, Margaret Page, DTM? Read her profile, listen to a podcast interview, and watch a video of her answering member questions!

## Virtual Convention Wrap-up

Did you miss some or all of the Toastmasters 2021 Virtual Convention? Catch up on the highlights in an exclusive online article.



### Talk Too Fast?

Find additional hyperlinked resources throughout this article online to help you slow down your speech.

## Your Online Magazine Experience

Did you know the *Toastmaster* online edition is published on the first of every month? In case you miss the monthly email we send to your inbox, visit [www.toastmasters.org/Magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine) any time, on any device, for fresh content, videos, podcasts, and more!

Also, find articles faster with the [Helpful Articles](#) section, peruse past issues in the [archive](#), or [send us](#) a story idea or topic you want to read about.





## ▶ MEMBER MOMENT

## Jeopardy! Trivia Buff Credits Toastmasters for Game Show Win

BY STEPHANIE DARLING

Would you pursue a dream for 30 years, hoping it would ultimately put you in the middle of jeopardy?

Dennis Chase, DTM, a member of Genentech Toastmasters Club in South San Francisco, California, happily did just that. To be clear, he wasn't seeking actual danger but the realization of a decades-old dream to appear on *Jeopardy!*, the iconic American game show that has garnered millions of fanatic fans over the past 37 program seasons. Versions of it now air in more than 20 countries. It's a general knowledge quiz show with a twist: Three contestants choose clues from various categories. These clues are given as answers, requiring the contestant to respond in a question format.

A simple example:

*Clue—Ape or apelike*

*Response—What is simian?*

In April 2021, Chase [appeared on the show](#) and returned home a two-night champion, with \$50,400 in winnings. He estimates he got more than 90% of his [answers](#) correct and never forgot to use the all-important “question format” in his responses.

Chase credits Toastmasters training and practice ethic for much of his winning style. “Without these skills, I probably wouldn't have even gotten on the show. All the Zoom interviews, interactions with dozens of the show's staff, even a calm stage presence ...” all courtesy of Toastmasters teaching, he says.

It was an epic journey for the biotech senior project manager and 10-year Toastmaster. Each year, 150,000 aspiring contestants vie for a spot in a pool of around 400 potential (but not guaranteed) contestants. Before a final invite, there are numerous interviews (Chase did his on Zoom) and online tests to assess candidates' acuity on topics such as geography, history, science, people, language, “potent potables,” and sports.

Once he made the pool, Chase began to prepare with the laser-focus of one preparing for the World Championship of Public Speaking®. He tested himself on *Jeopardy!* at least four times a day, noting pace, voice control, gestures, and confidence. He played each live episode like a mock show, standing up and speaking toward a bright light aimed at his face to simulate TV lighting and cameras. Clicking a ballpoint pen using both hands made him such a quick draw on the buzzer that many viewers thought he'd

perfected a tactic never seen before. Chase laughs and admits he was undergoing physical therapy at the time for a shoulder injury. Holding the buzzer in his left hand and hitting the button with his right index finger was the only position that didn't hurt.

Being an avid reader and inveterate trivia buff helped Chase prepare, as did flash cards to train rapid-fire responses. He studied likely topics and was thankful for his solid recall of facts in many areas, yet lamented having to pay extra attention to state capitals, as he was never forced to memorize them as many elementary students were in his day.

While the show was taped in person at its California studio, pandemic protocols were strictly enforced. Contestants even had to apply their own TV makeup. When the cameras were off, masks were on. The players' lecterns were properly distanced and stocked with a water bottle and hand sanitizer.

Chase's main disappointment was not getting to meet the show's world-famous

host, Alex Trebek, who anchored some 8,000 shows before dying of cancer in late 2020. However, Chase gave high marks to guest host, American football star, Aaron Rodgers, quarterback of the Super Bowl champion Green Bay Packers, from Green Bay, Wisconsin. Like Chase, Rodgers is a longtime *Jeopardy!* fan; he once won a celebrity segment of the show.

If you think *Jeopardy!* sounds something like a sister activity to Table Topics®, Chase agrees. These tactics helped him nail his championship dream.

- ▶ Vocal variety and projection during auditions to show personality and energy.
- ▶ Quick and confident responses. “That's everything to public speakers,” Chase notes. “Information is no use to you if you can't access and share it quickly.”
- ▶ Practice and persistence. As Toastmasters know, it's a robust and reliable formula for improvement, Chase says.

**Editor's Note:** Listen to a lively [radio interview](#) from a station near Chase's hometown, Hyannis, Massachusetts.

**Stephanie Darling** is senior editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.



Game show guest host and U.S. football star Aaron Rodgers (left) and Dennis Chase, DTM, two-time *Jeopardy!* champion. (Photo courtesy of *Jeopardy!*)

## QUICK TAKES

### ► CLUB EXPERIENCE

#### Tips to Build Your Club Membership

As a club mentor, advisor, and Area Director, I have been consistently asked, How do we get our club guests to become members?

There is no perfect answer to this question because there are so many variables to consider. However, during my time working with clubs, I realized there was one constant in our attempts to increase membership: *engagement*. Here are some steps we took.

#### Be the Brand

Always be a beacon of the best Toastmasters has to offer.

- When speaking to others about the organization, be an example of what it teaches: poise, confidence, thoughtfulness, and a high standard of speaking.
- Share specifics when asked how you have improved your speaking skills.

#### Engage Your Guests

Make sure guests are welcomed and understand the structure of meetings.

- Assign club members to be the liaison of the day for each guest attending.
- Talk to the guests, tell them what you enjoy and appreciate about Toastmasters.
- Contact guests after the meeting to check in with them about their experience.

#### Reach Out to Your Community

It's also important to increase public awareness of your club.

- Offer services to your community and be more involved with local groups.
- Consider attending or participating in local events as a club.
- Volunteer to conduct a free public speaking course for those interested in improving their skills.

### ► SPEECH CONTESTS

#### Information for District Officer Candidates

Thinking of running for District office? Planning to compete in an upcoming speech contest? A helpful clarification was recently made to speech contest eligibility rules that you'll want to be aware of. The 2021-2022 [Speech Contest Rulebook](#) states that District officers or candidates for elected positions are ineligible to compete in any official Toastmasters speech contest. This means candidates are ineligible whether or not their campaigning has started.

The last thing you want is to represent your Area, Division, or District in a contest and find out you are ineligible because you're a District officer candidate. Be sure to brush up on the Speech Contest Rulebook, where you'll find



Post regular updates about your club on social media.

#### Be Active on Social Media

Set up a social media page for your club as an informal way of interacting with members between meetings.

- Post regular updates about your club on social media.
- Provide practical information and nuggets of interest about twice a week.

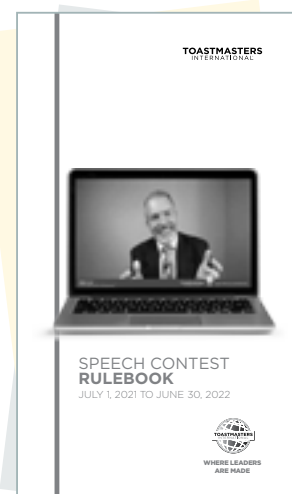
#### Get Creative

Making your club meetings interesting and enriching is essential—both for retaining your current members and adding new ones.

- Experiment and be creative with the meeting agenda. Try different activities instead of following the usual format. Here's a fun one: Run your meeting backward!

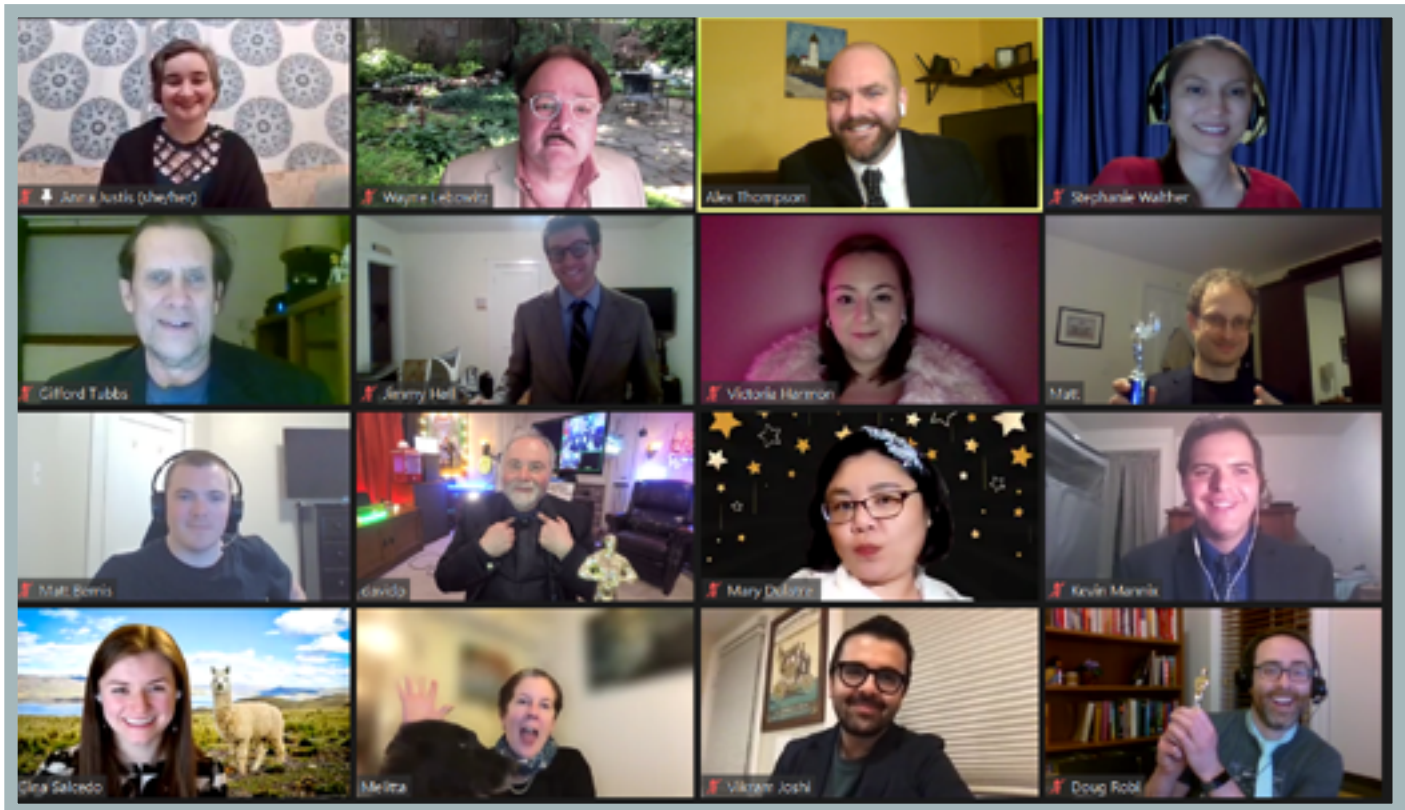
A key to making your club bigger and better is to connect with your Area and Division leaders and find ways to improve. Always remember: You are not alone in Toastmasters. Everyone is a resource and a mentor.

**Clifton James, DTM**, is a member and Past Club President of the *Nee Soon East Toastmasters Club* in Singapore and a member of *SPOT ON Advanced Online Toastmasters Club*. He is Assistant Division Director (Club Growth) for Division G, District 80, and won the District's Table Topics® Contest this year.



detailed explanations of all contests and the rules for how they are conducted. The document is updated every year before the next contest cycle. The rule regarding District leader eligibility is found in "General Rules for all Toastmasters Speech Contests," Section 2: Eligibility, C.6.



▶ **SNAPSHOT**

Somerville Toastmasters of Somerville, Massachusetts, held “The Toasties,” an awards show-themed meeting. Members were encouraged to dress up, and President Alex Thompson played the role of the red-carpet fashionista, interviewing members about what they were wearing to that week’s Zoom call. During Table Topics®, members practiced receiving fictitious awards (such as World’s Best Procrastinator) with tact and humility. David Pasternak came up with the meeting idea, served as Toastmaster of the Day, and created a video prelude and humorous interludes throughout the meeting. While no trophies were given, each speaker received an even more valuable gift—an evaluation!

▶ **TOASTMASTERS NEWS**

**Renew Your Dues** – To ensure your club is in good standing and receives credit for the Distinguished Club Program, log in to Club Central and process member dues on or before October 1. According to Policy 2.0: Club and Membership Eligibility, the minimum renewal requirement is eight paid members—at least three of whom were members of the club during the previous renewal period. Don’t forget: Unpaid officers lose access to Club Central 30 days after their membership expires.

For questions, please contact the Club and Member Support Team at [renewals@toastmasters.org](mailto:renewals@toastmasters.org) or call +1 720-439-5050 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Mountain Time, Monday through Friday.

**Rotary/Toastmasters Alliance Update** – The Rotary/Toastmasters alliance was formed in May 2019 and a lot has happened since, including the release of eight Toastmasters-developed educational courses available to Rotarians and

Rotaractors; to date, there

have been over 16,000 enrollments! The Toastmasters [alliance webpage](#) has been updated with new resources to help you reach out to Rotary clubs. Be sure to check it out.

**Commemorate the New Year** – Join International President Margaret Page, DTM, and members around the globe in celebration of the new Toastmasters program year! [Watch this video](#) and then [read this article](#) for inspiration and helpful resources for you and your club.

**Spice Up Club Meetings** — If your club meetings could use a little variety, read through the handbook “[Master Your Meetings](#)” for some fun ideas on themes and events. Members will welcome the creativity and guests will be more likely to become your newest members!





**SEND YOUR TRAVELING TOASTMASTER PHOTOS** to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Show us a new hobby you learned during quarantine or where you're taking your digital *Toastmaster* these days. We want to see your photos and share them with other readers!



**1 | SEAN JUNG, DTM**, of Seoul, South Korea, completes a 76-kilometer (47.2-mile) bicycle ride at Sunrise Park in Yeongdeok, South Korea.

**2 | SHIRLEY ANNE VAN RENSBURG** of New Germany, South Africa, celebrates her 60th birthday in a hot air balloon in the Serengeti of Tanzania.

**3 | SONIA KESWANI, DTM**, of Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, visits Niagara Falls on the United States side, prior to the pandemic. The group of waterfalls span the border between Canada and the state of New York.

**4 | NATALIE DAVILA-RENDON** of Windermere, Florida, enjoys a tour through Harrison's Cave in Allen View, Barbados, while on a pre-pandemic Caribbean cruise.



View additional **Traveling Toastmaster photos** in the [online magazine](#) for some extra inspiration.



# The Advantages of an Atypical Mentorship

People asked why, as a seasoned member, I wanted a mentor. “Why not?” I replied.

BY KAREN INCE, DTM

In September 2019, I was browsing the Facebook Pathways Discussion Forum when a member post caught my eye. Vanessa Hughes, a North Carolina Toastmaster, asked if she could mentor someone outside her club to complete the “Advanced Mentoring” project of the Pathways Mentor Program.

Forum members confirmed that she could, indeed, mentor anyone, even a non-Toastmaster. Vanessa’s question was answered; I could have scrolled on by. But I saw an opportunity and asked if she already had a protégé in mind. She didn’t.

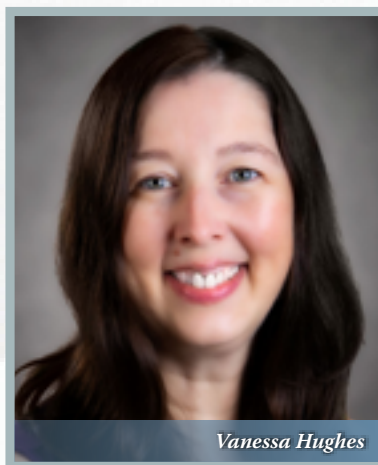
And so, the die was cast. I’m absolutely delighted that Vanessa chose to mentor me out of all the people in the world she could have selected for this six-month assignment. The “Advanced Mentoring” project, the final project of the Pathways Mentor Program, allowed Vanessa to put the final polish on her considerable advising and people skills. Not only did we work well as project partners, but we also became friends.

When the mentorship started, Vanessa belonged to Brunswick County Toastmasters in Shallotte, North Carolina. I was, and still am, a member of Canterbury Communicators Club in Canterbury, England. However, with modern technology at our fingertips, distance was not an obstacle, nor was the devastating pandemic which set in a few months later.

I quickly came to appreciate the fact that she and I represented different clubs, as well as distinct generations,



Karen Ince



Vanessa Hughes

nationalities, cultures, and levels of Toastmasters experience. There is much about our organization that is common across the world—and we welcome that consistency—but there are also subtle differences among us all, depending on our home club and country. For me, this adds yet another benefit to the mentor-protégé relationship, and why I recommend more people give it a try! Even if there are 4,000 miles, or many more, between you.

## Our mentorship felt very balanced and equitable.

I earned my DTM in July 2019, and people have asked why I still wanted a mentor. “Why not?” I replied. Yes, I knew more about Toastmasters as an organization than Vanessa. I’ve belonged to several clubs, given dozens of speeches, and served in club and District leadership roles. And I was able to repay Vanessa’s mentoring efforts with some practical knowledge and ideas from my own experiences, while she focused on helping me set and achieve new goals.

Vanessa was excellent at talking me through priorities when health issues required me to make some changes in my life. I feel very lucky to have worked with someone who could brainstorm solutions, listen patiently, and empathize. I sent her my speech videos and she gave me feedback with a fresh eye. She helped create a success plan, managed evaluations, and—of course—scheduled Zoom meetings. In the six months

I was her protégé, I completed Levels 1 and 2 in the Strategic Relationships path and Motivational Strategies Level 3. We still swap ideas about how to improve our clubs.

Our mentorship felt very balanced and equitable. We are proof that any enthusiastic, committed member can effectively mentor another member when both are open to the experience.

Eventually, both Vanessa and I were on Zoom for each other when we spoke to our respective clubs about our mentor-protégé experience.

Vanessa is now a member of Seymour Johnson Toastmasters at the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro, North Carolina. She recently led a Speechcraft® program, and I attended as Table Topics-master for its final session!

Toastmasters is truly international and filled with both similar and distinct individuals who become mentors and friends. That’s a reason to celebrate. **T**

**KAREN INCE, DTM**, is a member and former Vice President Membership of Canterbury Communicators Club in Canterbury, England.





# Traditional Meeting Roles in a Hybrid World

Do new meeting setups change tried-and-true responsibilities?

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has driven many changes to traditional Toastmasters meetings, hasn't it? One of those is clearly the ubiquity of Zoom meetings, at the club, District, and even the International Convention levels.

As some parts of the world return to varying degrees of safe public contact, it's likely that more clubs will move to hybrid meetings, welcoming both in-person and online attendees.

Obviously, a hybrid meeting requires additional technology, including a screen, a computer, and cameras. You will need to learn how to bridge in-person and online meetings with the [right technology setup](#).

Beyond technical considerations, are hybrid meetings different from fully on-site or fully online meetings? Yes. Do meeting roles look different now? Maybe. There are limitations on some, but the essentials are basically the same.

There *are* two traditional meeting roles impacted by the hybrid environment.

The first is the timer. If the timer is in the room and the online member is speaking in a timed situation, such as Table Topics®, be sure the speaker can see the timing signals. At Sunday Brunch Toastmasters in Turner, Australia, the timer was not originally visible to me, yet before long, she repositioned herself so that I could see the light. I found this club has a great awareness of the online experience.

At Roadmasters of Cheyenne, Wyoming, the timer was online. In this meeting, a TV screen was behind the lectern, and none of the speakers could see it. The club solved

that situation by having a second person with the physical timing light mirroring the timer's signal.

The second role that might involve some adjustment is the speech evaluator. This role holder can report from anywhere; however, an issue may come into play when there is an in-house speaker and an online evaluator. If the speaker intentionally or unintentionally moves away from the lectern, the evaluator cannot fully assess the visual presentation. This is a consideration for me because I love a big stage and see it as a huge visual aid.

## It's likely that more clubs will move to hybrid meetings.

Also, the speaker might be too far from the microphone to be clearly heard. If, on the other hand, the speaker stays at the lectern, depending on the camera placement, some of their body language might be hidden from view. Either way, the speaker could lose some valuable feedback. For these reasons, for an onsite speaker, the speech evaluator should also be onsite.

The hybrid format *has* created the need for some [new meeting roles](#). Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters in Las Vegas, Nevada, has a person specifically designated to monitor the online experience—making sure that onsite speakers are in the stage boundaries, for example. It can also be a person who is designated to be online that day in a role akin to the General Evaluator.

A good hybrid experience also requires a tech master to handle the setup. Be sure to have a backup for this role, or written instructions, in case the person responsible for tech is absent.

However, a club may opt to give greater priority to the in-person experience, in which case the roles are essentially the same as an in-person meeting. The onliners just have to hang on and pick up as much as they can. However, this approach will likely significantly decrease the number of online attendees. Regardless of format, the meeting experience must juggle the needs of both online and in-person attendees. That requires thoughtful meeting adaptations that work best for your club.

One final consideration is when should the Vice President Membership (VPM) talk to visitors? Before the meeting? After the meeting? At Cloud Peak Toastmasters Club in Sheridan, Wyoming, the club has a two-minute, mid-meeting break. What a perfect time for the VPM to touch base.

Hybrid meetings [aren't for everyone](#), but they do introduce an additional dimension to the typical Toastmasters meeting. Speaking and leading in a hybrid world will be an increasingly important business skill—one that may be very valuable to you. What better way than to learn and practice it than in your Toastmasters club? **T**

**Bill Brown, DTM**, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at [www.billbrownspeechcoach.com](http://www.billbrownspeechcoach.com).

# Discovering Your Inner Comic

Lean into your quirks and get creative.

BY BEVERLY WISE, DTM

**A**re you funny? Do your fellow Toastmasters know how funny you are? Maybe not. Maybe you think you wouldn't be taken seriously if your speeches were too playful. Maybe it's too big a risk to be yourself and expose your silly side. However, the supportive setting of your Toastmasters club meeting is an excellent place to explore your inner stand-up comic.

## Find Your Hook

I bet you have a hook or a quirk that's distinctively you. A hook is a unique mannerism, a catchphrase, a style that sets you apart from others. It's your trademark. When my mentee, Lift Every Voice charter member Noelle Yalamanchili, gave her Ice Breaker, her story wandered a bit. And she absentmindedly ran her hand back and forth through her hair as she spoke, accompanied by a look of confusion. The Distinguished Toastmaster in me thought, "We have some work to do." But the stand-up comic in me said, "That distracted hair ruffle: She's got a hook!" You see, even though she is an accomplished woman, Noelle disarmed her audience by coming off as less polished because of that ruffle and confused look. I knew that would make the coherence of her punch lines a surprise and therefore, even funnier.

I told her I thought she had the moves and demeanor of a comic. My message resonated. Here was something she was intrigued by but hadn't had the confidence to pursue. Several months later, I was in the audience for her first comedy set, as she ruffled her way into a standing ovation.

What mannerism might you have that you can grow into a signature move? Ask your fellow Toastmasters if they've noticed

something you do when you talk.

## Get Creative

I had a teacher who taught us to be creative by finding as many different uses for ordinary objects as we could. It is a wonderful exercise that will help you think like a comedian. It leads you to look for the twist, the double meaning, the extreme possibility. What made you laugh hardest? Comics know that creative plus unexpected equals funny!

To track that creativity, carry a notebook and write down the things you encounter or think of that make you laugh. Go over it and tweak it until it resonates as yours. Make it personal. If you can tell it to your sister at breakfast and make her coffee come out of her nose, you've got it.

When I reached the "Using Visual Aids" project in the traditional education program's *Competent Communication* manual, everybody was expecting another PowerPoint presentation. My speech was about my scuba diving trips. I asked the leanest man in the club to put on six layers of T-shirts printed with maps of the dive sites. I dressed in scuba gear. And when I moved on to a new dive location in my speech, I pointed my snorkel at my visual aide and said, "Next slide please" as he peeled off a shirt. Adding a surprising twist can get you a laugh.

Another way to get the audience on your side is to make fun of yourself. Once, a meeting theme was ancestry so I wrote this as my introduction: "Tonight's General Evaluator is Beverly Wise. She tried one of those DNA test kits and found that all

of her relatives—including the dead ones—denied knowing her." Self-deprecate, exaggerate, and then pause for the audience to catch up with you and laugh.

## Embrace Slip-ups

Comedians often use the "call-back"—referencing something the audience heard earlier in the speech. For example, during a District conference, I mistakenly introduced a well-known member as Bob Michel. Trouble is, everyone knew his name is Don, a 2014 International Speech Contest semifinalist. I laughed along with the crowd and moved on.

Later, during the Humorous Speech Contest, Nate Stephens, DTM, of Penn Hills Club in Pittsburgh, "checked" his text messages during his speech. He looked at his phone and said, "Here's one from Don Michel. 'Thinking of changing my name to Bob.'" By creatively referring to my slip-up, he got the laugh and the win.

There is no one right way to be a Toastmaster. It's not about conformity; it's about personal growth. Learn everything you can from the program, your mentor, and other Toastmasters. Then dare to let it nourish that special something that is uniquely you. **T**

*Beverly Wise, DTM, is a neuropsychologist turned stand-up comic whose two biggest life-changers have been Mt. Holyoke College and Toastmasters. She is a member of North Hills Club and Lift Every Voice Toastmasters, both near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*



# How To Quit Talking Quickly

6 tactics to help slow your speaking speedometer.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZBERG

**R**adio commercials sometimes end with legal language that must be included but is said purposefully quickly so that the listener can't fully process the information, and that's the point. The producers of that commercial know anything said quickly is less likely to be processed or retained.

The same is true when you are sharing important information with an audience. The more quickly you speak, the more you diminish the resonance and impact of your point.

## Why Speaking Quickly Hurts Your Speech

To understand the connection between speaker pace and audience processing, consider the roles of speaker and audience. As the speaker, you're making a point you've understood and practiced for some time. Your audience, on the other hand, is hearing it for the first time. As such, they need to hear it, digest it, process it, determine its relevance, think about its application, and consider writing it down or tweeting it. Meanwhile, you're already six sentences down the road.

Speaking quickly also blunts the clarity of your words and increases the risk of mumbling, making it even harder to be fully understood.

## Why People Talk Quickly

Unlike the voice in commercials, public speakers don't typically talk quickly on

purpose, so here are some reasons why they might:

- ▶ They're nervous about speaking and propelled by the internal thought, *the sooner I'm done, the sooner I'm done*.
- ▶ They're conditioned to talk quickly because they've often been interrupted or cut off.
- ▶ They have a natural style of conveying ideas as soon as those thoughts pop into their head.
- ▶ They're influenced by their cultures: "I'm from New York City, where we all talk quickly!"

- ▶ They suddenly realize they have more content—or slides—than time and respond by speeding up to get to it all.

Whatever the cause for quick-speak, it *always* decreases clarity and impact. Remember: Your audience needs twice as long to receive your point as you need to make it. And if they don't successfully receive it, there's no point making it in the first place.

I've never met a public speaking client or student who was able to slow down after simply being advised, "Hey, slow

## DO YOU TRUDGE LIKE A TURTLE OR RACE LIKE A RABBIT?

**T**he rate at which you speak is closely associated with your personality. Consequently, the rate is difficult to change because it relates to how you think and behave—even how and where you live.

The most effective speaking rate is between 120 and 160 words per minute. You can easily keep within this optimum range by speaking rapidly enough to avoid being a boring drone, yet slowly enough to be understandable. By varying your speaking rate during a talk, you can also reflect changes in emotions and mood, as well as emphasize critical points.

[A good speaking voice](#) is an asset in every contact with others. It can help in gaining promotions, making sales, winning the respect of others, and improving your social opportunities, as well as in speaking effectively to audiences. Your voice is your [greatest tool](#) as a speaker. It's the medium of your message.





down.” That’s like telling someone not to sneeze, blink, or scratch an itch. So let’s talk about six tactics that do work:

**1 Raise Your Volume** – If you speak with a loud voice—something [I always advise](#) to project competence, confidence, and authority—you simply won’t have enough breath to simultaneously talk quickly. Try saying something both loudly and quickly. Very difficult, right? Since volume in and of itself is a public speaking asset, use it also to decrease your speaking velocity.

**2 Over-Articulate** – Articulation is another effective speed-reduction tactic because it creates oratorical “speed bumps” that force you to slow down, while boosting your vocal clarity. When you use your mouth, not just your tongue, to increase enunciation, you’ll also come across as more committed—and feel more energized—because you’re making points with greater physical effort.

**3 Embrace Pauses** – Pauses can be a speaker’s best friend because they give you time to choose your words with precision, draw attention to critical points, and bring your speaking speedometer back down to zero. Sure, you can rev up the pace again, but at least you have to build up to that level after every pause, which is much better than maintaining that speed constantly. When you pause, remember to take a quiet breath. That breath will further slow and calm you down.

If you fear how your pauses will be perceived, don’t sweat it. Audiences generally don’t remember short pauses—which are moments of nothing, after all—so use them strategically. Just don’t fill those pauses with [crutch words](#) like “ah” or “um,” which draw attention to them.

**4 Ask Questions** – Find places in your presentation to pose questions to your audience, even if you’re only asking them to raise their hands. This technique brings your speed down to zero because you naturally won’t ask a question



quickly, and you need to wait a few seconds for the audience to respond.

**5 Put Breaks in Your Notes** – [Good speaking notes](#) are like a cheat sheet, reminding you of the points you need to make. Notes can remind you not only what to say, but also what to do. Write the word “PAUSE” in your notes where you need time to allow a point to sink in. Also, break up your notes into concise bullets or phrases. This practice will condition your mind to think of your presentation as separate and distinct expressions—with built-in pauses between them—not as one big collection of words to sprint through.

**6 Cut, Don’t Run** – Finally, if you find yourself running out of time as you’re speaking—which happens to the best of us—try to cut less important content, not speed up, because anything you rush will not be retained. As a general rule, your presentation should start with the most significant ideas and end with the least significant ideas, making emergency cuts easier as you progress.

### Learning From Prized Pausers

In Toastmasters, we often learn the best techniques by watching others speak, so if you want to see great examples of a

controlled and steady pace, look no further than three of my favorite Toastmasters International World Championship speeches from [Dananjaya Hettiarachchi](#) (2014), [Manoj Vasudevan](#), DTM (2017), and [Ramona J. Smith](#) (2018).

As you watch these speeches—even just the first 30 seconds of each—pay close attention to their strategic use of patience, volume/energy, articulation/enunciation, and deliberate pausing. I believe those tactics were just as critical to Hettiarachchi, Vasudevan, and Smith’s success as their content and humor.

Reducing speaking speed is personally relevant to me because I’m admittedly a fast talker. Whether that’s due to nature or nurture (I do work in New York City), I know that I’m sabotaging my purpose as a presenter if I talk too quickly. These tactics—particularly volume, articulation, and pausing—keep my speed in check, and I hope they do the same for you. **T**

**Joel Schwartzberg** is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a major national nonprofit, a presentations coach, and author of *The Language of Leadership: How to Engage and Inspire Your Team*. Follow him on Twitter @TheJoelTruth.



MEET

# Margaret Page, DTM

Learn how feng shui, cattle raising, and a missed opportunity were all part of this Canadian's path to the presidency.

BY SHANNON DEWEY

On any given morning, Margaret Page can be found riding her bicycle against the sunny and scenic backdrop of Delta, British Columbia, Canada. Back at home, surrounded by plants aplenty, she'll practice yoga before her day becomes busy with virtual workshops, calls with clients, and an online Toastmasters meeting.

"I have filled the house with plants—there is life here!" says Page, laughing. "Last fall I had about five ... now I have 35. I just have to be surrounded by living things."

This is a notion that many people around the world can relate to, now having spent more time than ever at home and away from friends and family. The 2021–2022 International President is rarely alone, though. In addition to her daughter and grandchildren living nearby, Page says she has her Toastmasters community by her side, in Canada and beyond. She plans to bring this message of unity to Toastmasters during her term.

"We have been tested the last two years, but now we have this opportunity to move forward more purposefully and build back stronger," says Page. "We have three different kinds of meeting models now: on-site, online, and hybrid, and there is something for everyone. Geographic borders are no longer relevant—whatever kind of club you want, at any hour of the day, of every day ... if you have a need that can be met, we can build it and support members to grow and learn."

"Build back stronger" is a theme you'll be hearing from Page, DTM, over the next year, as she draws on perspectives developed during her 18-year membership. Through her monthly Viewpoint column in the *Toastmaster* magazine, she will motivate clubs to find their sweet spot in membership numbers, encourage individuals to keep track of goals (and thank those who helped them along the way), and give guidance on gaining and retaining members.

### A Leader in the Making

As an entrepreneur with more than 30 years of business experience, Page is no stranger to taking on big tasks, leading teams, and making difficult decisions. She and her ex-husband



ran successful businesses since the late 1970s throughout the city of Lloydminster, the “oil capital” of Canada. She managed enterprises involving anything from oilfield construction to tire retreading to raising horses and cattle—and then shifted to operating a hair salon franchise in Las Vegas, Nevada.

She currently operates three businesses of her own: Westminster Property Management Ltd.; Etiquette Page Enterprises (providing training and coaching to corporations, executives, and individual clients); and Beyond the Page Coaching Ltd., where she offers one-on-one coaching support for individuals in achieving clarity and confidence.

“There are many things I learned from my own businesses, including finance, delegation, teamwork, and management,” says Page. “What I learned in Toastmasters, though, were the people skills. Leadership is about results *and* relationships—at one time I thought it was more heavily toward results in the business world ... but relationships are so much more significant, especially in a volunteer organization.”

### The Pivot Point

Before she could rise to the challenge of the leadership track in Toastmasters, Page first had to stop avoiding public speaking. Prior to becoming a member in 2003, there was one speech that haunted

her, and it wasn’t even a speech she gave. In 2001, Page was living in Las Vegas, running her chain of salons, when she received a call from an association to share her business success story—with 1,700 people. She passed on the opportunity but still attended the convention. While sitting at a table with her managers, she watched as a gentleman from a lesser-ranked company walked to the microphone and shared *his* business success story.

“There I was with these managers ... I looked at them, and they looked at me like ‘what’s going on here?’ That was a pivot point for me—I realized that I had let them down, and I couldn’t



**1** Margaret Page, DTM, greets a snake in Vietnam during Mid-year Training in 2019.

**2** Page addresses the audience as Second Vice President during the Board briefing at the 2019 International Convention in Denver, Colorado.

**3** Dressed in a sari, Page attends a themed meeting that took place at an East Indian restaurant with her advanced dinner club.





**4** Page campaigns for International Director at the 2015 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**5** Page proudly walks past the display of flags at the 2018 International Convention in Chicago, Illinois.

**6** Page borrows a giant gavel from District 39 while campaigning for Second Vice President in 2018.



share their stories,” says Page. “But then you have a realization that this can’t go on; you need to do something about it. Still, it took a year and a half before I stumbled my way into a Toastmasters meeting.”

Page, who is originally from Calgary (also affectionately known as “Cowtown”), moved to British Columbia in 2003 to live out her late father’s dream of residing there. Having sold the businesses in Las Vegas, she was starting with a clean slate and living somewhere where no one knew her. She recalled how speaking and humor had come naturally to her Dutch father, who immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands. He had found Dale Carnegie training and focused on learning to become a better speaker despite having no formal education. “I still have his Dale Carnegie plaque and ring ... he was so proud. That meant something to me; that was important,” says Page.

With her move to British Columbia and her businesses sold, it was time for her to take the leap and join Toastmasters.

“All of a sudden I had this gap of time in my life. There had always been the need to develop public speaking skills, but somehow I always found a way out and to not break that threshold of fear,” she says. “My intention was to stay [in Toastmasters] six months—I thought it was like a university class.

If someone told me I’d be there for 18 years, I would have been quite shocked!”

Keep reading to learn more about Page’s journey leading up to her role as Toastmasters International President.

**Tell us about your first speaking experiences in Toastmasters.**

I had joined in October 2003 but didn’t speak until January. They asked me time and again for Table

Topics®, and I would say ‘no, not this week.’ But my New Year’s goal was to speak at Table Topics no matter what; and the very first meeting after the new year I said yes! My question was, “Why is New Year’s on January 1st?” I didn’t have a clue! But I blathered something for 30 or 45 seconds. To me it was such a success. My goal was to just get up there and do it—and I broke through that big threshold.

Then, for my Ice Breaker, I thought I would demonstrate all the hats that I had worn in life, so I had a table with all these props to show driving my kids to school, diapers under my arm, book-keeping, etc. But I ran out of time and the props were all over and it took a long time to collect everything. I’ll never forget that Ice Breaker!

**After becoming more comfortable speaking, was a leadership role your next goal?**

Relative to going down the leadership path in Toastmasters, I only saw as far as the headlights.

The door of opportunity would unlock and open—I would peer in and think, yes, I can make a difference here. When the opportunity came for international Second Vice President, I raised my hand and put in my application. After I was nominated, I did a lot of work studying parliamentary procedure, working with an image consultant, and a host of things to prepare for the role. I’m still preparing! When you’re representing many people around the world who are counting on you, you feel obligated to put forward your best. That’s our core value of excellence, right?

**What does it mean to you to be Toastmasters’ seventh female International President?**

First let me say that I am absolutely proud of Toastmasters and how we, in essence, have been leading the way in nonprofits with women in leadership. Women have been paving the way since 1985 when Helen Blanchard was International President.



Past female International Presidents reached out in support, and have encouraged, nurtured, and guided me along the way. Pat Johnson, DTM, was my mentor when I was District Governor in 2012-2013, then I served with Lark Doley, DTM, on the Board of Directors. Pauline Shirley, DTM, is a longtime supporter of women in leadership roles and she has nudged me on to more passionate thinking, and I adore Jana Barnhill, DTM, AS, who makes everyone feel welcome. I am honored to be following in their footsteps.

### How has Toastmasters helped you beyond your career?

There was a period in Toastmasters when so many doors of opportunity opened up to me in my community. I had to come up with some criteria by which I would make a decision on what to do next. So, I came up with three things, and that's what I measured everything against: 1) It had to align with my values, 2) I had to be learning something new, and 3) I had to make a significant difference. I served on the Community Foundation Board and the Sunshine Coast Economic Development Organization, and I received other requests, such as serving on the hospital board, running for mayor, and council person, all because Toastmasters unlocked those doors of opportunity.

During COVID, I also started doing work for some cities and chambers of commerce, and I started a program called "Lights, Camera, Action," which is about effective meetings on Zoom. I have done that workshop 25 times, and now I've been asked by the hospitality industry to deliver workshops for them. The online experience did come about from Toastmasters, and now that's a big chunk of my business.

### What are some of your interests outside of Toastmasters?

When I lived in Las Vegas, I studied with a feng shui master. I would fly or drive to Los Angeles on the weekends to study with him. I also went on a tour with him and 22 students around China as he did his readings.

I love Sudoku and do it every day—if I don't solve that then I am frustrated! And I don't take the easy ones. I did at one time set a record for fastest solving of a puzzle in the diabolical category when the apps came out.

I also study Spanish and Dutch every day for 10 minutes each—just enough to keep improving. I'm trying to join a club in the Netherlands so I can give speeches in Dutch. I've spoken in about 30 different countries, and I attempt to do the greeting in their native language when I visit.

### Tell us about someone who made an impact on you.

One thing that has been a driver for me for many years happened when I was taking my Area Director training in 2005. The District Governor, Mike Robinson, DTM, at that training said, "We owe it to those who came before us to leave the organization in better shape than we found it, so those that come after us can grow and learn."

That meant a lot to me, because Anne Kramer, DTM, a past District Governor who lived in North Vancouver, Canada, had gone to extraordinary measures to make a four-hour trip—by ferry and bus—every Monday night to get to a club meeting. Had she not done that for more than a year, there would not have been a club for me to join when I moved to the Sunshine Coast, and that made all the difference in the world. ■

Shannon Dewey is the digital content editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

## WHAT'S MARGARET PAGE READING?

When it comes to literary material, Page strays from the classic book genres. While her friends often suggest their favorite novels to her, she is particular about what lands on her bookshelf. "I can get goosebumps on my arms from business books," she admits with a laugh. "Business, investments, psychology, human development ... sometimes I read the same thing over again. There's always a golden nugget, and another tool to put on my toolbox."

Here are a few of Margaret's favorite books:

- ▶ *The Leader's Checklist* by Michael Useem
- ▶ *Dare to Lead* by Brené Brown
- ▶ *Think Again* by Adam Grant
- ▶ *Measure What Matters* by John Doerr
- ▶ *The 5 AM Club* by Robin Sharma
- ▶ *The Culture Map* by Erin Meyer
- ▶ *Growth IQ* by Tiffani Bova
- ▶ *Stories that Stick* by Kindra Hall
- ▶ *Impossible to Ignore* by Carmen Simon

# Toastmasters Works

How corporate clubs help both companies and employees.

BY CAREN S. NEILE, PH.D.

I can see it now, decades after the fact: There I was, seated at a conference table with my boss and the company's top brass, terrified to open my mouth for fear of making a fool of myself. My throat was dry. My hands were shaking. My only desire was that no one would ask me a question.

If I'd only known about Toastmasters! Any of the 11 paths in the Pathways learning experience—especially Visionary Communication and Persuasive Influence—would have made it easier for me to participate that day. In addition to helping me speak in meetings, my Toastmasters training changed my entire job trajectory by enabling me to parlay the writing and teaching work I'd done for years into presentation and performance. In so doing, it literally changed my life.

It should come as no surprise that, like me, many club members cite employment advancement as the primary reason they join Toastmasters. After all, the skills that Toastmasters promotes are the hallmarks of a great worker in a vast array of fields. Anything that adds to employees' professional skill sets can benefit the employer as well, whether they are in leadership roles, speak on behalf of the company, make internal presentations, or simply need to collaborate effectively with others.

"Toastmasters gives its members a definite edge," says Angelika Kofler, a certified life coach in Vienna, Austria. "It builds a string of small and big successes for the

individual that enhances confidence and competence in any endeavor, both personal and professional." That's why so many companies welcome in-house corporate clubs, which typically meet within the business setting. This is as opposed to community clubs, whose members come from a vast array of backgrounds and meet at schools, community centers, restaurants, etc.

## The Networking Advantage

Any Toastmaster knows that whatever the setting, a club meeting is a great place to meet others. Hannah Pratt, Immediate Past President of RE/MAX, LLC Toastmasters in Denver, Colorado, says that through her corporate club, she's become acquainted with many people in different departments of her organization whom she otherwise likely would never have known. After all, it can be tricky walking up to someone in a large corporation and introducing yourself out of the blue, especially if that person is on a different management level.

"The club helps build camaraderie in the culture of the organization and in their teams. It also provides opportunity for cross-departmental learning, as well as accountability and mentorship." Not only does Toastmasters give workers the chance to get to know more people at work, it also gives them the ability to shine when they do. Members are able to get to know coworkers on a more personal level, and see how they grow and interact with others in the club setting.

A non-corporate club, on the other hand, provides slightly different opportunities to network. By demonstrating your skills and your product or service at a meeting, you can more easily attract prospective clients and colleagues. You can even get a leg up on your job hunt. And speaking of job-hunting, don't forget to list Toastmasters on your [resume](#), perhaps under Volunteer Positions, Leadership, or Affiliations.

## The Development of Practical Skills

Think about it. A club meeting provides a safe space to speak up, try new ideas, and feel comfortable with creativity and experimentation—as well as to experience the occasional failure and live to tell the tale. Many workplaces just don't offer that kind of opportunity. And because of the built-in evaluation process, as well as the generous spirit of teamwork and learning that permeates the club, your audience is comprised of supportive, knowledgeable coaches.

The most useful benefit that club meetings have provided for Victor Valks, a member of TOPS—Toastmasters of Pinnacle Assurance in Denver, is confidence.

"My confidence relates both to the mechanics of speaking and to the intangible self-esteem improvements that happen as a result," says the quality assurance analyst. "Learning to monitor and mitigate my 'ums' and other filler words has helped me relax while speaking." What's more, the



*Microsoft Speakers charter club member Christine Clacey delivers a speech during a club meeting at the Microsoft office in Reading, England.*





*Microsoft Speakers Club in Reading, England, celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2018.*

encouragement of his fellow club members has allowed Valks to feel good about opening up and making himself vulnerable in front of others.

The club has also enabled his fellow club members to excel at specific work assignments.

Valks says, “Past President Rod Cole was a panelist on our company’s Black History Month roundtable discussion and practiced during a club meeting. And [2020-2021] Vice President Education Jordyn Cagney utilized a meeting to rehearse her discussion of the company’s return-to-work program.

**“The skills I learned in Toastmasters are highly desirable when recruiting new employees and promoting current employees into leadership roles.”**

—REBECCA ABRAHAM

“In my case,” Valks says, “I’ve been able to apply Toastmasters’ lessons while serving as a mentor in the company’s apprenticeship program for high school students. In addition, [Toastmasters] helped me to mitigate conflict, addressing and discussing differences of opinion before they escalate too severely. For example, when

a colleague and I, whose job roles intersected, each thought that a particular task was ours to address, we discussed the matter openly, before it could fester and cause hurt feelings for us both.”

In Valks’ club, the speaking opportunities are ample, and Toastmasters helps members prepare for them. Other clubs actually create speaking engagements in the workplace. For example, marketing manager Angela Bos is Immediate Past Club President of the Microsoft Speakers Club in Reading, England. Over the last 18 months, Bos, who works with Microsoft’s marketing events team, has created a company speakers bureau that provides a pool of speakers to call upon for presentations at internal and third-party events.

Of course, the club has also benefited Bos herself. She says, “As a frequent public speaker for my previous position as a technical specialist, I joined Toastmasters specifically to improve my speaking skills. Over time, I found that the club also helped me develop my active listening, impromptu speaking, and leadership skills. The preparation, practice, accountability, and feedback involved in delivering Pathways speeches has helped me add greater clarity and conciseness to

my presentations, abilities that became increasingly valuable as I began presenting to more senior audiences.” Bos still puts her speaking skills to use to encourage female participation in careers in technology.

Meanwhile, Toastmasters helped Pratt from RE/MAX fulfill her employment wish list. Although she always knew she wanted to work in communications and public speaking, she had no idea that she could do that full time. Thanks to the skills she learned at club meetings, she’s become an instructor within the company.

Human resources director Rebecca Abraham at Aristotle Capital Management in Los Angeles, is a big fan of Toastmasters, having been active in Beach Cities Toastmasters in Southern California.

“The skills I learned in Toastmasters are highly desirable when recruiting new employees and promoting current employees into leadership roles,” she says. “The ability to convey information articulately and persuasively is critical and is only becoming more important in our increasingly knowledge-based economy. Seeing Toastmasters on a candidate’s resume would definitely get my attention as a hiring manager.”

Networking. Resume-building. Self-improvement. Mentorship. And much, much more. With all these benefits, why would any employee not join Toastmasters?

As for me, I’m just grateful that I finally did. **T**

**Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.,** teaches at Florida Atlantic University. She is a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Are you a member of a corporate club? Tell us how you have benefited. Use **#talkingtoastmasters** and join the conversation online or email [magazine@toastmasters.org](mailto:magazine@toastmasters.org)!



# Does the Board of Directors Beckon You?

Consider being a candidate for International Director. Serving in the role brings growth, emotional rewards, and new Toastmasters friends.

BY PAUL STERMAN

**T**oastmasters know how rewarding it is to help a fellow member develop new skills to improve their professional and personal life. Imagine doing that a thousand times over—hundreds of thousands of times, even.

The leaders who comprise the Toastmasters International Board of Directors can positively impact every one of the organization's more than 350,000 members. Reflecting a global perspective, they work together to shape the vision, strategies, and policies of Toastmasters International. Board Members help clubs and Districts achieve success, meeting and motivating members throughout the world.

In the process, they also boost their own communication and leadership skills.

So why not consider running for the Board of Directors?

The position may be less intimidating—and more satisfying—than you think. And you might have just the right combination of skills, enthusiasm, and commitment.

Recently, four Past International Directors reflected on their experience as Board Members: **Monique Levesque-Pharoah**, DTM, of Canada, an International Director from 2016–2018; **Don Bittick**, DTM, of the United States, 2017–2019; **Deepak Menon**, DTM, of India, 2013–2015 (Menon served as International President in 2019–2020); and **Morag Mathieson**, DTM, of Germany, 2017–2019 (Mathieson is currently the organization's First Vice President).

They emphasize that Board service is deeply gratifying.

"The most meaningful aspect was the honor of representing every member from every country in the world—by participating in healthy, respectful Board discussions that would result in adding value to as many members as possible," says Bittick.

October 1 is the deadline to [apply](#) to be a candidate for the Board of Directors.



Monique Levesque-Pharoah, DTM



Don Bittick, DTM



Deepak Menon, DTM



Morag Mathieson, DTM

Adds Levesque-Pharoah: “I grew a lot through my Board experience. I have never been afraid to speak up but I’ve learned to contribute differently and more strategically.”

### How the Board Works

The [Toastmasters Board](#) is composed of 19 elected members—14 International Directors who each represent a different Toastmasters region in the world, and five International Officers: International President, International President-Elect, First Vice President, Second Vice President, and Immediate Past President. (Toastmasters’ Chief Executive Officer is also a member of the Board, but doesn’t have voting privileges.)

Any qualified member can run for International Director, a two-year position (see the next page for qualification information). However, you must serve as an International Director before you can be elected an International Officer. If you are interested in becoming an [International Director candidate](#), submit your Letter of Intent by October 1. The Toastmasters International Leadership Committee nominates candidates from the pool of applicants.

It’s the Board’s job to ensure the organization’s overall strength and growth. Board Members tackle a wide variety of Toastmasters practices, principles, and issues, incorporating member needs into all their organizational decisions. Among other responsibilities, they must:

- ▶ Participate on committees to support Toastmasters’ strategic direction and purpose.
- ▶ Approve and oversee the organization’s budget and financial matters.

- ▶ Work with Region Advisors to help Districts progress and achieve success, including speaking regularly with District leaders.
- ▶ Connect with members at events such as District visits, Mid-year Training, and the International Convention.
- ▶ Facilitate at District Leader Training.

### Personal Impact

Levesque-Pharoah, Bittick, Menon, and Mathieson say they wanted to be an International Director to use their Toastmasters skills and experience to benefit others. In serving, they found satisfaction connecting with members and leaders. “I experienced many meaningful moments on District visits, meeting our members and encouraging and inspiring leaders to take their next step,” says Mathieson. “It’s heartwarming when you get a ringside seat on someone’s journey of personal development.”

Bittick says the experience was so uplifting that he retired early from his 35-year-plus career in information technology—and did something he had always wanted to do: become a high school teacher.

“Words can’t adequately express how much I learned about myself as a person, as a member, and as a leader,” he says. “The skills that I developed and improved upon were transformational, and I don’t believe this could have been accomplished anywhere else.”

Here are more reflections from Levesque-Pharoah, Bittick, Menon, and Mathieson. (Responses have been edited for length and clarity.)

Read how former Board Member [Michael Osur, DTM](#), has used his Toastmasters skills in the field of public health.



## CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS

**M**embers who serve as [International Officers and Directors](#) must have a demonstrated understanding of Toastmasters International's direction and purpose. They must also have communication and leadership experience and achievement in and outside of Toastmasters.

Are you the right person for the job?

The 14 International Directors represent a different Toastmasters region in the world. To run for an International Director position, you must meet the following specific qualifications:

- ▶ Be an active member of a club in good standing. That club must be in a District within the region you wish to serve during the entire 12-month period immediately preceding your nomination by the International Leadership Committee (ILC) or when you stand for election from the floor at the International Convention (having first completed the ILC evaluation process).
- ▶ At the time of the election, you must have served a full term as District Director and as an Immediate Past District Director, or served as chair or chief officer of a non-District administrative unit during the entire administrative year immediately before the unit became a District or Provisional District, or served as such officer and as District Director during the entire administrative year in which the unit became a District or Provisional District, and in both such cases, such service shall have been completed at least two years before the time of election.

The five International Officers (along with the CEO) form the Toastmasters Executive Committee. To run for an International Officer position, you must meet the following specific qualifications:

- ▶ Be an active member of a club in good standing.
- ▶ At the time of election have served a two-year term on the Board of Directors.

### Campaigning for Office

Toastmasters International recommends that the focus of your campaign be on your accomplishments in Toastmasters, your community, and in your professional life. Voters are interested in how Toastmasters has contributed to your personal growth, and how you have helped other members. You should also have a thorough knowledge of Toastmasters, its program, and its governing documents.

### What were the most meaningful and enjoyable aspects of serving on the Board?

**Levesque-Pharoah:** I had served on boards before and this was the first time I felt everyone was contributing for the right reasons. Everyone had worked so hard to get there and had so much appreciation for the organization that had helped them. Every discussion and decision was through that lens.

One of my favorite specific experiences was when I was asked to chair a subcommittee where we recommended work toward mediation support. It was exciting to see others feel the same way about conflict at the strategic level: that not addressing conflict certainly impacts not only the journey of our most important asset—our leaders—but also impacts our brand and strategic focus greatly.

**Menon:** The most meaningful experience for me was how the Board acted with agility to make nimble decisions during the time of the pandemic that ensured the safety and well-being of our members and leaders all over the world.

**Bittick:** One of the most enjoyable aspects of serving on the Board was the blessing of having meaningful conversations with many of our amazing members around the world, and learning how much more we had in common than we might have thought.

### What was it like to work with District leaders throughout your region?

**Mathieson:** I loved listening to our District leaders' perspectives and ideas. This gave valuable feedback on some aspects of the Board's work.

It was also great to see their personal growth over the course of one or two years while you are the International Director from a region. Many of them ask for advice about their leadership journey and that's opportunity for mentoring moments.

**Bittick:** I had served as a Region Advisor for two years prior to serving as an International Director, so I already had the honor of knowing the region's incredible District leaders. Outside of the region, I was able to meet and become friends with District leaders around the world. I have the utmost respect for all members who served, are serving, and will at some time serve in leadership positions throughout the organization.

### How did you grow from your Board service and improve your skills?

**Menon:** There are multiple skills that are honed while serving on the Board of Directors. Team building and team management involving the highest achievers and performers of the

## LADDER OF LEADERSHIP

Candidates for International Director have typically served in a previous series of Toastmasters officer roles. Here's a brief look at the organization's leadership structure and the many roles in which you can serve.

# 2

### At the club level, there are **eight officer roles**:

- ▶ President
- ▶ Vice President Education
- ▶ Vice President Membership
- ▶ Vice President Public Relations
- ▶ Secretary
- ▶ Treasurer
- ▶ Sergeant at Arms
- ▶ Immediate Past President

[Club officer elections](#) can begin to be held starting at the first club meeting in May. (New officers start July 1.) In clubs that elect officers semiannually, club officer elections can begin to be held starting at the first club meeting in November. (New officers start January 1.)

# 3

### At the **District level**, the leadership positions are:

- ▶ District Director
- ▶ Program Quality Director
- ▶ Club Growth Director
- ▶ Public Relations Manager
- ▶ Administration Manager
- ▶ Finance Manager
- ▶ Division Director
- ▶ Area Director
- ▶ Immediate Past District Director

[District leader elections](#) are held at the annual District Council meeting between March 15 and June 1.

Beyond the District level is the [Region Advisor](#) (RA) role. RAs guide and support Districts, helping them build new clubs and empower existing clubs to achieve excellence. RAs report to the International President and serve a 15-month term (April 1 through June 30 of the following year).

### At the **international level**

are the International Directors and Officers, who are elected at the Annual Business Meeting at the International Convention in August.

organization are invaluable skills gained through this experience. Gaining a better understanding of strategic planning and its implementation is another example. In the course of my service, I developed more empathy and compassion, which aided me in decision-making, which in turn was also guided by our core values—integrity, respect, service, and excellence.


**Mathieson:** Preparing to run for an International Director position makes you look at yourself and invites you to share who you are as a leader. The experience of speaking to members all around the world gave me a broader perspective of who we are as Toastmasters while at the same time increasing my confidence to share my thoughts and ideas.

### **Was the time commitment manageable, and how did you balance your professional responsibilities with your responsibilities as a Board Member?**

**Levesque-Pharoah:** When I was in discussions for a new job, I set the stage early on and let them know I was running for the

Toastmasters International Board. I negotiated extra time off for professional development as well as pre-approved clearance for the time needed for the Board meetings and the International Convention.

All dates and meetings for Board committee work were by consensus, so it was very manageable.

**Menon:** I had learned from my District leadership days that leadership in Toastmasters was time-consuming. Therefore, I developed a practice to divide my day into buckets and allocate to each bucket a singular activity, whether that be personal, professional, or Toastmasters related. This has instilled discipline into my schedule, and I have been able to manage my time quite effectively by utilizing this strategy. 

**Paul Serman** is senior editor, executive and editorial content, for Toastmasters International.

# To Hybrid or Not to Hybrid? That is the Question.

Ask these four questions to determine if hybrid meetings are right for your club.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

**A**s we emerge from the COVID cocoon, clubs have three options—go back to in-person meetings, stay fully online, or go hybrid, where you combine both methods. All have their merits, and you probably have experience by now in in-person and online meetings. Hybrid meetings offer other benefits and challenges. As you start to explore the hybrid option, there are some questions to consider.

## 1 **Why do you want to go hybrid? What is your objective?**

There are a number of possible reasons. Perhaps you want to boost membership. World Headquarters gives us a target of 20 members. Some clubs are below that number. A hybrid meeting gives you the opportunity to go beyond your immediate location. In fact, you can bring people in from anywhere in the world, including those in your hometown who would rather attend from the comfort of their own home. This could be an advantage in recruiting.

During the Zoom meeting era, some clubs have already brought in members from out of town. One Nevada club has a member from Arizona and one from Japan. They don't want to lose those members, so they will be going hybrid.

Another reason to go hybrid is to gain expertise in remote meetings. This style of meeting was already

common in the corporate world prior to COVID, but it will become even more so as we go forward. This gives us a new skill area to develop.

If we find ourselves as one of those remote attendees in a corporate meeting, we need to be adept at communicating in this medium. If we are selling a product or idea, our persuasiveness is affected by our online performance. The same could be said if we are giving a status report. Both hybrid and online Toastmaster meetings help us develop that skill.

## 2 **Are you willing to put in the effort to make a hybrid club happen?**

Hybrid meetings increase the complexity of a Toastmaster meeting. You need the right room setup to enable the in-person attendees to see those online. And you need equipment to make it happen. You also need someone who is tech savvy enough to put that together each week. On top of that, you need to manage the meeting so that your online attendees feel included. And it requires a total club effort. Does your club have a setup that would work and people who would be willing to make it happen?

If these considerations sound doable for your club, then seriously explore a hybrid meeting. If not, then this style might not be for you.

## 3 **What will attract outside members to join your club?**

Just by announcing that you are now hybrid does not mean that Toastmasters from around the world are going to flock to your meeting. You might get many visitors, but what is going to make them stay and become members?

## The question of going hybrid is an individual decision for each club.

If I am looking to join a hybrid club, I personally have at least two objectives—to have opportunities to speak and to have members of the club who can give me strong feedback. I want rigorous evaluations. I may find several clubs that fit those criteria, but I will pick just one of them. Why should I pick you?

All Toastmasters and guests have their own objectives. They are looking for the best option for them based on their personalized criteria. They may check out a number of clubs too. You are competing with those clubs for their membership. Why should they pick you? In other words, do you have a meeting that sells itself to virtual visitors?

While you don't really need an answer to that question to go hybrid,





Cloud Peak Toastmasters Club in Sheridan, Wyoming, uses affordable technology that works just as well as pricier options.

I suggest that it is something that you might want to think about. It can push the club to get better, which is, of course, a good thing.

#### 4 Do the members of your club want to go hybrid?

Let's say that you have answered the above questions and you think that a hybrid format would be a good fit for your club. The next question is, do your club members agree? Are they behind the change?

This is a business decision, so you have to go through the club vote with a quorum. If a majority agree, then move ahead. Although, it may be a bit more complicated than that. I personally think that if the decision isn't near unanimous, you run the risk of chasing off a large group of your members. And that would be counterproductive.

Before taking a vote, I suggest that you check with key people in your club. The tech-savvy folks need to be on board. They, after all, will bear the brunt of the effort.

In addition, each club has certain people who are the keeper of the keys, so to speak. Those members have perhaps been there since the club founding, and while not necessarily in leadership, have great

influence over the direction of the club. Make sure that they are on board. They will help you sell the concept.

Finally, check with every club member to gauge their support level and answer any questions or concerns that they might have.

When you have done that, bring it up at a club meeting for discussion. If there are disagreements, work to keep it civil. And then, when you are ready, take your vote.

If your club does vote to switch to a hybrid format, your officers simply need to update the [Addendum of Standard Club Options](#), which can be filled out online via Club Central or emailed to [clubquality@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubquality@toastmasters.org).

Hybrid meetings are a great way for many members to get the benefits from Toastmasters that they are looking for. And they are a great way for Toastmaster clubs to expand their reach and serve more people. The question of going



During hybrid meetings, both in-person and online attendees can see Cloud Peak Toastmaster Cody Wyatt and the timing lights.

hybrid is an individual decision for each club. You need to know what you want to achieve and what you will do to make it happen. And you'll want to consider how a hybrid meeting affects various aspects of the meeting, and perhaps make adjustments. When you know that, you are well on your way. **T**

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# Once Upon a Time in a Conference Room

The value of storytelling in professional communication.

BY MEGAN PRESTON MEYER

It's 8:30 p.m. You're staring at your laptop, struggling with the third bullet point on the sixth slide for your quarterly results presentation the next morning, when you feel a tug on your T-shirt.

"Mommy, can you tell me a story?"

You look down at your daughter, and smile. You close your computer and follow her to her room, where you read her favorite story about dragons, pirates, princesses, and triumph. After "The End," you turn out the light—and halfway down the hall, you hear her retelling the tale to her teddy bear.

*She really loves that story*, you think, opening your laptop back up. Then you sigh and turn back to your bullet points.

Stories aren't just for kids. For thousands of years, stories were the primary means of conveying information, and our brains have evolved to respond to them. Humans—young and old—seem hardwired to understand stories, which makes them ideal vehicles for professional communication too. Whether you're making a presentation, interviewing for a job, or trying to motivate your employees, here are some ways you can optimize business stories.

## Start With Your Objective

Traditional stories may have a moral. Business stories should have an objective.

Neil Bearden, managing director of Plot Wolf, combines storytelling with behavioral science to help companies and individuals craft their messages purposefully. When you tell a story in a professional setting, you're not there

just to entertain—you're trying to reach a particular result. Bearden calls these *instrumental stories* because they are told to achieve an objective. Being clear on your objective—what you want the audience to do—will help you decide how best to design your message.

Storytelling works because it involves detail. There are characters and action and conflict and emotion. But it's easy to overdo it. Without an objective, Bearden says, "You don't know how to triage. What

do I put in? What do I leave out? How do I decide?" Starting with the objective makes those decisions easier.

The goal of most business stories is to get the audience to act, and they seldom act alone. You want the audience to remember the story, and usually, to tell someone else: their boss, the hiring manager, or a decision-maker. By beginning with your end in mind, you can craft a crisp, concise story—one that's easy to retell.

## METAPHORS ARE MINIATURE STORIES

A story doesn't have to be long. Often, Bearden says, when he's working with corporate clients, "there's actually very little beginning, middle, and end." Many times, in trying to make a message more memorable and repeatable, "what comes out on the other side is a metaphor."

Metaphors are excellent ways to make abstract or complex messages more accessible. Imagine, for instance, that you need to motivate your employees after an extended period of tough economic conditions. You could speak abstractly of resilience and renewal—or you could tell them about the jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), an evergreen tree that grows in North America whose pinecones remain tightly closed for years until extremely high temperatures, such as from a forest fire, loosen the resin. Only then does the pinecone release its seeds so that a new tree can grow, towering toward the sky out of the ashes.

The right metaphor—just like the right story—builds a connection between your words and the concept you're trying to communicate. Once your audience understands the metaphor, "it's going to be much easier when you come back to the real thing," Bearden says. Metaphors are stories in miniature—and they, too, can have happy endings.





if the pieces were positioned as they would be in a real game. When the pieces were positioned randomly, the grandmasters had no advantage. De Groot hypothesized that, while novices tried to remember each individual position, the grandmasters saw the chess pieces as part of an organized “structure.” Their experience allowed them to infer the moves that preceded the configuration, and the moves that could come next—a story, if you will—and that story helped them re-create the chess board.

**When you tell a story in a professional setting, you’re not there just to entertain—you’re trying to reach a particular result.**

“There’s a logic to the board,” Bearden says, and there should be a logic to your story. “[If] the structure is retained, then it’s retellable.”

Once you grasp the power of storytelling, put it to use. Start with your objective, add in a pop of color so that your message stands out, and then tie your details together with a clear organizing structure.

Back at your laptop, you rethink the bullet points for your quarterly results presentation. There may not be dragons or pirates or princesses in your PowerPoint, but you can still tell a story. A few minutes later, satisfied that you’ve crafted a message that your audience will remember and retell, you shut down your computer.

From your daughter’s bedroom, you hear a whisper: “The End.” ■

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**Megan Preston Meyer** is a member of *TM International Club Zug in Zug, Switzerland*, and a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster magazine*. She is the author of *the Supply Jane Adventures*. Learn more at [www.supply-jane.com](http://www.supply-jane.com).

### Add Distinctive Details

Once your story is concise and objective-driven, how can you make sure people remember it? By giving them something that stands out. “One of the easiest things people can do is to put something in the story that’s distinct,” Bearden says. He mentions the Von Restorff effect, which says that distinctive items—things that stand out—are more likely to be remembered. He gives an example: “*Bed, rest, awake, hippopotamus, dream, doze, slumber, snore, nap, peace, yawn, drowsy.*”

Now cover the list and try to remember what was on it. Bearden knows at least one item that you’ll have remembered: “Anyone who is paying at least 10% attention is going to have ‘hippopotamus’ because it’s a distinctive item.”

One way to take advantage of this effect is to add colorful, visual details. Imagine you’re telling a story about a professor you once had. You can describe him as eccentric, maybe even goofy, and it might resonate with a few people in the audience—“but as soon as you say the professor always wore yellow socks, *everyone* is going to remember it,” says Bearden.

Yellow socks are like the hippopotamus. “They’re distinct. They stand out. You don’t see a lot of men walking around with bright yellow socks.”

Associating your message with a specific, vivid detail will help make it memorable. “Whatever the storyteller is saying about this professor, it’s more likely to be retained a month from now because of those bright yellow socks,” Bearden notes.

When sitting down to write your next speech, pitch, or presentation, Bearden recommends that you ask yourself this question: *What in my story is going to stand out and be distinct?* Sprinkling in a few vivid details “provides an opportunity for people to remember [your story], which is a necessary condition for them to be able to retell it.”

### Create a Logical Structure

Once you’ve collected some distinctive details to illustrate your message, it’s time to get organized. A story is more memorable than a collection of arguments because it follows a logical structure: a series of events with clear cause-and-effect relationships.

Bearden mentions a classic cognitive psychology study from Adrian de Groot. In the study, chess grandmasters and novice players were given five-second glimpses of chess pieces arranged on a board and then later asked to remember where the pieces were. The grandmasters were better able to recall the arrangements—but only



# The Great Courses

How to stimulate your mind, impress your friends, and actually know why the year 1066 was such a big deal.

BY JOHN CADLEY



I have a friend who’s almost as funny as I am. Almost. One of his best lines is, “I don’t know anything, and I can prove it.” It’s funny because he is, in fact, a very smart person who knows plenty. I, on the other hand, can—and often do—prove it. I had eight years of grammar school, four years of high school, four years of college, two years of graduate school, and all I can tell you is how to make a fake ID good enough to buy beer.

It’s embarrassing, and I’ve made up for it by cheating. Yes, I am an intellectual poseur, a charlatan, a mountebank, a quacksalver. Call me what you will. I had no choice. Standing like a coatrack while people around me kept referring to the Magna Carta or the Great Schism, I determined to get in on the action by hook or by crook. I chose crook. Recalling vaguely that the year 1066 had some significance, I looked it up and learned it was the year of the Battle of Hastings and the resulting Norman conquest of England, which was apparently a big deal. I would take this minuscule morsel of erudition to parties, wait for an opening, and casually interject, “And then, of course, there was 1066, which changed everything.” If someone asked exactly what changed, I would feign sudden chest pains and head for the door. Then I would go home and fall into paroxysms of guilt, lamenting all those lost years of education when so much knowledge passed, unimpeded, into and out of my ear canals like wind through a tunnel.

Why did I daydream, doodle, and write amorous sonnets to ... to ... (I forget her name). Why did I ridicule Mr. Rothstein

when he was trying to teach me about allopatric speciation? Oh, the waste! The loss! The humanity!

I was in just such a state when a catalog arrived in the mail for something called The Great Courses, one company’s vast collection of video lectures on all the subjects I ignored in school, plus hundreds more, from *The Peloponnesian War to Crochet: The Basics & Beyond*. I felt like an illiterate goat herder who had been offered a card to the Library of Alexandria. Here was a chance to make it all up, to learn everything I had once so blithely ignored, including—could it be true!—*1066: The Year That Changed Everything*. Now I could expound prodigiously on that fateful year without faking a myocardial infarction.

**I felt like an illiterate goat herder who had been offered a card to the Library of Alexandria.**

Which courses should I get? *1066*, of course. Then a couple on the Greeks and Romans, with a little Plato to round out my classical chops. I could also order *The Theory of Everything*. That ought to cover a few bases. Then *Law School for Everyone*. I’m sure I wouldn’t get a license to practice, but at least now I’ll find out why my lawyer charges \$250 for a 15-minute phone call. One course I won’t take is *How the Stock Market Works*. I know how the stock market works. You invest in a company, the CEO is indicted for fraud,

and you have to explain to your children why they’re not going to Disney World. Nor will I order *Raising Emotionally and Socially Healthy Children*. That ship has sailed. My children are grown and as long as there are no felony convictions, that’s healthy enough for me.

On the other hand, *Philosophy, Religion, and the Meaning of Life* is intriguing. Where else can you find out the purpose of human existence—and *on sale*, no less—for \$49.95? *How to Read and Understand Shakespeare* looks like another good bet. I studied the Bard in college but got things mixed up. I thought Hamlet killed Caesar, Romeo married Cleopatra, and Macbeth was the guy who tamed the shrew (I was close; he married one).

Let’s see—history, philosophy, Shakespeare, law school ... maybe just one more to round out my curriculum. *Introduction to Infectious Diseases*? No thanks, we’ve already been introduced. *Skepticism 101*? I could teach that course. *Machiavelli in Context*? I’m afraid it might remind me of my ex-wife’s attorney. Ah! Here’s one—*The Psychology of Performance: How to Be Your Best in Life*. That’s for me. I’ve always wanted to fulfill my potential, achieve my goals, distinguish myself, and generally feel superior to everyone else. In fact, for that one I’ll even pay the shipping for next-day delivery. **T**

**John Cadley** is a former advertising copywriter, freelance writer, and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at [www.cadleys.com](http://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 

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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