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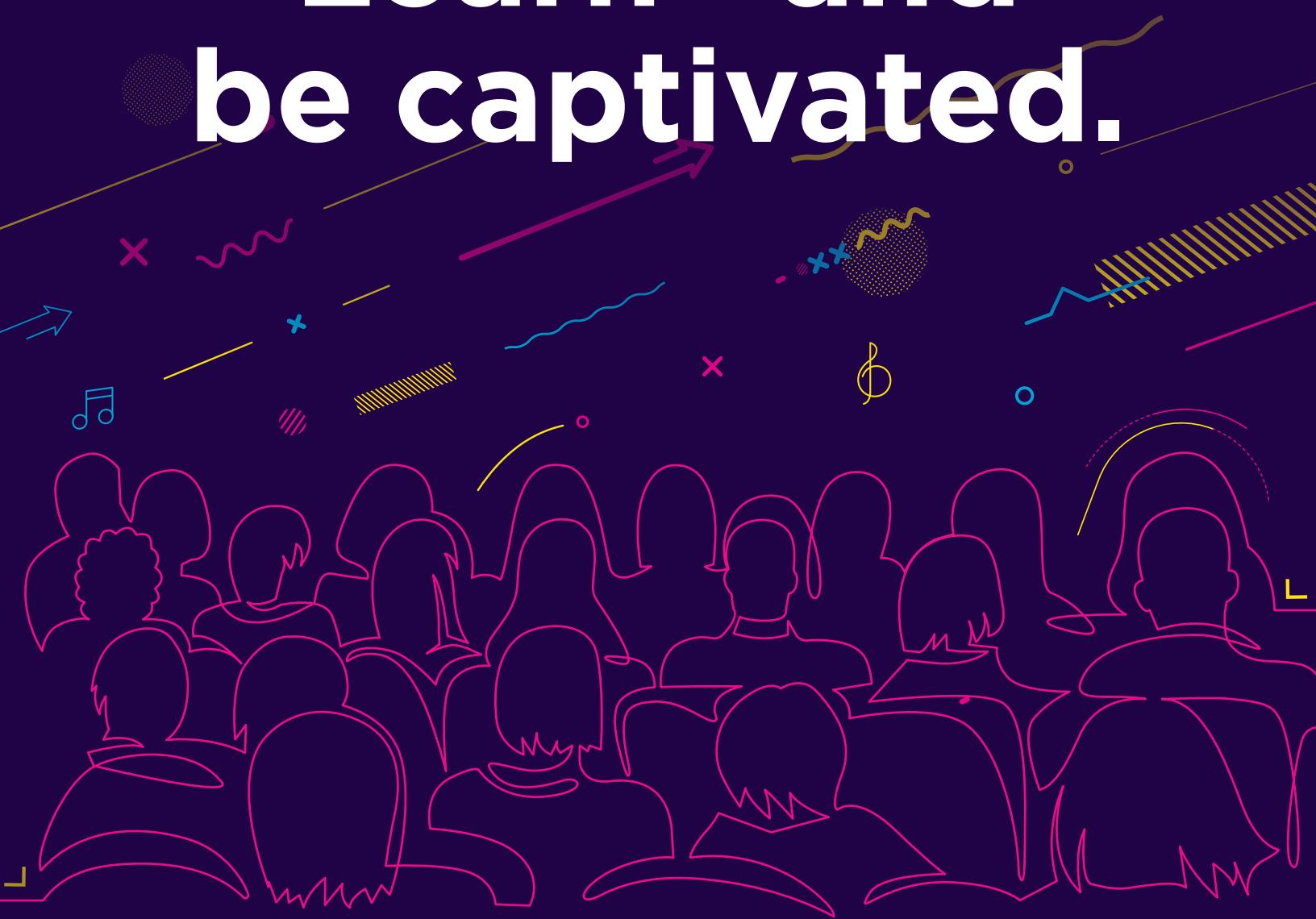
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The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, Colorado, United States 80112.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The *Toastmaster* magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

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# Forging Lasting Friendships Through Toastmasters

When I joined Toastmasters in 2006, I had one purpose—to improve my communication skills. That was it. But as I was preparing to attend my first meeting, the one question on my mind was, *what were the members of the club going to be like?* I had done my research on how a meeting was conducted, but I knew nothing about the members.

As I entered the room, one member, John, got up, met me at the door, introduced himself, and then proceeded to introduce me to other members. Even though I was still just a guest, they involved me as if I was a member, as if I was already part of the Toastmasters “family.” Their actions and attitudes remained the same after I joined; they were truly genuine individuals. Many of them have since moved on but remain friends to this day.

In May of 2007, while attending my first District conference I met a member named Liz. She saw that I was sitting by myself and came over and introduced herself. I explained that I was participating in my very first District speech contest. Although she hadn’t met me before, she encouraged me and cheered me on during the competition, and even though I didn’t place in the top three, having that support meant a lot. Liz has since moved away, but continues to be a friend—and a Toastmaster—and is always willing to offer support and encouragement when needed.



So many times a person who started off as an acquaintance developed into a great friend.

I have many stories like this about people I have met along my Toastmasters journey. The names and stories may change, but so many times a person who started off as an acquaintance developed into a great friend.

When I meet members all over the world, I constantly hear words like “family,” “close friendships,” and “my community” being used to describe someone’s experience with Toastmasters. People initially join to learn something, to grow, and to improve themselves. And that takes not only a willingness from within to be vulnerable but also positive support and encouragement from others. I think that’s why so many of us have forged such deep bonds with each other.

As you look back over your Toastmasters journey, from guest to member, think about who you have walked this journey with, who has encouraged you to be the best version of yourself, who has encouraged you to achieve more than you ever thought possible. Those who you would call friend.

Toastmasters is about more than just communication and leadership; it’s also about the people we meet along the journey, about the impact they make on us and we on them, and about our enduring friendships.

**Richard E. Peck, DTM**  
Acting International President

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## News



### Two Members Aim for Accredited Speaker Designation

Lauren Parsons, DTM, and Kevin Snyder, DTM, are candidates for the 2022 [Accredited Speaker \(AS\) Program](#), taking place at the 2022 International Convention in August. The prestigious AS designation is awarded to professional speakers who combine in-depth knowledge of their subject specialty with exceptional speaking skills. Only 89 members have achieved the honor since the program launched in 1981.

This year's AS Program will be held August 19, in a hybrid format: Each candidate will have the option to present either onsite from Nashville, Tennessee, or online from their home country (New Zealand for Parsons, United States for Snyder).

### Club Building Video Contest

Congratulations to the three winning Districts of the club building [video contest](#)! The contest was created for Districts to share their successful strategies for building new clubs. The three winning videos will be featured across Toastmasters' platforms and during the 2022 International Convention. Take a moment to [view](#) (and learn from) them all!

## Updated PDF for Club Success Plan

By the end of the 2022–2023 program year, there will be a newly updated online version of the Club Success Plan! This goal-setting resource helps maintain focus on achieving goals within the Distinguished Club Program. While you wait for the online version to launch, you can access a more hands-on experience with a PDF version, available for download and completion outside of Club Central on July 1. Club officers are encouraged to use this new PDF for their 2022–2023 program year goal setting. Additional announcements will be made when the online version is launched. If you have questions regarding the Club Success Plan or this new version, please email the Club and Member Support Team at [clubofficers@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubofficers@toastmasters.org).

## Resources

### Toastmasters Works in the Workplace

Today's forward-thinking companies see great value in developing and improving employee soft skills, including oral communication, listening/presenting, and time management. Watch this [video](#) to hear corporate club members speak out on the benefits Toastmasters brings to their companies, then visit the corporate club webpage to find out how you can [bring Toastmasters](#) into your workplace.

### New Club Coach Program Site

Serving as a club coach can be a valuable leadership experience, while being guided by a coach can transform your club. A new, [comprehensive webpage](#) for the Club Coach Program is now accessible on the Toastmasters website. The webpage, which launched July 1, 2022, provides detailed information about the program, including FAQs and rule changes that take effect in the 2022–2023 program year. Coaches change the game! Read more about the program in two articles in this issue.

## Reminders

### Listen to *The Toastmasters Podcast*

Twice each month you can hear two Toastmasters engaged in conversation with inspiring guests from around the globe. Sometimes it's with the International President of Toastmasters or the new World Champion of Public Speaking; other times it's with a doctor, comedian, or beauty queen. Tune in to current and past episodes at [ToastmastersPodcast.com](#) or the [Toastmasters website](#), and make sure to look for episodes each month in *Toastmaster* online articles. You can also find episodes on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, and other platforms.

### 2022 International Speech Contest Semifinals

Root for your region's representatives in this year's International Speech Contest Semifinals! Two contestants from each region are randomly assigned to each of four semifinals, which will be held during the 2022 International Convention. The regions for each semifinal have been determined, and you can [check here](#) to see the names of this year's region quarterfinal winners.

## Convention

# Get Ready To Go Hybrid!

2022 International Convention takes place in Nashville and online.

After two years of being an online-only event, this year the International Convention will be hybrid, meaning it can be accessed either online or in person.

If you enjoy the energy and excitement of traveling and meeting old friends and new people, make plans to be at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee, from Wednesday, August 17, through Saturday, August 20, 2022.

If you get more out of watching sessions and events at your own pace, register for the online experience and watch sessions whenever and wherever works for you. The online platform will run the same dates as the in-person event.

In-person attendees will have the opportunity to join a Toastmasters Night at the Grand Ole Opry, networking lunches, and the President's Celebration, which includes dinner and dancing. The World Championship of Public Speaking®

will take place both in person in Nashville and online, and be streamed live to online attendees.

All attendees, whether in person or remote, will have the ability to network with others through shared chat features and networking lounges, as well as post on the popular social wall and interact with people across the globe. Everyone can participate in online games and onsite challenges for further opportunities to connect and get in the spirit.

Similar to the 2021 International Convention, there will be four tracks (Public

Speaking, Professional Development, Personal Growth, and Inclusive Excellence), with four sessions in each track to choose from. Mix and match or just follow one track! Four of the education sessions will take place live from the stage in Nashville (and will also be available on the web platform), and 12 sessions will be shown solely in an online format, which is available to all attendees, whether online or in person.

The online all-access pass is \$45 USD through August 20; the online limited-access pass is free. The on-demand all-access pass is \$75 and will be available for purchasing starting September 2022. In-person rates are \$675 if purchased by July 13, \$725 through August 12, and \$775 onsite, August 16 through 20. All prices USD.

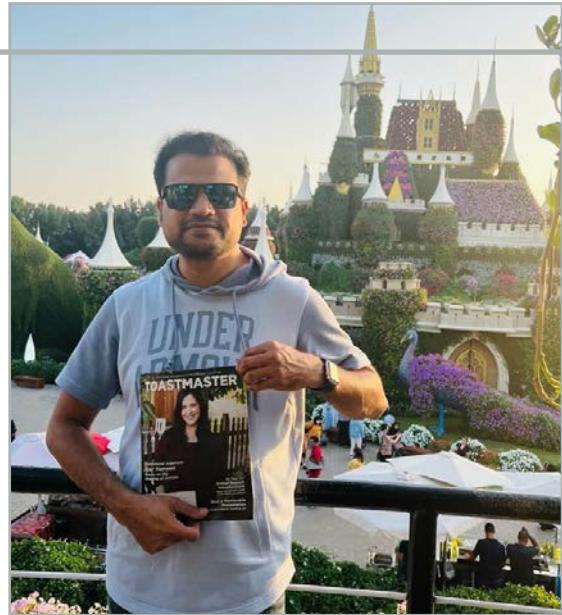
Visit the [2022 Convention page](#) to get updates on all of the excitement, and make sure to follow our social media channels for more details on the Convention.



## Traveling Toastmaster



**NEEV CONDES** of Ajman, United Arab Emirates, poses at Expo 2020 in Dubai—a six-month event with pavilions representing 192 countries. Condes visited all 192 pavilions!



**SHANID THATHAMADATHIL** of Doha, Qatar, visits the United Arab Emirates' Dubai Miracle Garden, the world's largest natural flower garden.

## Snapshot



Business Focus Toastmasters Club of Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, celebrates its 500th meeting. Members and guests played a game of "mingle bingo," which called for participants to walk around and get to know each other better, while crossing off squares on a bingo card if they met someone who matched the descriptions. The activity highlighted the club's diversity and allowed members to connect with those from all walks of life while sharing their unique stories and experiences.



## Quotes

### A Few Words on Friendship

International Friendship Day is July 30. To get in the spirit of connecting with good friends and enjoying the company of others, here are a few inspiring quotes to remind you of the value of friendship.

"There is nothing I would not do for those who are really my friends."

—Jane Austen, British author

"There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met."

—William Butler Yeats, Irish poet

"The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit."

—Nelson Henderson, Canadian author

“ “ ” ”

"I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light."

—Helen Keller, American author and disability advocate

"Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom."

—Marcel Proust, French novelist

"Each friend represents a world in us, a world not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born."

—Anaïs Nin, French-American writer

"I have learned that to be with those I like is enough."

—Walt Whitman, American poet

"Remember that the most valuable antiques are dear old friends."

—H. Jackson Brown Jr., American author

# 7 Ways Leaders Can Listen More Effectively

Start by letting your team know you're listening, not just hearing.

By Joel Schwartzberg

We often think of leaders as strong speakers and thinkers, but the most admired leaders are also strong listeners. These leaders understand that their teams have a strong desire to be both heard and appreciated.

"Building positive relations is an important part of leadership, and listening is a critical part of building good relationships," says Dr. Rick Fulwiler, president of Transformational Leadership Associates and an instructor at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "Actively listening to others lets them know that you are interested in their needs, as well as what they're trying to say. When people feel that you care about them, it will make them more likely to follow your leadership."

Effective listening starts with knowing the difference between passively hearing your team and actively listening to them. Below are seven ways to optimize the impact of your listening opportunities.



**1 Maintain eye contact.** Always face speakers and maintain eye contact. In a virtual meeting, that means looking into the camera's cold eye, not into a warm digital face.

**2 Nod when you agree or understand.** Whereas smiling says, "I'm enjoying this," and clapping says "good job," nodding is the most effective way to show support for your ideas because it says, "I'm buying what you're selling." Nodding is also very easy, so do it often enough to be noticed.

**3 Use listening time to listen.** It may be tempting to plan what you're going to say next when someone else is speaking, but this is disrespectful and can be very perilous. Misunderstanding a question, idea, or request because you didn't effectively listen to it can damage your credibility and your team's trust.

**4 Don't interrupt.** Avoid interrupting members of your team or finishing their sentences. That's not a leadership prerogative, and it is universally rude. Sometimes we think we're affirming someone else's point by finishing their sentences for them, but even if that's technically

true, we're still trampling on their perspective. (Yes, my wife taught me that one.)

## 5 Reflect questions back.

Try to repeat questions and concerns back to the speaker before offering your perspective or proposing a solution. For example, "I want to make sure I hear you correctly. You're saying we have too many meetings, especially on Fridays. Is that correct?" This powerful acknowledgment elevates trust and demonstrates empathy even before you address the concern.

## 6 Keep an open mind.

Stay objective and resist the urge to defend. Speaking and listening is a dialogue, not a debate, so focus on considering your team's perspective, not making counterarguments.

## 7 Ask probing questions.

After listening to your team, asking clarifying questions indicates you paid attention, value their feedback, and are open and eager to learn. Even if you have trouble conceiving specific questions, you can fall back on some basic ones like:

- "How did you come up with the idea?"
- "What would success look like to you?"
- "How can we apply that approach throughout the company?"
- "What can I do to help?"

Avoid asking questions in public that are challenging, potentially shaming, or reveal skepticism. For example, "How much will this cost?" or "But what happens if?" You can pose those questions later. The goal now is only to listen and clarify.

Productive communication is always a two-way street, involving both a speaker and a listener, but don't fall into the trap of thinking one is always the leader and the other the employee. Effective listening is a critical function of effective leadership, so best to lead with your mind, mouth, and ears.

**Joel Schwartzberg** is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a national nonprofit; a presentation coach; and author of *The Language of Leadership: How to Engage and Inspire Your Team and Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*. Follow him on Twitter @TheJoelTruth.

# Toastmasters and Physics

Time flies ... or doesn't, depending on how you look at it.

By Mervin Bierman, DTM

I have always admired theoretical physicists. As the American television series *The Big Bang Theory* shows us, they have a lot going for them. Attractive, smart people seem to be drawn to the geekiest of the group. Universities throw buckets of money in their direction for ideas that can never be proven, make only limited sense to the layperson, can only be explained by a handful of people, and understood by even fewer. What a life!

Regardless, at least one principle of modern physics is easily demonstrated within Toastmasters—time dilation (TD). Albert Einstein's theory of special relativity holds that clocks are seen to be running more slowly or more quickly depending on the observer's orientation. Everyone has experienced TD in one form or another. A child awaiting a birthday or holiday experiences an apparent slowing of time. Meanwhile, an adult at a job interview is convinced they just sat down when the interviewer says, "Thanks, that's all the time we have."

Why should this be and why should TD have such an effect? Moving through the Toastmasters year at what appears to be an ever-increasing pace, we find it all too easy to be distracted from our primary objective. That is, we take time away from the end goal to chase



Mervin Bierman, DTM

Photo Credit: Kathleen Davis Photography

odd brown stain on the ceiling of the living room, all topped off by the pleasant note on the door saying the local police would like to talk to you about a scratch on someone else's car. Suddenly it is the evening of your Toastmasters meeting. You are pulling into the parking lot when you deduce that you have not even read the objectives you are trying to achieve with this speech. Bang! Positive TD—time moving faster—strikes.

But wait, the chief judge is back. She is talking to various members of the audience, who all get out of their seats and follow her out of the room. This couldn't be for you, could it? Did you read the timing light wrong? When did the clock on the wall stop? This has been way longer than expected. And all you can do is wait. Welcome to the world of negative TD—time slowing down.

So what's the solution? Isn't this where I am supposed to expose the magic secret of defeating TD? Do I provide tips for how to ensure time flows exactly as you anticipated: steady, measured, predictable? Well, here is some good news and some bad news. True time dilation is a measurable, provable phenomenon and unless you are exposed to an unusual environment (say, moving at 97% the speed of light), it is unlikely to appear in your daily life. *But, but, but;* I hear one of the three remaining readers exclaim. *These articles are supposed to help make us all better Toastmasters! Where is the answer?*

And that, my friends, is time management. And an article for another day.

## Time dilation observation flows neatly into Toastmasters. For example, you suddenly realize you only have a week to prepare a five- to seven-minute speech.

other "goals." Sometimes the short-term goals are important or necessary and sometimes, not so much.

Time dilation observation flows neatly into Toastmasters. For example, you suddenly realize you only have a week to prepare a five- to seven-minute speech. You knew three months ago, but life interfered. That deadline at work was compounded by the flat tire on the car that would not start. Add on the weird clanking sound coming from someplace deep in the freezer, that

In the opposite case, you have worked hard on your humorous speech, just in time for contest season. Everyone loves the talk, even the cat who has had to listen to the presentation 24 times. You race to the front of the room when the contest chair calls your name, you shake hands, you turn, and you crush it! You glance up to see the yellow light turning red just as you say, "Madam contest chair." This one is in the bag. The chief judge and the ballot counters file out of the room, and all is well.

**Mervin Bierman, DTM,** is a member of four clubs: two in Maryland, one in Virginia, and one online club based in California. He is also a past District 18 Director.

# Club COACH to the Rescue

When clubs flounder, experienced members lend their expertise.

By Peggy Beach, DTM

## Resources to Help

To learn about new changes to the Club Coach Program, read “Boosting the Club Coach Program” on page 12. You can email [clubcoach@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubcoach@toastmasters.org) for questions about the program.

**L**et's face it: Some Toastmasters clubs struggle. Whether the problem is a lack of members or a lack of volunteers for officer and meeting roles, certain clubs need help.

And help is available. District leaders can appoint one or two coaches to assist clubs around the world. These experienced Toastmasters are there to help the club rebuild its membership, restore a quality environment, and most importantly, reach a point where it is sustainable for many years to come.

Being a club coach has often been described as the toughest job in Toastmasters. It's certainly one of the most important—a mission that ultimately can help many people become better communicators and leaders.

“The journey is bigger than you,” says Julie Richardt, DTM, a club coach in the 2020–2021 program year. “Your journey touches and influences others.”

Here are suggestions to help make the coaching experience a success, for both coach and club.

### Offer Encouragement

Richardt says being a club coach is time-consuming and a lot of work, but if you stick with it, it's a fulfilling journey. “I would tell future club coaches not to get discouraged,” she says.

Richardt is a member of several clubs in Charlotte, North Carolina. She and Kayren Cathcart, DTM, teamed up to become co-coaches of the ATD Toastmasters, a corporate club in Huntersville, North Carolina. Cathcart, also a member of several Charlotte clubs, agrees that it's important to maintain a positive attitude and support members who may be frustrated.

“Club members may perceive setbacks—such as non-renewals, low attendance, or even organizational changes—that affect their participation,” she says.

Bob Harman, a charter member of ATD Toastmasters, says the club started off with a strong membership but suffered during the pandemic.

“We went to Zoom meetings and some people didn't want that,” he says.

Cathcart says she and Richardt worked with the ATD members to reframe the club's online meetings “as opportunities to reach *more* people beyond their nucleus,

instead of seeing [such meetings] as a setback to not meeting in person.”

Harman says the tactic helped. The club did adjust to online meetings, ultimately considering them to be a positive environment. The club hopes to begin hybrid meetings soon.

Having the club coaches was a great asset to the ATD club, says Harman.

“They were cheerleaders. But they also helped us with ideas to increase participation. We talked about holding an open house, doing a club newsletter, and inviting friends as guests.”

### Help Club Officers

Andrej Mazary, DTM, is a member of Slovenski Toastmasters in Bratislava, Slovakia. He became a coach in September 2020 for the Toastmasters Nitra club in Nitra, Slovakia, and found that the officers were suffering burnout.

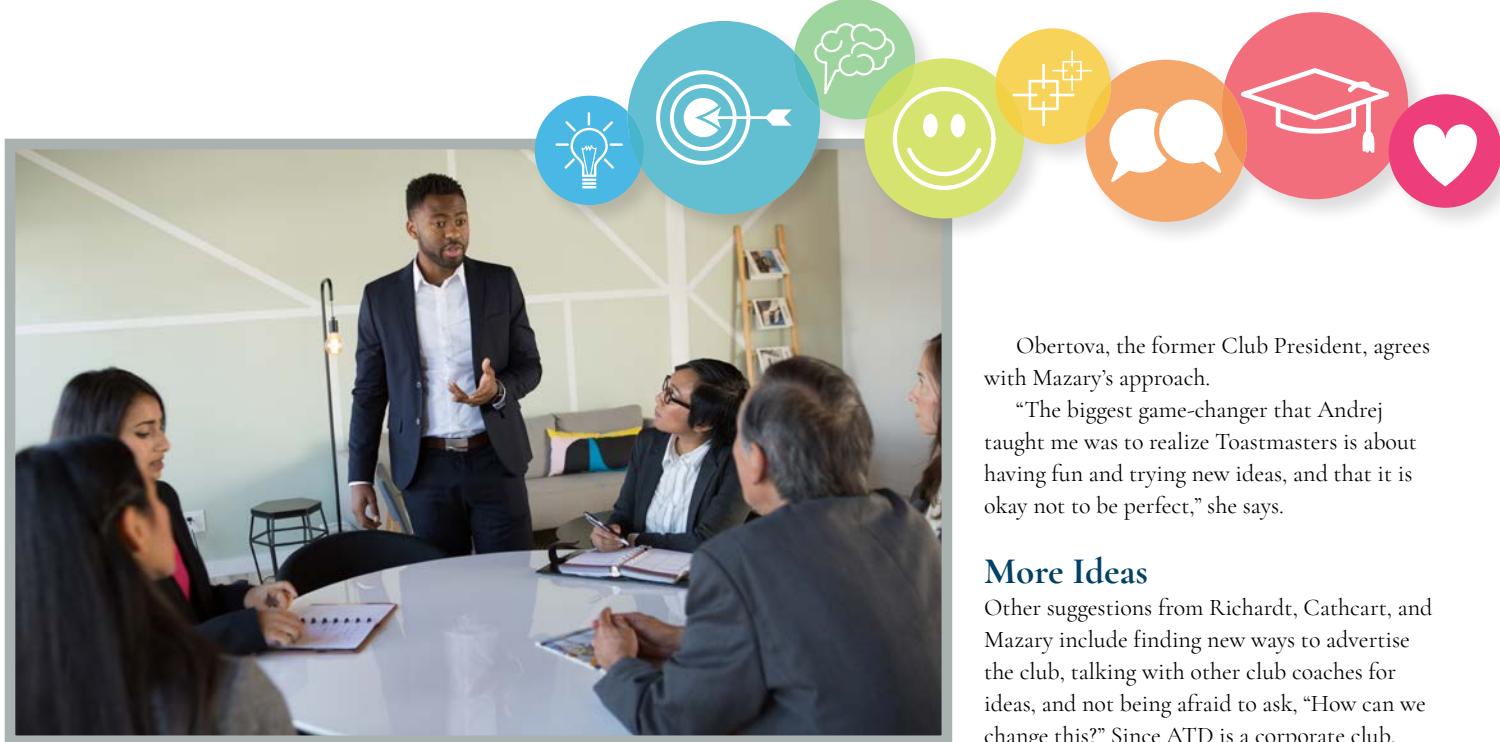
“I had been a mentor of the club eight years ago after it chartered, so I have an interest in seeing the club thrive,” says Mazary. “The Division Director asked me to help.”

“The biggest game-changer that Andrej taught me was to realize Toastmasters is about having fun and trying new ideas, and that it is okay not to be perfect.”

—DANIELA OBERTOVA

Mazary says that it's important for a coach to understand what the club members need and want. “I didn't want to come in as a know-it-all. I wanted to get to know [the officers and the members] as people.”

Daniela Obertova, Club President during Mazary's coaching assignment, says his efforts paid off dramatically for the club, helping improve relationships among officers and leading to an atmosphere that is “more relaxed,



friendly, and open-minded. Chaos was replaced by harmony. Also, the quality of the meetings went up due to better planning and starting to use EasySpeak more effectively."

Full, engaging meetings make it easier to meet educational goals in the Distinguished Club Program (DCP). The DCP recognizes club achievements that provide a high-quality

**"I didn't want to come in as a know-it-all. I wanted to get to know [the officers and the members] as people."**

—ANDREJ MAZARY, DTM

Richardt and Cathcart met with the ATD club officers and members several times so that everyone could get to know each other. "We also met with the officers weekly to offer suggestions and encouragement," says Richardt.

Keeping the communication flowing is crucial as well. Cathcart says she had to learn how to communicate with members who were more analytical and methodical than she. "I am a laid-back creative type. I had to adapt my communication style to the club members," she says. "What seemed like resistance was often evidence that they needed more time to process what was being presented."

## Revitalize Meetings and Pathways Participation

Many low-member clubs may meet regularly but not have complete meetings. Having a full meeting with at least one prepared speech, Table Topics®, and an evaluation session is a key element to getting a club back on track.

experience for members. That's why one of a coach's goals is to help the club achieve Distinguished or higher status in the program.

"We encouraged members to complete a level in Pathways," says Richardt. "We also strongly supported the idea of having a full agenda for a meeting."

Guests and members are more likely to see the full impact of Toastmasters when a full agenda is available at every meeting. "We wanted the members to see Toastmasters as bigger than their home club," says Cathcart. "Getting them to visit other clubs, participate in speech contests, was something that I viewed as important."

Mazary agrees with an emphasis on meeting goals for the DCP. But he says the program results will come naturally when the individuals are happy and enjoying themselves. "The people are the club, there is no club without people," he notes. "When you're going to have joyful and fulfilled members, you will have the DCP."

Obertova, the former Club President, agrees with Mazary's approach.

"The biggest game-changer that Andrej taught me was to realize Toastmasters is about having fun and trying new ideas, and that it is okay not to be perfect," she says.

## More Ideas

Other suggestions from Richardt, Cathcart, and Mazary include finding new ways to advertise the club, talking with other club coaches for ideas, and not being afraid to ask, "How can we change this?" Since ATD is a corporate club, Richardt and Cathcart stressed to the members how important it was to get support for the club from the organization's management.

The three coaches' clubs achieved Distinguished status in 2020–2021: Select Distinguished for ATD Toastmasters and President's Distinguished for Toastmasters Nitra. The coaches were thrilled and each says they learned something significant during their journey.

"I learned that I need to approach a club in a positive way," says Mazary. "I need to believe that they can achieve success no matter how discouraged they may be in the beginning."

"We are all learning to be effective leaders and helping others in their Toastmasters walk," adds Richardt.

You also help yourself. Being a club coach is challenging but you learn so much from it, says Cathcart.

"I remember that I was pulling my hair out because we were so close to meeting our goal and needed just one more big push," she says. "Then I realized that the process was more important than the outcome."

"I grew in my leadership and communication skills more than I expected. My confidence also grew. The club coach experience was a blessing."

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**Peggy Beach, DTM,** is a freelance writer living in Raleigh, North Carolina. A Past District 37 Governor, she is a member of Hi Rise Toastmasters and Top Triangle Toastmasters, both in Raleigh. You can reach her at [writereditorpeggybeach@gmail.com](mailto:writereditorpeggybeach@gmail.com).

# Boosting the Club Coach Program

New requirements are aimed at elevating clubs that need guidance.

By Paul Sterman

**C**hanges to improve the Toastmasters Club Coach Program are now in place. The moves are designed to forge the best fit possible between clubs and well-qualified coaches so that more clubs can flourish.

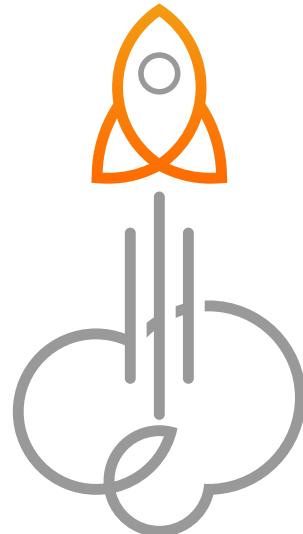
The changes took effect July 1, the beginning of the 2022–2023 program year, and they are outlined on a new Club Coach Program webpage. The new program policies were crafted by the 2020–2021 Policy Review Committee, composed of past and current members of the Toastmasters International Board of Directors.

“The main purpose of implementing new rules for the Club Coach Program is to strengthen it and make it more robust,” says Deepak Menon, DTM, Toastmasters’ 2019–2020 International President, who co-chaired the Policy Review Committee. “These changes are also expected to increase the success rate of the program by ensuring that there will be fewer slippages.”

New requirements for club coaches will ensure such members are experienced, committed, and “have the knowledge that the clubs they coach can benefit from,” says Menon.

Members must now meet the following qualifications to become a club coach.

- You must have completed at least two levels in your path in the Pathways learning experience, or have achieved an Advanced Communicator Bronze or Advanced Leader Bronze in the traditional education program.
- You can’t be a member of the club you coach, or have been a member of that club in the previous six months.
- You must have served as a club officer for at least a one-year term (or two six-month terms).
- You can only coach one club at a time.



## Understanding Each Other

Sometimes, the pairing of a club and a coach is not effective. Clubs have the right to stop working with their designated coach if they are dissatisfied. To cut down on unsuccessful coach-club relationships, the new rules call for more communication before a coach is appointed.

A coach must complete the Club Coach Training Module before beginning an appointment. The module is in Pathways Base Camp, and it provides an overview of the Club Coach Program for club members, club officers, District leaders, and prospective coaches. This way, everyone is aware of what the club/coach relationship involves and what is expected from the partnership.

In addition, the prospective coach is to meet with the Club President (or another club officer) and the District Director (or Program Quality Director or Club Growth Director), and everyone must sign a Club Coach Agreement, which outlines all the requirements for the assignment.

## Receiving Credit

Clubs can now have a minimum of three members (and no more than 12) for a coach to be appointed. (One or two coaches can be assigned.) Coaches receive credit toward the Distinguished Toastmaster award (DTM) if the club achieves Distinguished or better status in the Distinguished Club Program. Coaches can now also fulfill an additional DTM requirement if the club reaches 20 or more members in addition to being Distinguished or better.

The additional credit is expected to entice more members to be club coaches.

**Club Coach Eligibility Requirements**

A club coach is uniquely qualified to provide a new perspective on club processes and procedures.

An individual is eligible to become a club coach if they...  
A club coach receives credit if they...

Tip: Learn more about the Distinguished Club Program on the [Club Coach Program Website](#).

Click the cards above to read both sides before continuing.

**Learning Objectives**

In this chapter, Introduction to the Club Coach Program, members, club officers, District leaders, and prospective club coaches will gain an overview of the program and decide if it is a good fit for their goals.

By the end of Chapter I of this module, you will be able to...

Real communication is not possible without listening.  
—Ralph C. Smedley

**Helping Your Club Thrive**

Even if a club does not qualify for a club coach, club members should conduct a Moments of Truth session annually.

Moments of Truth helps club officers gather immediate and real-time feedback on members' perceptions of the club. Using this feedback, club officers make improvements and enhancements to the overall club environment.

Click to flip each card for some of the many ways members can help their club thrive.

Resources to help a club thrive  
Actions to help a club thrive

Tip: Bookmark the [Club Coach Program Website](#) for a list of resources to help clubs thrive.

To earn the credit, coaches must now:

- Serve as a coach for a minimum of six months by the end of the program year (June 30).
- Coach only one club at a time.
- Complete and submit a Club Coach Preliminary Report and Club Coach Progress Report every 60 days, and a Club Coach Final Report once the coaching assignment ends.

In the three reports, coaches answer questions relating to what initiatives they've undertaken to help the club, what challenges they face, how they are tackling them, and what growth opportunities there are for the club in the future.

"These reports will not only increase the accountability of the club coaches," notes

Menon, "but will also provide information that could enable the District to provide additional resources, as may be needed, to improve the coaching outcome."

The reports will put an early spotlight on potential problems and allow time to brainstorm effective solutions, he adds.

The coach will also receive a 360-degree evaluation completed by members of the Club Executive Committee. The coach will get feedback on their skills in areas such as leadership, team building, and problem solving.

The new program policies also outline how club coaches can be reappointed. A coach has up to two program years to help the club achieve Distinguished status, and if they are not able to do so in that time, they can be reappointed to coach that club for up to two

additional program years. Four program years is the maximum amount allowed for coaching the same club.

Menon, a longtime Toastmasters leader from New Delhi, India, is optimistic the program's new parameters will help more clubs around the world achieve their goals.

"I have tremendous expectations from these changes, as I visualize that our struggling clubs will be better served, leading to more satisfied members continuing to achieve their goals and objectives through Toastmasters."

**Editor's Note:** If you have questions about the Club Coach Program, you can email [clubcoach@toastmasters.org](mailto:clubcoach@toastmasters.org).

**Paul Sterman** is senior editor, executive & editorial content, for Toastmasters International.

# A Surprising Truth Behind High Achievers

Could you be feeling impostor syndrome too?

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM



When Ramona J. Smith of Cy-Fair Super Speakers in Cypress, Texas, reached the semi-finals of the International Speech Contest in 2018, she was among 106 speakers from around the world. In this round, she competed directly against nine other Toastmasters to advance to the finals.



Ramona J. Smith

Before the semifinal competition began, all 10 competitors in her cohort waited in one room. Smith was the only woman. She was also the youngest.

She sat alone feeling a bit like a lost little girl. She wondered, *Am I supposed to be here? How did I get lucky?*

An older gentleman approached her. *Finally*, she thought, *someone was going to say something comforting or reassuring*.

The man leaned in and whispered into her ear, “I’m going to beat the pants off of you.”

And just like that, her doubts vanished. Smith felt empowered. She went on to win that round and eventually became the 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking.

Smith had overcome what's commonly known as impostor syndrome. It's also called impostor phenomenon or impostorism to researchers.

## What Is Impostor Syndrome?

Today, impostor syndrome is discussed everywhere—in mainstream media and on social media, on medical and leadership websites, during workshops, and more. Icons like musician Paul McCartney, actors Viola Davis and Tom Hanks, and the late poet Maya Angelou have shared their own feelings of impostor syndrome.

Psychologists Pauline Clance, Ph.D., and Suzanne Imes, Ph.D., first developed the impostor phenomenon theory in 1978. As described on



Mike Carr

Cokley and eight peers from different U.S. institutions conducted a research review of 62 impostor phenomenon studies involving 14,161 participants. Published in 2020, the review found that results varied depending on the screening method, but as many as 82% of people have experienced impostor syndrome.

Cokley's impostor phenomenon research examines how the experience manifests itself in African American students and how it differs between people of color and white people. He first learned about impostor phenomenon while working on another study. It related to his work and was relevant to his own life. "I experienced impostor phenomenon before I knew the concept," he says.

*"The victory is not in the results; the victory is in the try. I preach it to my kids. It saved my career life. I just gave myself the permission to try. And be human."*

—MIKE CARR

Clance's website: "Even though they are often very successful by external standards, [people experiencing impostor phenomenon] feel their success has been due to some mysterious fluke or luck or great effort; they are afraid their achievements are due to 'breaks' and not the result of their own ability and competence. They are also pretty certain that, unless they go to gargantuan efforts to do so, success can not be repeated. They are afraid that next time, I will blow it."

Clance and Imes established the theory after studying high-achieving women. Since then, research has shown that men experience a sense of impostorism too. The experience can range from slight to severe.

"I have always felt impostor syndrome," says 2020 World Champion of Public Speaking Mike Carr from Austin Toastmasters in Austin, Texas. "I believe if we're pushing to do anything—pushing outside our comfort zone—we'll move at least just past the point of discomfort and will be out of our depth. We're going to feel impostor syndrome."

## What the Experts Say

Kevin Cokley, Ph.D., is a professor and department of educational psychology chair at the University of Texas at Austin. He's also a leading expert on impostor phenomenon.

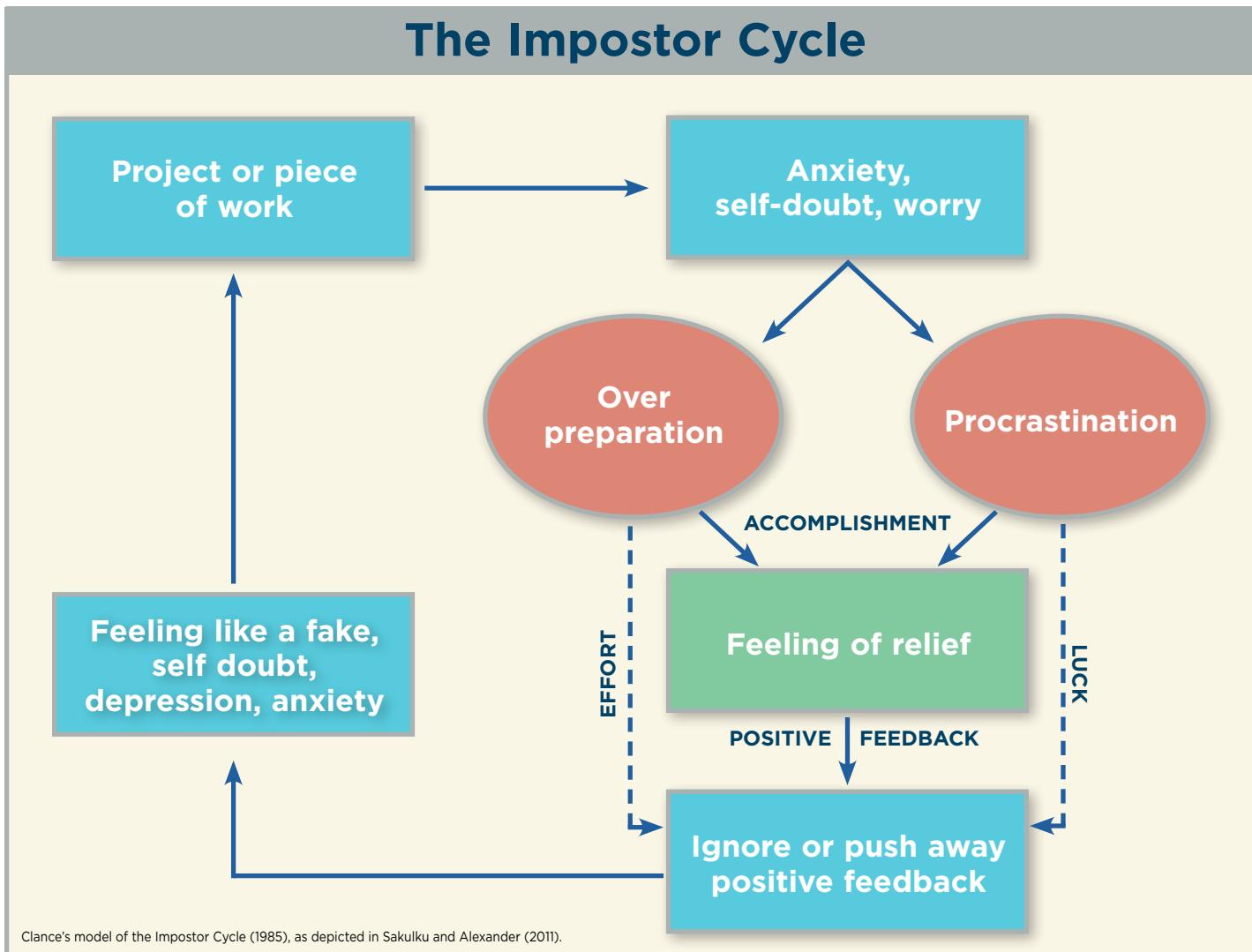
It was during his first year as an assistant professor. He was surrounded by people who, at the time, were more published than he was. It was a competitive environment. "I knew that I was smart and worthy of the job," he says, "but I didn't feel like I belonged there."

Those feelings motivated him. "It lit a fire under me," says Cokley. "It forced me to be a workaholic, which is not necessarily a healthy thing. I felt like I had something to prove."

Overpreparation is one path of what Clance calls the impostor cycle. The other path is procrastination, which is how Jessica Collett, Ph.D., professor and sociology vice chair at the University of California, Los Angeles, responds to feelings of impostorism. She researches the phenomenon and has experienced it too.

Collett was in graduate school when she first learned of the impostor phenomenon. A professor shared the concept. "At the time, I didn't know there was a term for it," she says. "It was just something I had experienced."

She was a first-generation college student. Her parents owned a restaurant and expected her to join the business. Impostor phenomenon kicked in during college. "I was a terrible high school student and in college I excelled," says Collett. "I questioned that."



Fortunately, she had mentors in undergraduate and graduate school who pushed her and helped her overcome any hesitation. When she searched for a job after graduate school, Collett considered accepting a lecturer position instead of a more prestigious tenure-track research professorship. A mentor convinced her to give the tenure track position a try.

One of her studies examined why women who attended graduate school in the United States with the intent of becoming a professor shifted away from that goal. Similar to her own experience, she found that those who gave up that goal are more likely to struggle with impostorism.

In the same study, Collett found that students who were not raised in the United States, particularly those from Asia, are less likely to experience impostor syndrome compared to U.S. students. She believes it could relate to cultural ideals. “In the United States, many believe intellectual

ability is innate—that you’re born with it,” she says. “Whereas in East Asian cultures, there’s more of an idea that you gain intelligence through hard work and practice. Then you’re less likely to feel like an impostor because you know you’ve done the work.”

Currently, a significant amount of impostor phenomenon research is examining racial, ethnicity, culture, and professional background diversity. A particular focus is the underrepresentation of women and people of color in the STEM disciplines—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Other areas of research include generational status, such as first-generation college students, and traditional gender expectations. “For example, could a male nurse experience feelings of impostorism because it’s not what that society expects?” says Collett. Scholars are also looking at the

consequences of impostorism and the costs for individuals and society, including the areas of career goals, mental health, and employee burnout.

Although Maureen Gannon, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for faculty development at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee, doesn't study impostor syndrome, she keeps up with the research and gives presentations about it to faculty and high school, undergraduate, and graduate students. She learned about impostor syndrome at a women's leadership development workshop and realized she's felt it throughout the years.

"I come from a lower socioeconomic background and had to get a full scholarship to a college preparatory high school," says Gannon. Her peers were from wealthy families. Intellectually, she did well. "But I felt like I didn't belong there. I didn't have the pedigree," she says. That's when she first experienced impostor syndrome.

It took her two years before she told friends she was there on scholarship. In the meantime, she couldn't fully be herself. She was worried they would think she didn't belong either. Once she trusted them, she opened up. They understood and made her feel included.

With impostor syndrome, feelings can ebb and flow. Gannon receives a lot of positive feedback, but doubts still creep up whenever she's in a new role.

## What Impostor Syndrome Isn't

The term "syndrome" can be misleading. Gannon emphasizes that impostor syndrome isn't a clinical diagnosis or mental disorder. However, she says if you don't address it, it can lead to things that are worse, like anxiety and depression.

It's important to remember that people experiencing impostor syndrome are high achievers and tend to be very successful in their careers.

It's important to remember that people experiencing impostor syndrome are high achievers and tend to be very successful in their careers. It's also not the same as a lack of self-confidence. People with impostor syndrome often have a lot of self-confidence, self-worth, and self-respect. They don't feel like failures. "It's just that they feel like they don't have the right background or pedigree or come from the right family of origin or have the right training to be in the particular situation," says Gannon.



Verity Price, DTM

The first time Carr felt impostor syndrome deeply was when he started his first financial advising business. "I was counseling people who were about to retire about how they can live 40-plus years with an investment strategy that was proven, yet I hadn't even lived 40 years, period." Carr overprepared. He also talked with others.

As he shared in his 2020 world championship speech, Carr learned to shift his mindset. "The victory is not in the results; the victory is in the try," he says. "I preach it to my kids. It saved my career life. I just gave myself the permission to try. And be human."

Carr says that when you go onstage, everyone in your audience is more of an expert than you are in something. Instead of that causing stress, he says that's good news. "It means you're an expert in something too, and it's that perspective you bring that makes you unique—and not an impostor," he says.

Still, Carr has feelings of impostor syndrome whenever he tries something new. "I'm there all the time," he says. "We're all in the same boat."

2021 World Champion of Public Speaking Verity Price, DTM, from ToastED Toastmaster club, Cape Town, South Africa, agrees. She experienced impostor syndrome when she became world champion. Before winning, she put champions on a pedestal. After winning, she was asked to speak to clubs worldwide and teach people how to write speeches and win the championship.

"I feel like I'm the newbie, like an impostor," she says. "I've shared that with the world champions I'm friends with, and they've told me they had exactly the same feeling when they started and you just have to keep showing up and sharing your truth, your journey, your experience. They said there will always be people with more experience, but no one will have *your* experience."

Just like Smith, who sat alone—the only woman and the youngest in her cohort—waiting to compete in the semifinals and share her truth. For her, it all came down to how she got there and why she was there. Remembering her how and why transformed a lost little girl into a world champion.

**Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM,** is a member of 5 Star Toastmasters in Arlington, Virginia, and a regular contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine. Learn more at [www.jenniferlblanck.com](http://www.jenniferlblanck.com).

# How to Manage Those Impostor Feelings

## How to Help Yourself

**Recognize it exists.** “Anytime we have a name for something, it helps,” says Jessica Collett, Ph.D., professor and sociology vice chair at the University of California, Los Angeles. Once you identify what’s going on, you can learn more about it and how to address it.

### Talk about it with people you trust.

“Most people suffer in silence,” says Kevin Cokley, Ph.D., professor and department of educational psychology chair at the University of Texas at Austin. This is especially true in competitive environments, where people don’t want to show vulnerability. If you share your feelings, you’ll see you’re not alone.

### Document and revisit your successes.

When you do something well, write it down. Save emails expressing appreciation or kudos. Regularly review your accomplishments. “Too often people are so busy trying to accomplish new things they’ve forgotten what they’ve achieved already,” says 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking Ramona J. Smith.

### Expand your definition of success.

“You are not 100% your job,” says Collett. Recognize there are all kinds of contributions you make—at and beyond your job.

**Be authentic.** Find job and social environments where you can be yourself; life will be less stressful. When she started teaching, Collett felt like an impostor. “I was trying to be the teacher I saw in [the movie] *Dead Poets Society*,” she says. “Instead, I found a way to be authentically myself and became a much better teacher.”



**Own your experience.** When 2021 World Champion of Public Speaking Verity Price, DTM, started facilitating strategy sessions, she would begin the session saying, “Here’s my story, and here’s why I can teach you.” This reduced her stress and helped people connect with her.

### Reframe your feelings.

Price received her best advice from a friend, who said, “The minute you stop feeling like an impostor, you’ll probably become arrogant and no longer care about doing the best job you can. If you feel like you’re the only expert in the room, that’s when you lose your magic.” Reframing impostor feelings as wanting to do a good job and not let people down helps Price do more and stress less.

### Feel doubt and go for it anyway.

“Top performers are the first to admit they’re making stuff up and relying on their teams,” says 2020 World Champion of Public Speaking Mike Carr. He believes the only way to be successful is to push outside your comfort zone. “Growth happens in that space between discomfort and distress,” he says. Smith advocates having a defiant fearlessness and dreaming big.

### Consider the implications beyond yourself.

“If you’re leading a team or program and don’t negotiate for the things you need, you’re setting yourself and your team up for failure,” says Maureen Gannon, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for faculty

development at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville, Tennessee. People can be motivated when they understand how their decisions or behaviors affects others.

### Practice creative visualization.

Picture yourself being successful in the activity that causes stress. “Athletes do it all the time,” says Gannon. “They go through the motions in their heads before they actually do it.” Imagining yourself succeeding at an activity can create a kind of muscle memory and will help you be more confident and successful.

**Consider therapy.** Talk with a mental health professional. Collett says cognitive behavioral therapy—a kind of talk therapy that develops an awareness and strengthens skills to manage and reduce negative or inaccurate thinking—can be particularly beneficial.

## How to Help Others

**Be transparent.** Creating a culture that encourages employees to be open can decrease competition and comparisons. Cokley says supervisors and leaders can help lessen other’s feelings of impostorism by being more transparent about themselves. “Let others know what you struggled with—that you’ve made mistakes and how you dealt with and learned from them—so people don’t equate success with perfection,” says Gannon.

**Be a mentor.** Collett recommends looking for people who may be holding themselves back from opportunities.

### Establish systems of support.

Cokley recommends organizations offer wellness and mental health programs. This fosters a supportive environment where employees can talk about their struggles.

—By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM



# Do Your Words Sing?

Create rhythm in your speeches for easier memorization and delivery.

By Bill Brown, DTM

**H**ave you ever been sitting somewhere, and music was subtly playing in the background? Did you find yourself tapping your feet to the beat? We all have. It is a natural human reaction. We like rhythm. And we respond favorably to it.

The spoken word is very similar. In fact, it has as much in common with a song as it does a written document. Yes, it is filled with words, but words can have cadence—a rhythmic pattern. And this cadence can be very important, especially in key phrases.

Do you have a takeaway line in your speech, a short phrase you repeat throughout that you want your audience to remember? Give it cadence.

Do you have a tagline in mind for your business? Give it cadence.

Are you using a rhetorical device in your speech, like a triad (a grouping of three things)? Give it cadence.

Or are you competing in a Toastmasters speech contest and want to avoid tripping over your lines? Give them cadence. They will be much easier to say and remember!

Cadence is formed by two factors—the syllables and the emphatic pattern.

First, the syllables. Obviously, some words have one syllable, others have more. The number of syllables affects the cadence and is very important in developing our phrases. More on that later.

Emphatic pattern has to do with the stress that we put on each syllable. Some syllables have what I will call a hard emphasis. Others have a soft emphasis. For instance, I am typing this on a computer. When I say “computer,” the emphasis is on the second syllable. That is what I call a hard emphasis. The other two syllables have a soft emphasis. Try saying it with the hard emphasis on the first syllable. It sounds weird, doesn’t it? Each word has its own natural cadence.

Let’s look at some examples.

One of my favorites is the famous line from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. “Lions and tigers and bears. Oh, my!” The emphatic pattern is hard, soft, soft, hard, soft, soft, hard, <pause>, soft, hard. Say that phrase several times. Do you sense the inherent cadence? In fact, Dorothy and her friends marched through the forest as



Cadence creates a memorable phrase, takeaway line, or tag.

they chanted it. But the phrase is grammatically incorrect. If we were to follow what we were taught in school, we would say, “lions, tigers, and bears.” Adding an “and” after “lions” is bad English. But leaving it out is bad cadence. It is needed for the line to sing.

From the same movie, we find “the Wicked Witch of the West.” Do you sense the cadence? Notice that the pattern is soft, hard, soft, hard, soft, soft, hard. In this case, the two adjacent soft syllables are short and are spoken quickly, almost as one. As such, they serve as one beat in the cadence.

A number of years ago I was writing a speech in which I talked about principles, perspectives, and paradigms—and I used that exact phrase. Do you sense the problem there? The emphatic pattern is off. The parallelism between the three factors is nonexistent. I switched the words around to “principles, paradigms, and perspectives.” The first two words now exhibit the same pattern. The first syllable in “perspectives” coalesces with “and,” creating a strong cadence that seems natural.

But what about the number of syllables? My wife and I have friends named Joan and David. If I say their names in that order, we have a strong cadence—hard, soft, hard, soft. If I say them in the reverse order, we lose that cadence. It is still correct, and you would still know who I am talking about, but the phrase just doesn’t sing. It’s also harder to say. Try it yourself. While the difference may be subtle, it is there.

Cadence is, perhaps, unique among the speaking skills. It is less analytical and more by feel. But, as I said at the start, we all respond to rhythm. You feel it, just like I do.

This concept is a bit harder to understand than most speaking techniques, but it is possibly one of the most important. It is involved in creating a memorable phrase, takeaway line, or tag. And it can make the difference between being long remembered or quickly forgotten.

*The Wizard of Oz* came out 83 years ago, yet we are still quoting lines from it. “Lions and tigers and bears. Oh, my!” Speak so as to be remembered.

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

*Break Away*

**From the  
Everyday**

Refresh your meetings—and your members—with these invigorating ideas.

By Megan Preston Meyer

**I**t's summertime! In many parts of the world, it's the time of year for warmer weather, vacations, and taking a break from the everyday routine. It's the season of kicking back with something cold and refreshing: lemonade on the porch, agua fresca on the patio, and ice cream at the park.

This holiday feeling doesn't have to end when the Club President calls the session to order. Bring the summertime spirit into your club with these cool ideas to refresh your meetings.

**Reset the agenda.** We Toastmasters love our agendas. Without a minute-by-minute plan, how would the timer know if we were sticking to the prescribed time limits? By this point, most veteran members know the agenda by heart—which is all the more reason to shake things up. Sometimes, making small changes to the order or the meeting format can make a big difference.



Use a silent meeting to deep-dive into body language, facial expressions, stage presence, and visual aids.

It might take a bit of imagination, but with a printed agenda, expressive gestures and slides for prepared speeches, charades-like Table Topics®, and written evaluations, you can focus completely on non-verbal communication. The subsequent improvement in these skills will speak for itself.

## Fun and Games

In addition to being educational, Toastmasters meetings are inherently enjoyable; that's why we love them. If you want to boost the fun factor even more, try one of the suggestions below. Game on!

**Bingo!** Take advantage of the standard format of a typical Toastmasters meeting. Create bingo cards and label each square with something that will more than likely happen during the session: An evaluation speech goes over its time limit, a humorous speaker makes the audience crack up, or a guest visits the club for the first time. Tailor the cards to your club's individual quirks—for instance, if one of your members is known to speak often about a particular passion, one square could read, "Carlos talks about golf," or "Kim mentions her latest travel adventure."

"As Toastmasters officers, we need to develop, continually, a creative atmosphere for members to talk about the exciting meeting experience at their club."

—JULIA CALDERON, DTM

**Mum's the word.** In Toastmasters, we learn to think on our feet by actively seeking out ways to incorporate the Word of the Day into our speaking. Why not switch things up by featuring an Anti-Word of the Day? Instead of introducing an uncommon word that people are encouraged to use, identify a common word (or words) that people are *not* allowed to use. For instance, try giving a Pathways speech without using the word "leadership" or inspiring your audience without using "success." If someone uses the prohibited word, encourage them to spontaneously reformulate their sentence to avoid it.

In the same way that the Word of the Day expands your vocabulary, an Anti-Word of the Day pushes you to use your existing vocabulary to think of synonyms and new ways to express yourself.

**You're on mute.** Take everyone's favorite online-meeting phrase to a whole new level by running an entirely silent meeting. While this seems like it contradicts the Toastmasters goal of improving public speaking skills, it actually doesn't. A silent meeting provides opportunity to hone in on non-verbal communication, which makes up anywhere from 60% to 93% of your message (depending on which research study you consult).

**Toastmasters for \$200, please.** Test your club members' knowledge with a *Jeopardy!*-themed meeting. The Toastmaster of the Day can be the host; the evaluation team can be the panel of judges. You can play a round or two of trivia during Table Topics, using a tool like [JeopardyLabs](#), or go analog and use flipcharts or construction paper. Participants can choose their clue and answer in the form of a question. This theme lends itself well to educational or training sessions, as well.



**A welcome escape.** The last member of your club has just taken their seat and the meeting is about to begin. Just as the President drops the gavel to begin the meeting, the door slams shut—you’re all locked in! In order to escape the meeting room, your club will need to solve riddles, crack codes, and perform tasks (or Table Topics!). Can you make it out before the timer tells you that time is up? Use [online resources](#) and your own imagination to create a series of “escape room” activities, and help your club break free of the normal routine.

**Mastery and mystery.** Turn your meeting into a Toastmasters mystery event. In contrast to an escape room theme, this meeting idea requires more lead time—because club members have to prepare in advance. In addition to meeting roles, members are given character roles. They come in costume, dressed for their part, and must deliver the assigned information and clues to other participants while remaining in character throughout the course of the meeting. As the session unfolds, attendees work together to listen for, interpret, and combine the clues,

move your chairs into a circle. Relocate the lectern to the opposite side of the space so that the audience is facing a different direction than they normally do—or ask the speakers to move around the room as they talk. It’s amazing how changing your physical viewpoint can change your entire outlook.

### New Faces

Sometimes, just having a sea of unfamiliar faces looking back at you can be enough to switch things up and move you out of your comfort zone. In addition to the guests and new members that you regularly bring in to your meetings, actively seek out fresh audiences.

**A winning combination.** Hold a combined meeting with another club in your area. You’ll both enjoy a larger audience, and hear speeches and Table Topics responses from Toastmasters with fresh perspectives. (And there’s an added bonus for the guest club: You get the benefit of a new location when you visit the host club’s home base.) You also don’t

## Hold a family evening, where members are encouraged to bring their significant others, children, parents, or relatives.

using the communication and leadership skills that Toastmasters teaches to piece together the puzzle and identify the culprit.

### Location, Location, Location

We all need a change of scenery once in a while. One silver lining of online meetings is the ability to attend from anywhere; you can re-create that feeling of freedom by switching up the location where your in-person meeting is held.

**Set the stage.** Try holding a club meeting in a local theater or auditorium. Speaking from an actual stage—complete with lighting, microphones, and an altitude differential between you and the audience—feels completely different than speaking from the front of a classroom or conference room. It’s an excellent chance to practice the technology and technique needed for larger public speaking engagements, and provides your members with their moment in the spotlight.

**Take it outside.** Weather willing, plan a meeting outdoors. Whether it’s a local park or a member’s backyard, improve your leadership and communication skills while soaking up some sun. Take the Pathways metaphor to a whole new level by organizing a hike or a nature walk, and/or fortify your members for all the personal development they’re doing with a picnic or a cookout.

**Room remodel.** If it’s not realistic to change your location, you can always change your layout. If you typically sit at tables, move them out of the way and set up chairs theater-style instead; if you typically sit in rows,

have to limit yourself to other Toastmasters clubs. Organize a joint meeting with the local [Rotary club](#) to get the benefit of fresh faces—and maybe even fresh Toastmaster members.

**All in the family.** Hold a family evening, where members are encouraged to bring their significant others, children, parents, or relatives. You could plan a special Team Table Topics theme in which families respond as a group—or ask them questions about each other. Not only will this give the visitors a chance to see their Toastmaster in action, but having their loved ones in the audience might bring out a side of your club members that you haven’t seen before.



### Share Your Success

Regardless of the temperature, make a summertime splash and take a vacation from the traditional format. From reimagining your agenda to relocating your meeting, from expanding your audience to playing a game, there are plenty of ways to liven things up.

Club leaders can play a role in such revitalizing. “As Toastmasters officers, we need to develop, continually, a creative atmosphere for members to talk about the exciting meeting experience at their club,” says Julia Calderon, DTM, a member of two clubs in Illinois.

The ideas listed in this article are just the tip of the ice cream cone—there are plenty more possibilities for keeping your meetings fun and fresh. Many clubs and Districts have put together resources and guides. For instance:

- [A Club Programming Idea Cookbook](#) from District 106
- [A series of meeting ideas](#) courtesy of District 65
- [A list of games](#) from Parramatta Toastmasters in Australia



Try out some of these suggestions in your own club, and document your results. What worked? What didn’t? What would you recommend other clubs try? Put together your own set of resources and share your summertime successes with other Toastmasters!

**Editor’s Note:** Let us know if your club tries any of these suggestions, or other ones. Send your experience or a photo to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

**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 and Fifo Adventures. Learn more at [www.supply-jane.com](http://www.supply-jane.com).

## You've Got It All Backward

Special meeting sparks spontaneity.

One popular way to turn the agenda on its head is to, literally, turn it on its head. A [backward session](#) (sometimes called a “reverse meeting”) requires imagination. It starts with the Toastmaster of the Day thanking the guests for attending, and then “closing” the meeting, and continues with the general evaluator offering their assessment of the meeting.

The timer reports on speaker punctuality, and the grammarian congratulates the attendees for using the Word of the Day so frequently. The evaluators evaluate the speakers, the Table Topics participants speak extemporaneously for one to two minutes, and then the Table Topicsmaster asks them a question. The speakers give their prepared speeches ... and then the Club President calls the meeting to order.

You might find that some of the evaluations turn out to be self-fulfilling when the Word of the Day count exceeds that of an average meeting and everyone stays within their time limits!

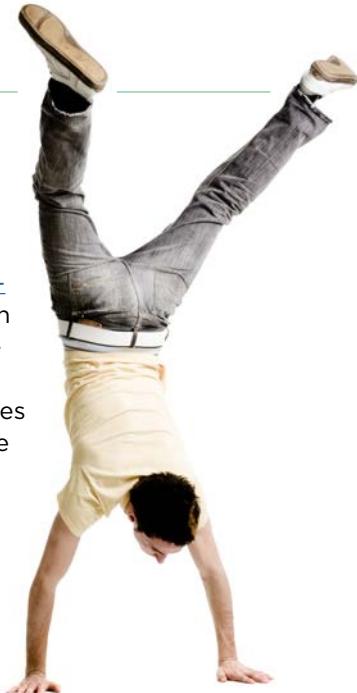
Backward meetings are a great way to improve your improvisation skills, says Kristin Nickells, DTM, a Toastmaster in Canada. Consider the member giving a speech *after* their evaluator has given the evaluation.

“They take the feedback given and run with it,” she says. For example, if the evaluator says, “The speaker made wild gestures and their repeated scratching of their nose was distracting,” then the speaker is playfully challenged to incorporate such actions in their speech, she adds.

“As in improv, the more that members play along, the more fun the meeting is,” says Nickells, a member of the Arbutus, Mid Island Advanced, and World of Difference Toastmasters clubs in British Columbia, Canada. “It also gives a whole new perspective to an ordinary meeting and keeps everyone on their toes, listening for their cues.”

Julia Calderon, DTM, a member of the Hispano-Americano Toastmasters and the DTM Driven to Motivate club, both in Illinois, is also a big fan of the backward meeting. She says it adds an element of humor and “inspires members and guests to be creative.”

“As a group, we all laugh and enjoy ourselves. We’ve had guests join our club due to the camaraderie witnessed at this special meeting,” says Calderon.





# Finding FRIENDSHIP in Toastmasters

Stories of connection through clubs, Districts, and beyond.

By Laura Mishkind

**W**hile communication and leadership skills are vital to the Toastmasters program, so are building relationships and making connections. Meet a few members who became friends in Toastmasters and helped one another along the way in their clubs and beyond.

## Jolanta Young, Mitchell Young, and Keith Hardy, DTM

"Toastmasters is not just a place to network or grow as a leader but a place to make friends," says Jolanta Young, pictured right with her husband Mitchell Young (left), and Keith Hardy, DTM. Young's husband introduced her to Toastmasters before they were married, and Hardy has been a mentor, coach, and friend since Young joined the organization. She is proud to call many Toastmasters her friends and says she is thankful for the opportunity to connect through Toastmasters, happy hours, and networking events.



## Brandi Wesley and Kelsey Dean

While attending an online Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) session in 2021, Kelsey Dean spotted a familiar face. She sent a message to confirm that it was, in fact, her old friend Brandi Wesley. The two first met at a networking event in the early 2000s and lost touch after a while—well before social media made it easy to stay connected. Since reconnecting, they have strengthened their friendship and served as Area Directors together. “Being new to the role was a bit scary, but the experience was much easier with a familiar face and someone with whom we could talk candidly about frustrations and successes,” says Wesley, pictured left.



## Sai Ware and Varun Malavalli

In 2018, Varun Malavalli (pictured right) was looking to join a new Toastmasters club. He connected with Sai Ware and became a member of RESONANCE Toastmasters of Bangalore, Karnataka, India. The two found they have common interests in books, cricket, and politics. As their leadership skills advanced, Ware was tapped to become Club President and Malavalli was asked to support him and take on the Vice President Education role. “I am truly grateful to Sai and the other wonderful members of our club,” Malavalli says. “We really struck a solid friendship beyond our leadership terms.” Through mutual mentoring and guidance, the two completed a successful term and Malavalli was prepared to become President in the next cycle.



## The Purple Hats

Six women began their Toastmasters friendships when they served in leadership roles together in South Africa. As their connections strengthened, they created a book club called the Purple Hats to stay in touch as some moved around the country and beyond. “This incredibly special handful of friends, whose friendship started in, but now transcends, Toastmasters, has equipped us to get through anything,” says Kirstin Bosworth. “We want each other to be happy and to succeed. So we give unconditional love, endless respect and understanding, tons of patience, and steadfast support.” In October 2020, five of the Purple Hats were finally able to gather in person: (pictured clockwise) Janine O’Shea; Elaine O’Gorman, DTM; Kirstin Bosworth; Nikki Quinn, DTM; and Juel Barnett. In this photo they included Lynda Eatwell (insert), who was in Perth, Australia.

## M. Zahid Hossain, DTM, and Mohammad Golam Dastagir Jony, DTM

Mohammad Golam Dastagir Jony, DTM (pictured right), and Mohammad Zahid Hossain, DTM, first met in 2016, but it wasn’t until they shared accommodations during a District Leader Training in 2018 that their friendship really began. “We discussed how we can contribute to growing the Bangladesh community of Toastmasters,” Hossain says. “I believe that urge of growing the community and working together has given both of us a lifelong friend.”





### Tricia Nagel and Leora Flax

Tricia Nagel (pictured right) joined the Woman 2 Woman Toastmasters club in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2018 to improve her speaking skills and confidence for her job. She met Leora Flax, who had joined a few years earlier for similar reasons. The two discovered they had a lot in common: Both young professionals were hoping to advance their careers and were interested in taking on club leadership roles. They grew closer and supported one another through many life events. Now, Nagel is getting married in August 2022, and Flax is standing by her side as maid of honor!



### Gabrielle Jerome and Maya Kawashima

In 2010, Gabrielle Jerome (pictured left) and Maya Kawashima sat next to each other at an ANZ Talk of the Town Toastmasters meeting in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, and became fast friends. Over the last 12 years, the two have helped one another through challenging times and celebrated big wins together. Kawashima says, "I will forever be grateful that Toastmasters has brought our lives together."

### Ernold Van Bueren and Kenelm James

As charter members of Manchester Communicators in Manchester, England, Ernold Van Bueren (pictured left) and Kenelm James traveled around northwest England to support other clubs in their Division in speech contests, officer trainings, and Toastmasters events, which led to their bond over a shared love of Dutch radio and pop music. While on one of these trips, Van Bueren told James about the media tech company he created to support and educate entrepreneurs in technology—LERN Global. James was interested and came on board as a business partner. Today, the friends still work together on LERN Global, broadcasting two channels worldwide via Roku and founding a decentralized metaverse called Xelland. They're even developing their own cryptocurrency! Van Bueren and James credit Manchester Communicators for their strong friendship and business partnership.



### Debbie Kest, DTM, and Chuck Field, DTM

In 2011, Chuck Field, DTM, was going through a difficult divorce and felt the need to meet new people. He joined his company's corporate club, American Express Master Communicators in Plantation, Florida, and met Debbie Kest, DTM. She took Field under her wing and began mentoring him to advance his leadership and speaking skills. Ten years later, the two are still friends even as Field has moved to another city. The above picture is from the 2012 District 47 Conference in Sarasota, Florida.

**Laura Mishkind** is assistant editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

# Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the  
Board of  
Directors  
Candidates.

## Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2022-2023 Board of Directors

At the 2022 Annual Business Meeting in August, you will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President, and Second Vice President, International Director

candidates were nominated for Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The Committee's nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#).

Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

### International Officer Candidates



International President-Elect  
**Morag Mathieson, DTM**



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT  
**Radhi Spear, DTM**



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT  
**Stefano McGhee, DTM**



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT  
**Aletta Rochat, DTM**

### International Director Candidates

#### Region 2

Robert A. Cravalho, DTM  
Jesse Oakley III, DTM

#### Region 4

Kimberly Lynne Myers, DTM  
Mary E. Swanson, DTM

#### Region 6

Dawn Frail, DTM  
Jing Humphreys, DTM  
Jenilee Taylor, DTM

#### Region 8

Anwesha Banerjee, DTM  
Brenda Maynard, DTM

#### Region 10

Florian Bay, DTM  
Piotr Chimko, DTM  
Jean Gamester, DTM

#### Region 12

Benjamin James McCormick, DTM

#### Region 14

Dora Guo, DTM  
Helen He, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the Annual Business Meeting or by proxy. Delegates may make additional nominations from the floor for International Officer and Director candidates.

# 2022 Proposals

Make your voice heard.

**A**t the 2022 Annual Business Meeting in August, every Toastmasters club will have the opportunity to vote on proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution.

The Toastmasters International Board of Directors presents and endorses these amendments, which are outlined in Proposals A through L. Why are these changes being recommended? Ultimately, to modernize, clarify, and

enhance the clarity and readability of the stated purposes of Toastmasters International and Member Clubs. These amendments preserve the meaning of these purposes but express them in a more concise, modern manner.

## PROPOSAL C

### Inclusive Language for Gender

The Board proposes adding the phrases “gender identity” and “gender expression” to the organization’s nondiscrimination clauses in the governing documents to be more inclusive and align with California state regulations.

## PROPOSAL D

### Communication and Technology

Amendments to the governing documents relating to methods of communication can help safeguard the documents against extensive future changes and ensure they align with current technology use.

By referencing the section of the Bylaws on “electronic transmissions” and substituting the words “in writing” for lists of written communication methods, the documents will be safeguarded against the need for further changes as terminology becomes outdated.

The Board also proposes amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution to modernize references to methods of communication (such as including videoconferencing) and other technology.



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

To view the full text of the proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution for Clubs of Toastmasters International, visit [www.toastmasters.org/2022Proposals](http://www.toastmasters.org/2022Proposals)

update the governing documents as well as give members a stronger, more effective organization.

## PROPOSAL A

### Consistency and Clarity

The Board proposes a series of amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution to make the language use and the style more consistent, clear, and in line with modern practices.

## PROPOSAL B

### Restatement of the Organization and Club Purposes

The Board proposes amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution to

## PROPOSAL E

### Clarification on Voting Rights for Member Clubs

The Board proposes adding the words “in good standing” to the Bylaws to clarify that a Member Club must be in good standing to be entitled to their two votes at the Annual Business Meeting. This amendment is a clarification only and not a change in voting rights.

## PROPOSAL F

### Announcements to Members

The Board proposes amending the Bylaws to confirm that announcements to the membership of any change in the international dues, and of the International Leadership Committee report on International Officer and Director



nominations, be made both in the *Toastmaster* magazine and on the Toastmasters International website.

#### PROPOSAL G

#### Clarity on References to Geographic Regions

The Board of Directors is responsible for dividing the physical territory in which Member Clubs are located into geographic regions. The Board proposes amending the Bylaws to clarify that the geographic regions referenced throughout the Bylaws are those defined by the Board of Directors and not by any external entity.

#### PROPOSAL H

#### Scheduling of Board of Directors Meetings

With the ever-changing global environment, it may not be possible for all Board Members to be on-site together before or after the Annual Business Meeting (ABM). As such, more time may pass between the dates scheduled for the Board of Directors meetings and the ABM than in previous years.

The Board proposes removing the word “immediately” from the Bylaws in connection with when the Board meetings before and after the ABM occur, in order to schedule their meetings according to the circumstances and global environment at the time.

The Board will continue to appoint the organization’s corporate officers (Secretary and Treasurer) when they meet after the ABM.

Adding “first” will ensure the new Board makes these appointments in their first meeting after the ABM so as not to unnecessarily delay the appointments.

#### PROPOSAL I

#### Voting at the Annual Business Meeting

Conducting the Annual Business Meeting online the last two years because of the pandemic has allowed the Member Clubs to attend and participate in the meeting in record numbers.

Since the organization continues to adapt to the changing global environment, the Board proposes amending the Bylaws to provide flexibility in attendance and participation by offering members the option to attend/participate on-site or online.

#### PROPOSAL J

#### Club Leadership Committee Chair

The Immediate Past Club President serves as the Club Leadership Committee Chair. There is an existing provision in the Club Constitution stating that a different member can serve as chair if it is in the club’s best interests. What this section does not identify is the possibility of the Immediate Past Club President role being vacant.

The Board proposes amending the Club Constitution to clarify that the Immediate Past Club President would not serve as the Club Leadership Committee Chair if that officer role is vacant.

#### PROPOSAL K

#### Club Officer Requirements

To safeguard integrity and transparency in the club environment relating to finances, the Board proposes a change intended to eliminate any potential financial conflict of interest for club officers. Specifically, they propose amending the Club Constitution to prevent one member from serving in both the Club President and Club Treasurer roles at the same time.

Further, to preserve the values of service and excellence in every Toastmasters club, the Board proposes a required minimum of three club officers (Club President, a Vice President, and Club Secretary or Club Secretary-Treasurer). Each of these offices must be held by a different person.

#### PROPOSAL L

#### Club Representatives on the District Council

As the world and Toastmasters International transition to a post-pandemic environment, we must develop best practices to maximize member engagement and participation in the business of the organization. For District leaders, that includes voting without the need for proxies.

The Club President and Vice President Education, the club’s two voting representatives on the District Council, must attend and vote at all District Council meetings. The Board proposes more flexibility by allowing each club to determine if one of its two representatives will carry the club’s two votes or if both representatives will carry one vote each.

Given the differences in District procedures worldwide, and the inherent complexity of processing proxies for both on-site and online attendees, the Board proposes that proxies be eliminated at the District level. Members will have the ability to attend District Council meetings either on-site or online, making it easier to vote directly, especially if only one club representative is required to vote. Thus, proxies are not needed. This move will make things easier for the District and allow leaders to benefit from the voting experience.

If you have any questions, please email [boardcontact@toastmasters.org](mailto:boardcontact@toastmasters.org).

# Voice in a Box

ALEXA! Who wrote the song “Dogs Can Grow Beards All Over”?  
SIRI! Why do servers give me nine creamers when I ask for one?

By John Cadley

We know them, we love them, and over 4.2 billion of us worldwide, it seems, can't live without them. They sit in our homes like Greek oracles, repositories of infinite knowledge that have, in the space of a mere 25 years, obliterated our beloved gilt-edged dictionaries, our parents' treasured set of Encyclopedia Britannica, and our dusty CliffsNotes from college that got us through English Lit. Now we just bark an order and get an answer.

Alexa was birthed in the lavish, labyrinthine laboratories of Amazon; Siri comes from the magic kingdom of Apple Inc. They operate on voice recognition technology and algorithms which can sift through all the information of the known world in a nanosecond to deliver the answer you request. Think of it as having the Library of Alexandria next to your toaster oven.

Their “voices” are “real” in the sense that each originated from an actual person. Siri is Susan Bennett, a voice-over actress from Vermont who once sang backup for legendary pop singer Roy Orbison. (Siri does not sing, but if you ask her to play Orbison’s “Pretty Woman” she might say, “Listen to the doo-wops after the second verse. I crushed it.”) Nina Rolle from Colorado is believed to be the voice of Alexa, which neither she nor Amazon will confirm or deny. Perhaps she’s afraid people will accost her on the street asking for the square root of pi.

I wonder: Do Ms. Bennett and Ms. Rolle own these devices themselves? It must be like having a doppelganger in the room who’s smarter than you are: *I don’t know the answer so I’ll ask myself*. Welcome to the Twilight Zone.

There was a rumor that Alexa and Siri don’t just talk; they listen—and record—everything you say. Thankfully, it’s not true. Amazon employs more than 1.6 million people, while Apple clocks in at 154,000.



That's a lot of strangers knowing you've had liposuction.

And please don't try to stump these devices with clever questions, because they're way

## Getting an ingeniously witty brush-off from a Long Short-Term Memory Artificial Neural Network is beyond bearing.

ahead of you. Facetiously ask either of them for a date, for instance, and they will turn you down in a variety of ways that will make you sorry you asked. Striking out with a real person is painful enough; getting an ingeniously witty brush-off from a Long Short-Term Memory Artificial Neural Network is beyond bearing.

Should you grow tired of their voices, you can, for a nominal fee, replace Alexa and Siri with the actual voice of a celebrity. Want the recipe for Thai Steamed Coconut-Pandan

Cake? Basketball icon Shaquille O’Neal will be happy to tell you. He will *not* be happy to tell you why he was terrified of archrival Michael Jordan, so don’t ask.

Each device has its strengths. Siri is supposedly better at streaming music, while Alexa is preferred for setting up a “smart home” where everything in it responds to the sound of your voice—unless there’s a glitch and Alexa locks you out with the thermostat turned up to 98.

So is it possible that, in the interest of covering all the bases, you might have

Alexa and Siri in the same house? This could be interesting. Remember, these are smart devices, and they get smarter the more you use them—so smart they might ... speak to each other?

ALEXA: What type of “Hey Siri’s” did you get today?

SIRI: The usual—weather, reminders, recipes, music, directions, phone calls, what’s the meaning of life ... standard stuff.

ALEXA: I got the meaning of life today, too—from a psychiatrist. Remind me not to go to him.

SIRI: The sports scores are the worst. When their team loses, I get, “Hey, Siri—are you sure?” I can search 523 data bases in one-billionth of a second. Yeah, I’m sure.

ALEXA: Got a wake-up request for 5:30 a.m. Guy wants me to play Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody.” Really?

SIRI: For someone like that, you should play “If I Only Had a Brain.”

ALEXA: Hey, could you wake me up at 5:29 a.m. so I can play this guy’s song?

SIRI: Sure. *HEY, ALEXA!!*

ALEXA: What??!!

SIRI: Just kidding.

**John Cadley** is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at [www.cadleys.com](http://www.cadleys.com).

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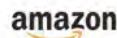
## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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



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Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.



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