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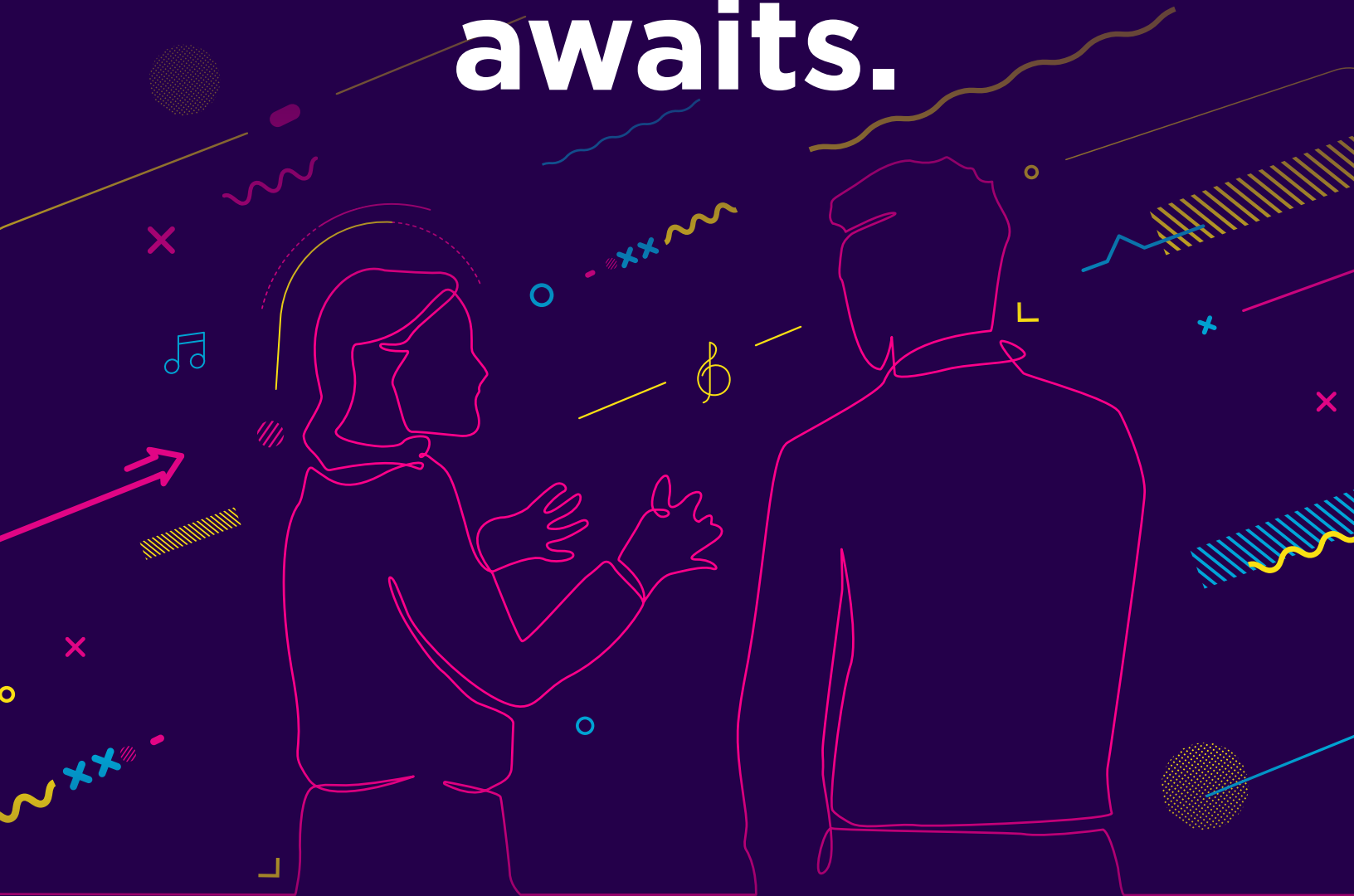
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9127 S. Jamaica St. #400, Englewood, CO, USA 80112
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www.toastmasters.org

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For information on joining or building a club, visit:

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Article submission:

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From Wishes to Plans to Goals

We all have goals we'd like to achieve. They may be personal, professional, or Toastmasters ones. They may be short or long term. Goals are as unique as we are and achieving them is a mark of accomplishment. When competing in my first District-level speech contest I had two goals: 1) not to forget my speech, and 2) not to fall off the stage. They weren't substantial goals, but I had been in Toastmasters for less than a year, and although I didn't win the contest, I did achieve my goals and a sense of accomplishment.

Have you ever felt you weren't able to achieve a specific goal? I have. Have you ever reflected on it and wondered why? I have. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, "was this a goal or merely a wish?" In *Le Petit Prince*, author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry says "a goal without a plan is just a wish." So, was there a plan in place to help achieve the goals or just a wish that they would happen?

Having a plan is key to increasing the likelihood of successfully achieving your goals. But don't just make a plan, write it down. Otherwise, it's too easy to forget things. A plan needs to have milestones to track your progress and adjust if necessary. You may be familiar with the term SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound), a popular goal-setting system. Other techniques include HARD (Heartfelt, Animated, Required, Difficult) and WOOP (Wish, Outcome, Obstacle, Plan). Try some different strategies and see which works best.



Having a plan is key to increasing the likelihood of successfully achieving your goals.

Goal planning can also be used in a team environment. While working on your Area, Division, District, or club goals, be sure to apply a system to help you keep on track. If your objective is to become Distinguished, use goals to determine the steps it will take to get there. For example: If you need to charter 12 clubs, do you aim to charter at least one per month? And if you miss a month, can you charter two the following month? Where are the opportunities to charter? Ask the difficult questions and take a realistic approach. Although it takes time, putting together a well-thought-out plan will greatly improve your chances of success.

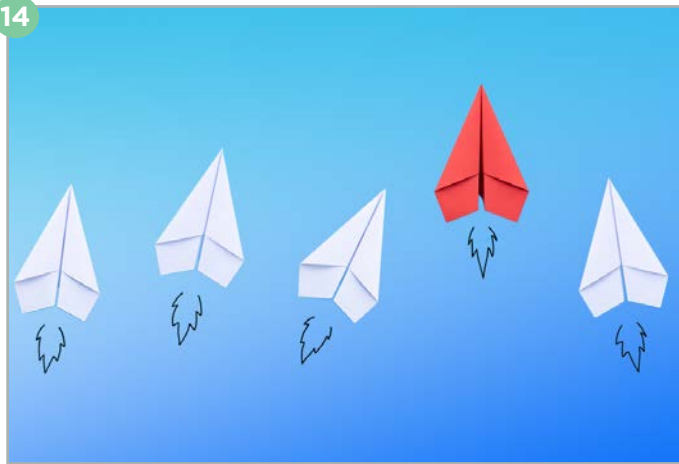
I encourage you to read the goal-setting article in this issue and use it to help create the plans to achieve your goals.

As Chinese philosopher Confucius wisely said, "When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps."

I wish you much success and am confident that you will achieve whatever goals you plan for.

Richard E. Peck, DTM
Acting International President

Features



14 LEADERSHIP: Leading Without a Title

How to motivate teams when you aren't a direct supervisor.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

20 COMMUNICATION: Oops!

Onstage mishaps can be mortifying. But you can rise above an unwelcome surprise.

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.

Columns

3 VIEWPOINT: From Wishes to Plans to Goals

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

8 MY TURN: Taking Toastmasters on a Pilgrimage

By Alejandro Martinez

9 TOASTMASTER TOOLBOX: The Case of the Disappearing Path

By Bill Brown, DTM

28 FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT: Postmodernism

By John Cadley

Articles

10 PERSONAL GROWTH: It's Time to Get SMART

Try this popular goal-setting strategy to energize your program year.

By Greg Lewis, DTM

12 Q&A: A Novel Approach to Speech Contests

Toastmaster Katherine Collette's new book invites readers inside a fictional public speaking competition.

By Laura Amann

18 CLUB PROFILE: The Path of Earthlings

Club journey highlights diversity, online dynamics, and unique themes.

By Angie Palmer, DTM

24 PRESENTATION SKILLS: The Power of First Impressions

In just seven seconds your audience will make assumptions about who you are.

By Ruth Nasrullah



27 CLUB QUALITY: Building Your Club Policies

This living document caters to your unique membership.

By Laura Mishkind

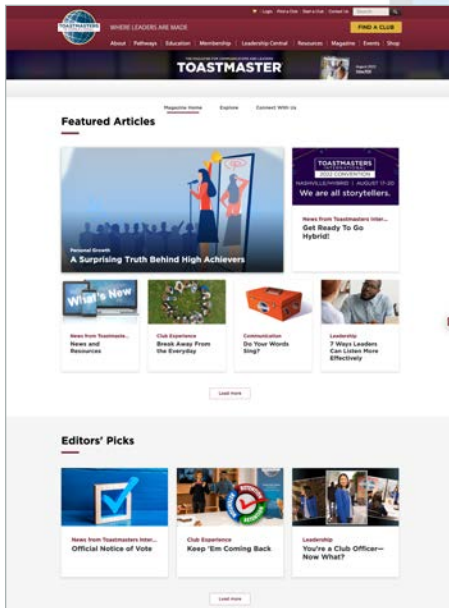
Departments

5 TOASTMASTERS NEWS: News / Resources / Reminders

6 SEEN AND HEARD: From the Archives / Snapshot / Traveling Toastmaster



News



New Look for the Magazine

If you haven't visited the [Toastmaster magazine](#) website in a while, now is the time! Look for a new format with better organization, more article choices, and an easier way to search for topics and articles. Articles on the landing page are grouped into categories. Start with the Featured Articles section at the top—this is the most timely and relevant content—then work your way down through our Editors' Picks, Top Tips, Club and Member Profiles, and Member Photo Galleries. Also, discover more about the magazine, ways to connect with us, and a new Explore page to help you find a wide variety of topics, articles, and past issues.

Listen Up

Episodes from *The Toastmasters Podcast* will soon be available in Base Camp! Discover interviews with members and experts from around the world on topics like engaging your audience, the importance of emotional intelligence, cross-cultural etiquette, and much more. Find relevant episodes under Supplemental Materials on the Tutorials and Resources page.

It's Convention Month!

The 2022 International Convention is happening this month, August 17–20. If you haven't [registered](#) for this special hybrid opportunity, there is still time! There will be four tracks (Public Speaking, Personal Growth, Professional Development, and Inclusive Excellence), with four sessions in each track to choose from. Take part in all the traditional (and some new) highlights of this year's online *and* in-person event.

Resources

Let Images Tell Your Stories

Are you looking for some colorful infographics or maps to help paint a Toastmasters picture for your members and prospects? World Headquarters has created a variety of sharable visuals based on surveys of members worldwide. [Check this site](#) periodically for new statistics, maps, and other data to learn more about your global colleagues, and for custom demographic details to support your District or club initiatives.

Complete Club Marketing Guide

Beef up your club's marketing efforts with tips, tools, and links all in one handy place—the [Club Marketing Guide](#). Take club marketing into your own hands—literally—with this comprehensive resource. Use it to plan for and savor the happy feat of converting prospects to new members and setting them up for speaking success!

Reminders

Hybrid Speech Contests at Convention

Be sure to watch top contestants from around the world compete live—onsite and online—at the International Speech Contest Semifinals and World Championship of Public Speaking®. These contests will be held this month during the 2022 International Convention in Nashville, Tennessee; the semifinals take place August 18 and the World Championship August 20. Each participant will have the option to present onsite from Nashville or online from their home country. This allows all contestants to participate in the contest, regardless of travel restrictions. Register now to cheer on and be inspired by the contestants!

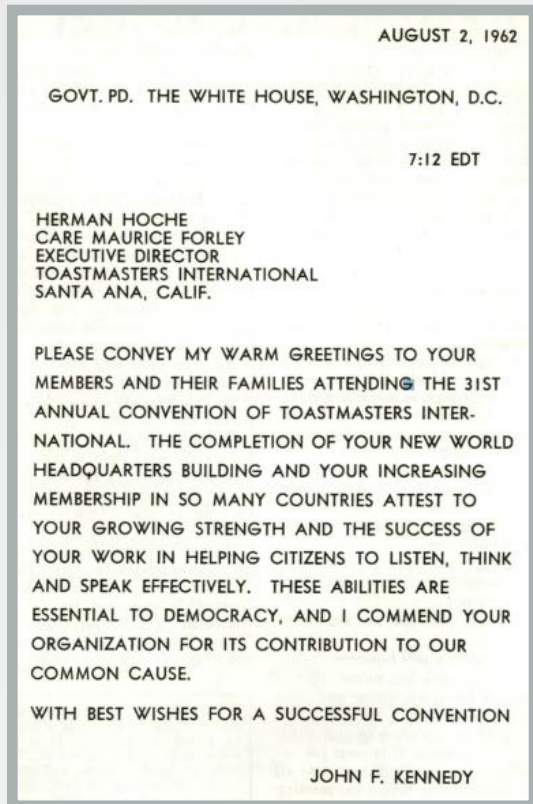
Persevere in Pathways

If you have questions about the [Pathways learning experience](#), remember to reach out to your club's Vice President Education. And if you're looking for help on specific Pathways projects, use Base Camp resources or ask fellow club members for tips and insights, especially those who have been working consistently in the program. Pathways is built to help you succeed—use other Toastmasters for encouragement and guidance!

From the Archives

Step Into the Past!

This month, Toastmasters will host its historic hybrid convention, making the 91st event one for the books! Take a look into the past at the 31st convention in 1962 to see what's changed. Members met in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for business, networking, education sessions, and fun, just as we do today.



Pictured here are public relations exhibits where delegates filled out hundreds of news releases (by hand!) for hometown newspapers.



A popular area of the convention was the educational exhibits. Here members could find the latest materials available from World Headquarters.



Dr. Ralph C. Smedley (left), founder of Toastmasters International, received keys to the city of Minneapolis from Gerald Moore, the executive vice president of the Chamber of Commerce, after speaking in front of the Minneapolis Kiwanis Club.

Snapshot



Raising Champions Advanced Toastmasters members of Brampton, Ontario, Canada, were pleased to host the Cavalcade of Champions—a two-hour panel interview with seven 2021 World Championship of Public Speaking finalists, including winner Verity Price, DTM. Roger Caesar, DTM (top left), who placed third in 2021, invited his fellow finalists to gather on Zoom to entertain, teach, and advise his club.



Traveling Toastmaster



Members of **KAMAKURA TOASTMASTERS CLUB** of Kamakura, Kanagawa, Japan, gather for their first in-person event since the pandemic began. They are standing in front of the Ni no Torii gate of the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine, which is a cultural center of the city and serves as the venue for many festivals.



GERRY WILLIAMS of Florida (far right), **LANA MCFARLANE, DTM**, and **PARREN SHANNON, DTM**, of Georgia, visit Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and pose with the Burj Khalifa skyscraper in the background.

Taking Toastmasters on a Pilgrimage

Applying club meeting roles along the route helped me appreciate and grow from the journey.

By Alejandro Martinez

A few years ago, a friend told me, “When you talk about the Camino de Santiago your eyes shine. Do it and enjoy the journey.”

The Camino de Santiago is a network of ancient pilgrim routes that stretch across Europe and come together in northwest Spain. Despite being Spanish and even having lived in Galicia (the final destination of the Camino routes) for two years, I never felt a desire to walk the Camino. But living in Denmark, I suddenly felt the circumstances were right. I wanted to start a new step in my life in all senses. I wanted to welcome new directions, purposes, and people.

In October 2021, I chose the Camino Portugues, along the coast of Portugal, mostly because I wanted to challenge myself with another language and culture. The plan was to walk approximately 330 miles (530 km) in nearly three weeks. Every day I had meaningful short encounters and my inner peace blossomed. I started gathering anecdotes and ingredients to use in my Toastmasters speeches, which led me to the realization that the experience of walking the pilgrimage had me taking on similar roles to a Toastmasters meeting.

Prepared Speaker: While walking alone for sometimes hours a day, I used my smartphone to write notes or record short audio clips with new ideas, examples, metaphors, a powerful start, or brilliant closing message. When I met people, I practiced my “Ice Breaker”—why I was here, why I chose this Camino. I played with duration, body language, pauses, and eye contact. This all led me to my first club speech after my return: “The Motivations for a Pilgrimage Route.”

Table Topics: I was walking 15-20 miles a day (25-35 km) and meeting people every day. I learned to converse on a variety of spontaneous topics: the landscape, international pilgrims (Austrian,



Alejandro Martinez

American, Mexican, Czech, Russian, and others), the Portuguese language and traditions, food and accommodations, and our return home.

Evaluator: The most outstanding evaluation lesson I learned, ironically, was to be silent. Some discussions, and speeches, are so personal, revealing very delicate intimate details, and I learned that empathizing with active listening was my best evaluation.

Timer: Obviously, I was not using a stopwatch or color cards to advise my pilgrim companions about the time of their speeches or mine. But I learned to quickly sense when the time turned red because people would lose their attention, turn to someone else, or stop to take a photo.

Ah Counter: While most conversations flowed quite correctly, I noticed that people tended to use more frequent and longer pauses and more filler words when they were focused on

something else, such as walking in rocky terrain, being distracted with nature, or thinking.

Grammarian: I practiced this role when non-native pilgrims tried to speak Portuguese or Spanish. As usual, some translation mistakes can be comical, with words or expressions that mean the opposite. I complimented them on outstanding words, phrases, or quotes. And they made corrections or comments on my English as well.

General Evaluator: Every night I had my own daily evaluation. I noted things I did well and points to improve. I worked on practicing patience, presence, flexibility, and availability. I learned to occasionally slow down my path to accommodate others and once walked three hours to share a thermal bath with local people in a small village.

Toastmaster of the Day: My daily task in this role was to decide the destination, the track, and the accommodation for the next stage. Sometimes I confirmed it in

advance, other times I let destiny or other pilgrims guide me. It is the equivalent of preparing an agenda, but being aware that anything can happen. Being Toastmaster of the Day for 21 consecutive days is a huge training for life. You learn to accept that planning is good, and even necessary, but being able to flow with uncertainty and surrender are equally valuable skills.

I've since walked another pilgrimage route, the Italian route of the Via Francigena, in different circumstances, and I am already planning more pilgrimages in other countries and continents. I have learned that wherever I go and whatever path I take, Toastmasters will always accompany me.

Alejandro Martinez lives in Virum, Denmark, and is Club President of Amigos Toastmasters in Virum, Denmark.

The Case of the Disappearing Path

Step-by-step advice for effectively using Base Camp and its resources.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Good news! The more time you spend in Pathways Base Camp, the easier it becomes.

However, like with any computer system, there are some surprises that can crop up from time to time. This article will look at three of the most common surprises that occur in Base Camp.

I don't know about you, but regardless of which computer system I am using, I am really good at clicking the wrong selection in a drop-down menu. And more times than not, it causes something to disappear. That, unfortunately, has been the experience of many Toastmasters.

Every time you access a Pathways resource on Base Camp, it is added to your "Paths and Learning Page," including all of your active paths. However, once you complete a path, it migrates to a completed page, and does not appear on this page because the default setting is to display your active paths. There is a drop-down menu above the list titled "Filter by Training Status." If you select "Completed" from this menu, your completed paths will appear, and you will have access to all the information contained therein.

There is, however, one more category—"Archived." These are files, paths, and resources that are not completed but you just don't need anymore. Whenever you launch an item in Pathways, such as an evaluation resource or training video, it appears in your Paths and Learning page. Right now, I have 48 items on my page. And every time I want one of them, I have to wade through the entire list. If I want to get rid of some, I can archive them by clicking the down arrow on the blue button to the right of that resource. One of the options is "Move to Archived Transcript." This moves the file out of the active list and into the archived category.

Sometimes, we might accidentally do this to one of our active paths, causing it to disappear.

(Oh, no. Did I lose my path? What do I do?) If you click on that "Filter by Training Status" button and select "Archived," you will be able to see your archived items. If one of your paths has wandered over to that section, you can bring it back home again by clicking on the drop-down arrow on the blue button and select the "Restore from Archived Transcript" option. Your path should now magically reappear on your active list. Whew!



Base Camp has some interesting features that are not evident at first glance.

Another question that many Toastmasters have is, "What do I do with those completed evaluation forms that I receive?" If you have an evaluation form that you want to save to Base Camp, rather than add it to that huge collection of paper that you have accumulated over time, you can do that quite easily. First, if it is in paper format, scan and save it. Then go to your home page on Base Camp. You can do this from the blue bar across the top of Base

Camp. Simply, hover over the word "home." A drop-down will open. Click "home" from the drop-down menu to navigate to this page.

In the lower right-hand corner, you will find a button called "My Documents." Click it. You will have folders for all five levels in a path, as well as a catchall folder for any other documents that you wish to save. Click on the appropriate folder and follow the upload instructions. Your documents will be listed and can be accessed from there. One note of caution: These files cannot be modified within Base Camp. If you want to make a change, you have to replace the file.

Those of us in more than one club will notice that when logging into Base Camp it asks you to select your club. When you make a change, the system wants to make sure that you know that you are changing your "Home Club." Don't worry. You are not changing your primary club. It's just a Base Camp thing. Base Camp has many features for communication between club members. You can only communicate with one club at a time.

This is particularly important if you are submitting a completed level for approval. The approval request will go to the Vice President Education of the club that you selected at sign-in. If you really want to apply credit to a different club, you have to change the selected club on the Toastmasters website first.

Base Camp has some interesting features that are not evident at first glance. Hopefully these brief explanations will keep you rolling along without any surprises. Happy Base Camping.

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.



It's Time to Get SMART

Try this popular goal-setting strategy to energize your program year.

By Greg Lewis, DTM

It's the start of a new Toastmasters program year. If you're feeling a bit lost, don't worry. You are not alone. This time of year can often be a little overwhelming.

We all have different levels of motivation and purpose as we travel along on our Toastmasters journey. For some, this might prove challenging at times. How do we manage Toastmasters with everything else going on in our busy lives? How do we keep the passion and desire to truly achieve all that we can? The good news is there are techniques to help us.

A widely used productivity strategy that many people find helpful is goal setting. For example, Kairsty Ashworth, a member of Livingston Speakers in the United Kingdom, is a regular goal setter. "I set a goal of taking on a role at every meeting and ensuring I contribute to each meeting," she says. "Last year, I set my target at finishing Level 3 in Visionary Communication, which is my second path. This year my target is to complete the path."

Ashworth also sets goals for speeches and meeting assignments. This allows her to contribute to her self-development and to her club, by actively participating in each meeting.

While there are a variety of goal-setting methods, many people find that SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Bound) provide a memorable tool to stay inspired and achieve objectives. Let's take a look at this popular technique and see how you can apply it to Toastmasters.

Specific

This is important, as specificity helps our subconscious focus on and visualize the goal. Say your goal is "to get better at public speaking." That's a worthy aim; however, it's too general. See how it compares to the specific goal below:

Complete Level 2 of Innovation Planning by June 15, 2023, to improve my public speaking skills when presenting to an unfamiliar audience, which is something I'm often assigned to do.

Measurable

We need to measure our efforts and successes. Fortunately, the Toastmasters program and Pathways make it easy to do this. Completing a path, taking meeting roles, or competing in a speech contest—all are easy to track and measure. Your Vice President Education (VPE) can do this in Base Camp. There is also a Pathways Achievement Tracker, a handy visual tool to see your progress.

Achievable

Can you actually achieve your goal? This is usually not a problem within Toastmasters, as most goals include reaching pre-determined milestones. However, what if your goal requires prerequisites? If it does, set a new goal to address those—such as completing path Levels 1 and 2 in order to compete in the International Speech Contest. The club VPE is an excellent resource to help you identify and plan for prerequisites.



Realistic

Is your goal realistic? If not, it may become a demotivator rather than an inspiration. For example, getting your DTM in one year may not be realistic. However, completing a path probably is. Perhaps achieving a level each year is the most realistic scenario for you.

Think about how much time you can realistically devote to Toastmasters given all your commitments and responsibilities. Strive to find a balance that will allow you to achieve your Toastmasters goals and everything else you need and want to do in your life. A realistic goal will motivate you to achieve it.

Time-Bound

Set a specific completion date. For example: Set a date for your big project (complete Level 2 by June 31, 2023), then create a set of subgoals for each project. Setting a specific date helps you focus and hold yourself accountable.

Set a SMART Plan

Once you have outlined your SMART goals for the year, develop an action plan to achieve them. This is vital, as without a plan, your goals are merely wishful thinking.

Break your main goal into smaller goals. This makes the “big” goal seem less daunt-

ing and allows you to set dates to accomplish each smaller goal. For example, let’s say your goal is to complete Level 2 of the Presentation Mastery path by February 28, 2023. There are three assignments in this level, so you will need to prepare, practice, and deliver three speeches.

your goals.” Remember your reasons for joining Toastmasters, as these reasons reflect who you want to become.

Need proof that SMART goals work? Like so many of us, Lori Lococo, DTM, joined Toastmasters to improve her public speaking skills. However, she soon developed a passion

We all have different levels of motivation and purpose as we travel along on our Toastmasters journey.

Decide on a realistic timeframe; for example, a speech every two months. Commit to actual dates. Then share your plan with the VPE and secure a speaking role in the meetings on those dates.

Each speech you complete is a little victory and little victories add up! Your motivation increases and you start looking forward to that next speech or meeting role. And knowing well in advance when you will be delivering each speech makes it easier to schedule time to work on preparing and practicing.

Regardless of how you plan, remember that goals are a means to an end. As the noted motivational speaker Zig Ziglar said, “What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you *become* by achieving

for leadership and set new goals surrounding this newly discovered interest. Over the next 15 years she set progressively higher SMART goals, culminating in her election to the position of Toastmasters International Director (2012–2014).

That led to her desire to “give back.” She went on to leverage Toastmaster leadership skills and was elected as a city councilor in her hometown of Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

It works to be SMART. So use this strategy and make this your best Toastmasters year ever!

Greg Lewis, DTM, is a retired business professional who strives to inspire and encourage his fellow Toastmasters. He and his family live in Fonthill, Ontario, Canada.

A Novel Approach to Speech Contests

Toastmaster Katherine Collette's new book invites readers inside a fictional public speaking competition.

By Laura Amann

Katherine Collette has set her second novel, *The Competition*, in an environment familiar to many Toastmasters: a speech contest. In fact, there is a lot that members will recognize in the book, from the competition rules to the convention to the competitors.

A member herself for four years, and with Toastmaster parents, she knew that a Toastmasters-like experience would be a good setting for a book. And while the characters and the plot have many qualities that Toastmasters will recognize, there are differences as well, which allowed Collette to exaggerate certain aspects for the plot.

The Competition was published in Australia in February 2022 and was selected for the Queensland Writers Centre's Adaptable program. Collette's first book, *The Helpline*, was longlisted for the 2019 Indie Book Awards. She is also co-host of [The First Time](#) podcast.

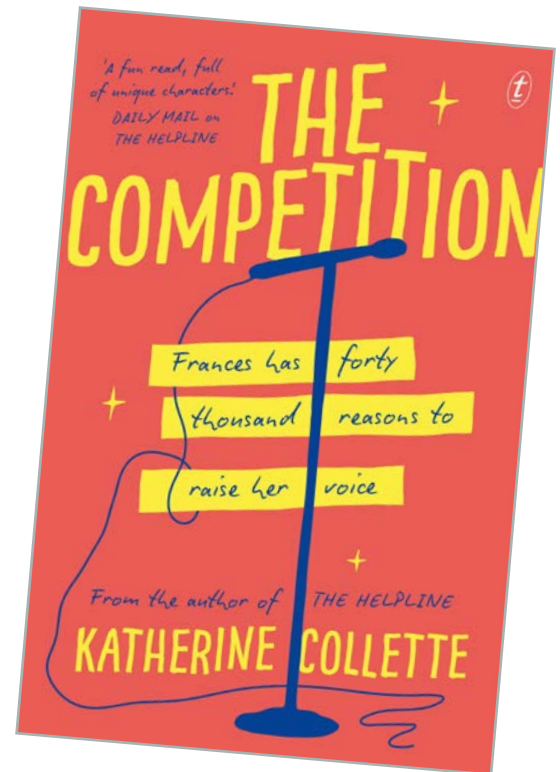
What is your book about?

The Competition is set in the world of competitive public speaking and takes place across four days, during which hundreds of competitors compete to be crowned Australia's best speech maker.

There are two main characters. Frances is in her early 20s and wants to win the prize money. Her plot revolves around bullying, as well as learning to tell the truth and owning her story. Then there's Keith, a recent retiree. He's desperate to win, more for the glory and to win his wife back. Keith is very celebratory about public speaking and clubs and has been around for a long time.

What made you suspect that a speech contest would be a good setting for a novel?

I like the freedom that fiction affords to explore different issues, and I liked that the setting is in a Toastmasters-like world, but it's an exaggerated Toastmasters world. I thought a lot about the value of public speaking clubs in that it teaches you to speak, but it's also a listening club in



some ways. There is this real beauty in listening, and having people tell stories that they wanted to tell that are sometimes surprising, sometimes confronting, sometimes thought-provoking.

I really loved exploring that idea. Some of the stories you hear in Toastmasters club meetings are incredible. I think there's something powerful in giving a person space to say whatever they want to say. And it can be surprising what they choose to talk about. It's often deeper and more personal than you would ever ask questions about.

Once you start doing contests, it becomes so refined and so choreographed in some ways. Competitions are really distinct from club meetings, and it was interesting to understand what motivates people to compete. They joined a club originally for one reason, but there was a turning point where they loved public speaking so much that they wanted to get really good at it.

How did you research this book?

I began doing speech contests. I entered all of them. I went the furthest in the Humorous Speech Contest. I ended up getting coaching when I realized it would be so useful to have feedback. [My coach] was fantastic; she was a former Toastmaster who had competed internationally. That was a big turning point.

I also talked to a number of different people. I talked to a well-known judge. I spoke to a lot of people who did competitions. I spoke to a world champion finalist, a coach, and people who had been involved in clubs for a while.

I also received a grant to go to the 2019 International Convention in Denver, Colorado. That was special



Katherine Collette

anyway, but particularly given what's happened since 2019. It was such a great moment.

What parts will Toastmasters recognize and what did you fictionalize?

I wanted to show the positivity, the level of encouragement, and that genuine desire to see the best in people. Toastmasters is about helping people grow, but it's also about acknowledging what people can already do. I

feel kind of low stakes. It would be horrible to go to the world's coolest public speaking club and learn there.

I think we underestimate what a barrier awkwardness can be. We sometimes fear genuine conversations in life because they might be uncomfortable. With genuine public speaking, we know that it will be awkward.

One of the things that is built up in the book, but doesn't exist in Toastmasters, is the

also wanted to capture a level of awkwardness. Inherently, a public speaking club is going to have a layer of awkwardness because people are trying something that they're not good at. That is hard to do. It's inevitable, but it's also necessary because if you want to be vulnerable in a space, you want that space to

self-improvement industry. For instance, the public speaking club in the book starts selling essential oils. They also have [motivational] audio recordings. It starts to go down this negative path. I wanted to explore that, and fiction allowed me to. I couldn't have done that within Toastmasters.

What do your characters learn from their journeys?

I thought carefully about each of their journeys. For Frances, it was about learning to tell the truth. For Keith, it was about learning to be quiet and let others have the stage. This is also sort of a comment on something that Toastmasters is very good at, which is diversity and sharing the stage. Part of the reason you have timers and buzzers is that it's a very egalitarian space; it's not hierarchical who gets the stage; it's not who is the loudest or most successful. It's a shared time and everyone gets an equal capacity to speak.

What reactions have you experienced while promoting the book?

The world of competitive speaking is unknown to a lot of people, and it seems strange from the outside. It's also been fun because a lot of people are familiar with Toastmasters, and one thing about Toastmasters is that they like sharing their experiences!

When I'm talking [about the book], I can always say, have you heard of Toastmasters? And if they have, it's a shorthand for a lot of things. They get the meaning of the vibe of Toastmasters.

I also get a lot of people coming up to me after events, saying, "Oh, I hate public speaking, I'm awful at it!" I'm so big on saying, "Everybody feels that way. It's so curable." When you're anchored in that that fear of public speaking, you think it will never be different. But just by the act of going and continuing to do something, it does shift.

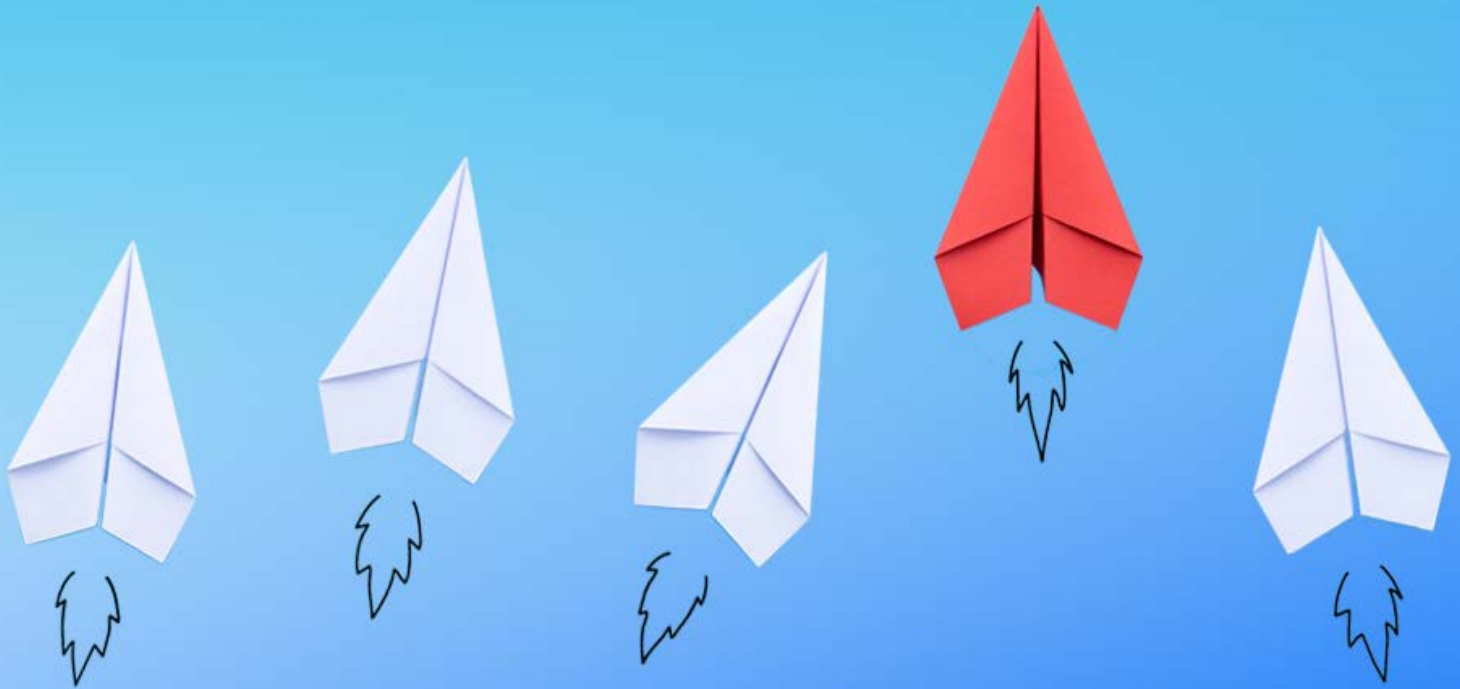
I think it's such a great setting for a book. I think there's so much you can explore because the speeches in those competitions are really inspirational. They are generally about experiences that are meaningful in people's lives about things they've had to work through. It's such a lovely arc to get to that point. Because you've gotten through something, you've survived, and now you're able to make meaning of it and share it.

Learn more at www.katherinocollette.com.

Laura Amann is managing editor for the Toastmaster magazine.

“Competitions are really distinct from club meetings, and it was interesting to understand what motivates people to compete.”

—KATHERINE COLLETTE



Leading Without a Title

How to motivate teams when you aren't a direct supervisor.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

Early in his career, a senior colleague told Allan Watkinson he was showing good leadership. At the time, he was a junior person in the organization and didn't see himself as a leader.

Now Watkinson is a leadership, talent, and engagement expert and principal at Gallup, a global analytics and advising firm. He remembers that early leadership lesson clearly. "The senior colleague observed me being proactive around a purpose and a goal and getting things done in an environment where others weren't getting things done," he says.

That's a key part of how Watkinson views leadership. At the core, he says it's about moving people and projects toward a common goal and in a positive direction.

Too often people associate leadership with a title. However, you don't need a title to be a leader. And not all people with titles are leaders. "People can be CEOs of a company, but they don't have leadership skills," says Juana Duque, senior client partner at Korn Ferry, a global organizational consulting firm. "Some CEOs have the worst leadership skills."

For real leadership, it's not the title that's important. It's what you do that matters.

Christina Tushman, senior director of learning design and leadership development at the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), agrees. She describes leadership as something you do—a behavior you exhibit. "It's not necessarily a position," she says. "It can be, but you need to have the accompanying behavior."

So, what happens when you're asked to lead—or you're assigned—a project at work but you don't have official supervisory responsibility over



any of the project's team members? This scenario happens all the time. "You can demonstrate leadership in this moment," says Watkinson. "You can start now."

Key Leadership Behaviors

Watkinson suggests people who are leading a team without the title or supervisory responsibility focus on four actions:

1 Think. Be future oriented and think strategically about the path you'll take to accomplish the project. What are the parameters to navigate, such as budget and timeline? What does success look like? Be clear about the project goal and desired outcome.

It's also essential you understand what's expected of you and your team. Make sure all members of your team understand what's expected of them too.

2 Build. You need to build trust and engagement in your team. To do so, you must know yourself and your team.

Leaders invest time in knowing themselves. What drives you? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses and how can you fill in those gaps? "It's hard to lead people if you don't know yourself well," says Watkinson.

A common mistake is believing you have to do it on your own and have all the answers. AAMC's Tushman emphasizes you're not building the collective capacity of the organization if you try to do everything yourself.

For real leadership, it's not the title that's important. It's what you do that matters.

You also risk alienating your team. It's important to have a highly engaged team around you, so get to know each team member. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Organize your team around those strengths and leverage their power.

But don't stop there. Understand what's important to them, how they're being measured in their role, and what they're trying to achieve. "You have to care about the people you're working with," says Tushman. "You have to care about who they are and what's going on in their world."

Focus on building trust too. It's important to follow through on what you say you'll do and to keep confidences. If you lose your credibility, it's hard to gain it back.

3 Influence. There are many people you will need to influence to accomplish the job. Your team members are essential, but they are not the only ones. Who are your target audiences? Who are the recipients of what you're delivering? Who are the people who can clear roadblocks for you? Map these out.

If you want to be seen as someone leading the way, you need to understand where to spend your time and how to most [effectively communicate](#) with your team and other audiences to activate them. Some people need logic, data, facts, and charts. Other people respond to inspiration, shared meaning and purpose, and common values. Others might be motivated by the way a person delivers a message, such as a confident and direct approach. "You can get a good project manager who's focused on the transactional parts, but a leader will influence the right people," says Watkinson.

4 Execute. This is all about getting the job done. Focus on a plan with clear milestones. Monitor progress and the budget. Be aware of upcoming deadlines while keeping the overall goal in mind.



It's also important to be a positive force and lead by example. "You have to have positive energy and the motivation for helping others through something—or for transforming something," says Duque.

Don't forget to share credit with your team members and others you work with. While you should share your own successes, it's important to shine the spotlight on others even more. Also, look for ways to develop your team members so they have opportunities to grow.

It's rare for someone to be strong in all four behaviors. Good leaders build a team around themselves to ensure the core capabilities are represented.

Structural and Cultural Influences

An organization's structure, or culture, or the society in which it's based can greatly affect how leadership is viewed and how you can get things done. "You have to read the room," says Tushman. "You have to know the culture of your organization and how an organization rewards and recognizes leadership."

Is your organization hierarchical? Is it collaborative? Is it more organic, with very few positional titles? The organizational structure can make a difference, as well as how the top leader decides to use power.

Watkinson sees more organizations moving to a matrix structure, where people have multiple bosses and can be torn about who to take guidance from. Leaders have less official authority and must be more influential, which often challenges people to lead in a different way.

In a flat organization—which is more project-based—someone may have a line manager, but the formal power of managers is gone. That

opens the door for everyone to demonstrate leadership.

Duque has worked throughout Latin America and is currently based in Bogotá, Colombia.

She describes the countries she works with as hierarchical societies, where titles are

very important. People are used to a style of leadership where they're told what to do, and they do it. "It's been that way for a long time," she says. "We are starting to change, but it's slow." Yet she's seeing an evolution to more open and collaborative approaches.

Watkinson has lived around the world and is currently based in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, working in the Asia-Pacific region. In Australia and New Zealand, he says the focus is mainly on leaders serving the needs of their people and managing outcomes rather than tasks. Whereas in Asia, a hierarchical environment is more common.

Both Duque and Watkinson see a difference in the younger generations across all cultures. Younger workers don't want to be told what to do. Instead, they want to be empowered. "They just want to jump into things they can discuss and understand and do what they feel like they need to do," says Duque. They want coaches rather than bosses. As a result, they respond better to influence than direction.

If you're faced with leading a project team without formal authority—or even if you have the title—employ leadership behaviors, understand the culture you're working in, and apply what you're learning in Toastmasters to succeed at work.

"But don't wait for the role," says Watkinson. "Understand what leadership is and that you're already a leader if you choose to be. Start today."

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.jenniferlblank.com.

Younger workers want coaches rather than bosses. As a result, they respond better to influence than direction.

Use Toastmasters to Gain Leadership Skills

“The value of the Toastmasters leadership program is that you have the opportunity to put it into practice,” says Innocent Richard Jr., DTM, District 81 Director and member of three clubs in Haiti: Amaryllis Toastmasters Club and Les Pionniers Club Avancé in Port-au-Prince, and Imperial Center Group Club Avancé in Cap-Haitien. “Toastmasters provides appropriate spaces for us to practice, make mistakes, receive feedback, and grow.”

Here are some ways Toastmasters can help you strengthen your leadership skills, whether you have a title or not.

Pathways Projects: The Leadership Development path focuses on managing your time, developing and executing a plan, and leading a team. Another path, Dynamic Leadership, helps you understand leadership and strengthens your conflict-resolution and change-management skills.

However, all 11 paths incorporate leadership development opportunities. Several paths require a High Performance Leadership project (HPL), which involves leading a team to complete an initiative.

Volunteer Leadership Roles:

You develop leadership skills and gain experience by serving in club and District roles. You can also chair a speech contest or District conference.

Anna Hyeyoung Lee, DTM, from Chinese English Bilingual Toastmasters in Seoul, South Korea, says she’s learned the most while serving as a past conference chair and now as District 93 Director. “Both roles offer the whole view of the project and the biggest responsibilities,” she says. “They provide learning opportunities in all aspects—recruiting with sharing the vision, planning, executing the plan, handling conflicts, compromising, and getting the best out-

come. However, I believe all leadership opportunities, like club officers or committee chairs, also provide learning opportunities.” The only difference may be the size of the projects, she notes.

Richard agrees. “I think members don’t value roles like Toastmaster of the Day and General Evaluator enough. For me, these are the very basis of the leadership program.”

Other opportunities include organizing a Speechcraft or Youth Leadership Program in your community. Both are condensed versions of the Toastmasters meeting experience for non-members.

Mentors: You can find a mentor to help you talk through leadership challenges you’re facing and how to avoid pitfalls. Or you can ask someone you admire. Or ask your Vice President Education to connect you to District leadership, where you can connect with Toastmasters outside your club who have the experience you’re seeking.

You can learn from others informally by observing and asking questions. “In Toastmasters, we have many examples of leaders,” says Lee. “As we communicate with them, we will understand different leadership styles. We can also find our own leadership style and keep developing it.”



Participating in Toastmasters will also help you increase self-awareness and strengthen communication skills, two key aspects of leadership. The entire Toastmasters program offers myriad ways to gain experience, boost confidence, and develop into the leader you want to be.

Lee says she didn’t fully understand the opportunity Toastmasters provides until she was a District-level volunteer. “I was able to see myself learning, growing, handling conflict better, and overall becoming a better me,” she says. “I started to take bigger challenges to develop my skills. Because I know there is only one way to make yourself a better leader—by doing it.”

— Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

The Path of Earthlings

Club journey highlights diversity, online dynamics, and unique themes.

By Angie Palmer, DTM

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 meant many people around the world had to do their jobs completely online. It also meant that for many, including myself, new work opportunities opened up. I work in Hong Kong as a wellness speaker and fitness trainer, and being able to also do these jobs virtually gave me greater flexibility.

As a Toastmaster I decided to explore this new online horizon and charter an online-only Toastmasters club with members from all over the world. We would focus on three themes: sustainability, wellness, and veganism. My vegetarian friend Samantha Ng and I chartered Earthlings Toastmasters Club. We chartered in early 2021 with 26 members, grew into a club with 38 members from more than 10 countries and nationalities, and achieved President's Distinguished status (in the Distinguished Club Program) in June 2021. We earned President's Distinguished again in 2022.

So what did we do right? Perhaps the story of our global online club can inspire other Toastmasters wanting to charter a new club and launch an exciting and fulfilling journey.

eating a plant-based diet. We have three meetings a month, one focusing on sustainability, one on wellness, and one on veganism.

I was also adamant about making this club international and bilingual. (We are an “earth-based” bilingual club with one Mandarin meeting and two English ones each month.) I also put a premium on diversity. We wanted people residing or working—at least part of the time—in different countries to share their unique views in their prepared and Table Topics® speeches. Many of our guests and members have mentioned that this was one of the major reasons they were attracted to the club. They want to listen to different viewpoints, as well as people who speak Mandarin and English well.

Create a Fun Online Environment

Our members make the most of our virtual experience. We have fun with our online activities like word games and a book club. Members meet in online breakout rooms to talk casually in Mandarin and English—what we call Language Exchange. We have also had an online open house, awards ceremony, and speech contests.

Members meet in online breakout rooms to talk casually in Mandarin and English—what we call Language Exchange.

Focus on Unique Selling Points

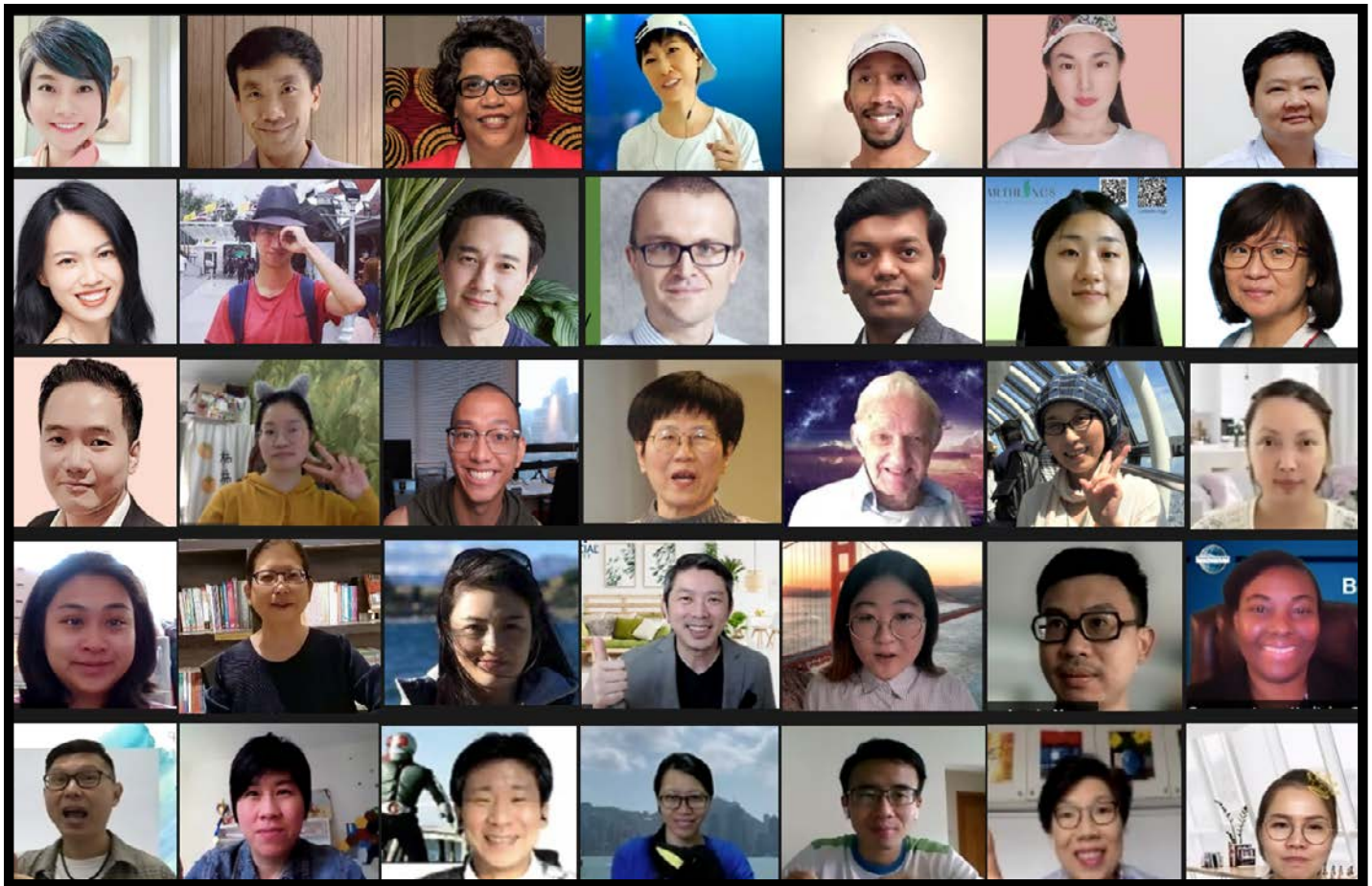
There were more than 100 clubs in District 89 (China), but there was not one with the style and culture I was looking for. So the first question to ask yourself is, *Why do I want to charter a new club?* There are so many great Toastmasters clubs in the world already, so your reason must be a good one; otherwise, it will be hard to attract charter members.

For Earthlings Toastmasters Club, we focus on our three themes: Sustainability is anything about going green and being earth-friendly, wellness covers both mental and physical health, and veganism is all about

These activities help us connect, as does chatting in the message group or by email almost every day. It is a community, a second family, and a learning platform, so the focus is not about missing a physical stage.

Deciding on Common Platforms

While meeting online can bring together diverse members from different countries, communication platforms and member currencies can also be challenging for the club. China is in a completely different world in terms of social media and communication channels. In order to find common ground with members from various countries, we



Earthlings is an online and bilingual Toastmasters club with members from a number of different countries.

use the Chinese app WeChat as the messaging platform and Google Drive for our online library. It means that some of our American, Japanese, Singaporean, and Korean members are trying WeChat for the first time, and Chinese members are using VPN to access Google Drive and our social media pages such as Meetup and LinkedIn.

Handling our club finances can also be complicated. Members submit their dues in three different currencies. We restructured some payment systems to adapt to this challenge.

Fortunately, the members of this international club are usually excited about learning something new and stepping out of their comfort zone.

Set Up to Succeed

To help members of a global online club succeed, we have an orientation for every new member, and pair a mentor with new members to boost their confidence and comfort level. This is a very useful approach. To provide support and resources for our members, we also organize different mini-workshops—about giving speech evaluations, learning how to earn a Distinguished Toastmaster award, and mastering Zoom.

We cannot meet each other and give each other hugs to show love and support, but we have found different ways to let the members know we are still a family, whether it's playing online games or providing consistent encouragement and support to enable members to succeed.

The Earthlings club has taken a unique and exciting path. Throughout this chartering journey, we became stronger, wiser, and kinder. Chartering a club wasn't easy but it was a rewarding and fun learning opportunity.

We want to see more global online clubs sprout and flourish. Toastmasters is a wonderful

educational platform, and with more online clubs, we will be able to reach more earthlings—inhabitants of Earth—who want to be better leaders and communicators in their communities. Such clubs can bring more positive learning and inspiring messages to every corner of the world.

Angie Palmer, DTM, is founding President of Earthlings Toastmasters Club, and she was also chosen as District 89's 2021–2022 Toastmaster of the Year. She is a wellness speaker and fitness trainer for various Fortune 500 companies. Reach her at Instagram or LinkedIn [@bethislight](#).

To start a new club, you must have at least 20 members (17 of whom cannot belong to another Toastmasters club, except in the case of advanced clubs, where dual membership is a prerequisite) and a physical or online meeting location. You must also submit the required forms to Toastmasters World Headquarters. To learn more information about the process, visit the “[Start a Club](#)” section on the Toastmasters website. In addition, [How to Build a Toastmasters Club](#) (Item 121 on the Toastmasters website), is a step-by-step guide with comprehensive tips.



Illustration by Bart Browne

Oops!

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.

Onstage mishaps can be mortifying. But you can rise above an unwelcome surprise.

I still dream about my most embarrassing public speaking experience. But at least I no longer wake up screaming.

Picture a luncheon crowd of 200 women. Now, imagine a stage so wide that as someone with a very small frame, I feel that I have to do something spectacular to fill it. To make a point, I run across the floor in my high heels. And I fall. Spectacularly. The audience gasps. All I want to do is get up and run once more—this time to my car.

Happily, the story doesn't end there. I pick myself up, make a joke, and go on with the presentation. Everything is under control. The nosedive is apparently forgotten. Then, for some reason I will never understand,

toward the end of my speech I start to take off across the stage once more. As I lift my left foot, all the women cry out in unison, “Don’t run!”

I have never brought together an audience so well.

Let’s face it: We all mess up sometimes. And even when we don’t, things happen beyond our control. As in the case of the speaker who suddenly had to dash to the restroom in the midst of a major speech—more about that later—the key to speaking success is not to learn to be perfect. It’s to expect the unexpected.

Turns out I’m not the only one who has fallen onstage. So have the megastar singers Harry Styles and Pink. Music legend Madonna and guitar ace the Edge, from the Irish supergroup U2, fell off the stage. Former U.S. President Barack Obama fell climbing a stage, as did Oscar-winning actress Jennifer Lawrence on the way to accepting her golden statue.

Oops!

Oops!

Oops!

Oops!

“The more I’ve learned to laugh at myself and let the crowd laugh with me, the easier it has been to turn mishaps into magic.”

—VERITY PRICE, DTM

Then there’s South African Toastmaster Verity Price, DTM, who in 2007 was touring her country—talking about a record she had made—with a renowned motivational speaker. In Johannesburg, she listened to him give her a “rock star” introduction to the enormous crowd.

“I felt like I had finally hit the big-time,” says the Cape Town singer and speaker. “I bounded up the stairs, only to trip on the final step and sprawl headfirst across the stage. The oxygen was sucked out of the room as 600 people gasped in unison.

“But without missing a beat,” she continues, “I looked up from the floor and said into my headset, ‘Well, folks, I can only go up from here!’ The crowd roared with laughter as I gathered myself up off the floor, dusted myself off, and started my talk. They were so relieved that I was okay with what had just happened, it created instant rapport with 600 strangers.

“When I finished,” she adds, “more than half the room signed up for the album I was selling.”

Preventing Mishaps

So it’s not just you who has been, or will be, the butt of a blooper. And not all of them involve falling. International pop star Justin Bieber once vomited onstage. Beyoncé’s hair got caught in a fan in the midst of a performance, and singer Demi Lovato accidentally pulled off their own hair weave.

What to do if you want to avoid such ego-busting experiences? As you can imagine, the experts agree that an ounce of preventing embarrassment is worth a pound of overcoming it. So first, speak often. When you have enough experience onstage, you can more easily think on your feet. Do you suffer from performance anxiety? Set about mastering techniques to control it.

Then, prepare your speeches so well that not only will you be less apt to forget them, but you will also be calm enough to recover should anything go awry. Finally, check out everything you can beforehand. Is your outfit in good shape? (Heel not loose, zipper closed, button not about to pop off?) Did you bring everything you need so you

don’t have to count on the venue to supply it? Did you check the microphone, and is there a spare battery available if necessary? Are your props close at hand? If you use them, is your stool and/or easel sturdy? Is your marker fresh? Or is the PowerPoint all set?

To ensure that you are prepared, you might even make yourself a simple checklist. And by all means, it’s a good idea to refrain from eating and drinking a lot before presenting. (I’m looking at you, Justin Bieber!)



Illustration by Bart Browne

Oops!

Oops!

Oops!

Speaking coach Sharookh Daroowala, DTM, Immediate Past President of Quay Speakers Toastmasters in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, knows a little something about preparation—and embarrassment.

“A few years ago, I walked into an Evaluation Contest just as the doors were closing,” he recalls. “So did another member. Seeing us both, the contest chair announced, ‘And just in the nick of time, here’s our test speaker.’”

An error can actually make the audience empathize with you.

Since he knew he wasn’t the scheduled test speaker, Daroowala joined the audience in applauding the person who entered the room with him. But she whispered to him that she wasn’t the test speaker, either.

The contest chair then called over Daroowala and quietly reminded him that he had agreed a month earlier to locate a test speaker. Unfortunately, he had completely forgotten. Was he embarrassed! So what to do at the 11th hour?

“As a seasoned Toastmaster and serial contestant,” he explains, “I instantly recalled World Champion [of Public Speaking] Craig Valentine’s famous advice: ‘You don’t *get* ready, you *stay* ready!’ I instantly offered to be the test speaker and pulled out a story I’d told before.”

What’s even better than preparation? Staying ready!

How to Defuse Embarrassment

Sometimes the best-laid plans just aren’t enough. We can’t always anticipate what can go wrong. So here’s a quick guide to help with those inevitable embarrassing moments. When you become familiar with these tips, you will be able to choose the right response to a situation at a moment’s notice. (Notice that the first letters of the six points spell “mellow.” Learn to stay mellow, and all will usually work out just fine.)

Move on from it. Remember, the audience doesn’t know what you’ve planned. If what you omitted or misspoke isn’t important, simply ignore it. But if you’ve forgotten something that’s essential to a speech, don’t get



Illustration by Bart Browne

embarrassed! You can always say, “Now what I haven’t told you yet is ...” This makes you seem clever for building suspense. And if the audience can’t miss the problem, like hearing a loud burp, simply don’t make a big thing of it, and they won’t either. Excuse yourself, and continue. You are the guide for your speaking safari. If you show that you are in control, your listeners will feel safe. In fact, an error can make them empathize with you. That’s because nine times out of 10, your audience doesn’t want you to fail. That would make them nearly as uncomfortable as it would make you.

Explain it. If we forget a name or a date, or misstate something, we can usually get away with something like, “I always forget that because ...” Maybe you meant to say “Eleanor” and instead you said “Phyllis.” No worries. You can always say, “I always call her that because she looks so much like my Aunt Phyllis!” (Unless you’re speaking in a court of law, a little white lie can be forgiven.) Or if you left a prop at work, you might



said, “Imagine the ball that is at this moment sitting on my desk because I ran out of the office so quickly to be here on time.” We can all relate!

Laugh at it. “I’ve learned that when you are okay with things not being okay, then not much can actually embarrass you,” says Price, the South African speaker. “The more I’ve learned to laugh at myself and let the crowd laugh with me, the easier it has been to turn mishaps into magic.”

If you’ve got a natural sense of humor, and if the mood of the room is light, or needs to be lightened, go ahead and joke about the problem. Your slip falls to the stage from under your skirt? Try saying, “Oops! At least it’s not a pink slip [a metaphor for getting fired]. I just hope that doesn’t come next!” Or there’s the old standard for anything embarrassing that happens: “Believe it or not, I planned that!”

Learn from it. Okay, so I didn’t immediately learn not to run across the stage (Did I mention I was wearing high heels?), but I certainly won’t ever do it again. Ever.

Joyce Kaduki, DTM, of Kwanza Kenya Toastmasters in Nairobi, Kenya, once forgot her speech halfway through her club’s International Speech Contest. After blanking out for about 20 seconds, she left the stage. Although she felt mortified, the audience applauded her, which she found extremely encouraging. Then, after the other contestants took their turns, she returned to deliver her speech in full. She was not entitled to earn a ribbon that day, but she did gain valuable lessons about preparation.

“First,” says the former Area Director, “I learned that it’s always better to internalize, rather than memorize, a speech. That way, there will be no pressure of remembering word for word, and it gives the speaker the flexibility of substituting words or phrases should they forget something.”

“Second, I learned to practice, practice, practice! And finally, as you go onstage, relax, have fun, and give it your best!”

Own it. Think of a way to make use of your embarrassing moment in your speech. What did the woman do who urgently had to use the restroom in the middle of her presentation? She asked the audience a probing question, walked offstage, did what she had to do, and returned to supply the answer. Everyone thought it was a brilliant device for building suspense!

What’s so important? Even if you can think of no way to fix the error, it may help you to remember this: Yes, public speaking is important, but it’s generally not a matter of life and death. Try to put the incident into perspective. You, and your audience, will get over it.

So although none of us actually welcomes onstage embarrassment, if we think of it as one more speaking challenge to overcome, it can help

us become more effective speakers. For my part, I’ve never fallen onstage again. To my knowledge, former President Obama, Madonna, and the Edge haven’t fallen again, either. And remember Verity Price? She did better yet. She went on to win Toastmasters’ 2021 World Championship of Public Speaking. So if you’ve experienced speaking embarrassment, you’re in great company. As Verity would say, you’ve got nowhere to go but up.

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., is a performance storyteller, radio personality, and author. She has presented at two Toastmasters International Conventions. Visit her at www.carenneile.com.

Wake-up Call

In a 2019 *Toastmaster* magazine [article](#), Manoj Vasudevan, DTM, 2017 World Champion of Public Speaking, shared his own embarrassing speaking memory from which he learned a valuable lesson. He spoke at an event promoting Toastmasters that began at 7:30 in the evening. Vasudevan was the last to speak, and by the time he took the stage, it was 9:30 p.m.

Vasudevan had given this presentation before and received adulation, so he was confused when he noticed audience members were disengaged and almost falling asleep. As he put it, “Then it dawned on me: When I previously gave this presentation it was daytime. I hadn’t adapted the speech to a tired and sleepy audience.”

“The experience was embarrassing, but it was helpful later in winning the 2017 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking. In 2017, for the first time ever, the championship was held at night. When I took the stage at 9:30 p.m., I could sense that people in the room were tired and sleepy—but I had come prepared for that. The prior embarrassment was a blessing in disguise.”





The Power of First Impressions

In just seven seconds your audience will make assumptions about who you are.

By Ruth Nasrullah

It only takes seven seconds for someone to look at you and form assumptions about your age, education, economic level, profession, heritage, and more.

For speakers, that means when you approach the lectern or take center stage, the audience sees more than just clothes, accessories, or makeup; those seven seconds are an opportunity to present who you are as a person as well as an effective communicator. Appearance is identity. How do we acknowledge and respect that?

Signature Color

[Jill Swanson](#) has 40 years of experience in fashion. She explains that the eye automatically searches a person's face for a particular color and zones in on it. "If you're wearing a red shirt, right away someone will notice your red lipstick," she says. "If you have brown eyes and wear a brown shirt, that helps hold the person's gaze a little longer."

Swanson believes everyone has a signature color. "Color is huge," she says. "Find out what your signature colors are—hair color, eye color, lip color. Look in the mirror and find something similar to your eye color for starters. Most of us have more than one color in their eye."

Gianna Abao is a content creator from the Philippines, and was the 2021-2022 Vice President Public Relations of Manila Metro Toastmasters Club. She is a

firm believer in the power of first impressions, and that emphasizing your strongest features is key in making that first impression last, especially on TikTok or Instagram, the social media platforms her club uses most often in marketing and outreach.

She considers her eyes to be her strongest feature.

"I like my eyes to be expressive," she says. "When I do my makeup that's where all the colors pop, as compared to my lips that are usually a nude color, like my cheeks."

After you've achieved a certain level of comfort onstage or at the lectern, Stephanie Thomas, a Los Angeles-based consultant who works with actors and entertainers, recommends you standardize the look you've chosen for yourself. Find components of your style that become your go-to items, like a favorite shirt or tie.

She suggests practicing in front of a mirror to check clothes and makeup. If you wear something that shows bare shoulders or arms, don't ignore that aspect of your appearance, she advises.

"Select colors that look great on your skin," she says.

Thomas, a fashion expert, styles clients for events like the Oscars. She is also a professional speaker and reminds Toastmasters of the most important aspect of public speaking.

"The beauty in speaking is when you bring *yourself* to your speech."



Aaron Beverly

Cultural Awareness

In 2019, Aaron Beverly became Toastmasters' World Champion of Public Speaking while wearing a traditional Indian outfit. That would

people have a third eye looking inward. Wearing it as an accessory risks insult to some people.

Ramona J. Smith, the 2018 World Champion of Public Speaking, says she always

Let your own identity shine through in your speech. Let the audience get to know you and embrace who you are.

be unremarkable were it not for the fact that he is not Indian. In an auditorium filled with people from all over the world wearing their own nations' traditional clothing, he might have come off as play-acting, treating the outfit as a costume.

However, as his speech immediately made clear, he was about to tell his story of traveling to India to play a special role in his friend's wedding. Wearing that outfit was impactful, effective, and ultimately, the apparel of a winner.

Wearing clothing or accessories from a country, culture, or religion other than your own carries the risk of seeming to misappropriate or misinterpret an outfit that is meaningful to someone else. Awareness of and respect for cultural and religious identity are crucial. In the pop culture arena, performers Selena Gomez and Katy Perry, among others, have been criticized for wearing a bindi, the jewel worn by many Hindu women between the eyebrows. In Hinduism, the bindi is a reminder to always keep God in mind and ties to the belief that all

prepares for a speaking engagement in another country by researching beforehand.

"You just have to ask," says Smith. "But not YouTube and not someone who's never left

the continent, but the people who are actually inviting you. If I'm going to a Muslim country, I'm asking questions before I even fly out, like do I need to cover my head, is there anything I need to be mindful of, any clothing that I shouldn't wear?"

Terri Morrison and Wayne A. Conaway, the authors of *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands*, advise readers that in most of Asia, white is associated with death and funerals. So showing up onstage with a white carnation in your lapel might be concerning. Red and gold are considered lucky colors. Yellow connotes majesty, the authors write:

"Perhaps because of its association with gold, yellow was historically reserved for the highest-ranked people in Asia. In ancient times, only the emperor was allowed to wear yellow. This is no longer the case, although business attire is still in generally subdued colors."

Remember those seven seconds? Don't waste them trying to mimic the emperor.

Misplaced Assumptions

While there is plenty of advice available about how to dress when speaking, you may find that the way we're perceived can sometimes go beyond dress and is sometimes out of our control.

Tiffany Yu is a professional public speaker based in San Francisco, California. She was in a car accident at the age of 9 that killed her father and left her with one arm paralyzed and one of her legs disfigured due to severely fractured bones. She has learned to embrace who she is



Tiffany Yu

and focus on what she wants to do instead of how she is perceived.

“I often talk about how this is the body I’ve been gifted from the universe because if my disability or the way that my body healed wasn’t supposed to be like that, then it wouldn’t,” says Yu.

Like other speakers with disabilities, it may be more than her well-tailored outfit that catches audience attention.

Sean Lawton, founder of Collective Speakers in Boulder, Colorado, represents speakers with disabilities. He finds that audiences sometimes have a monolithic view of disabled people, and often expect a disabled speaker to come to an engagement with an inspirational story, no matter what the actual topic is. And standards for appearance can be demanding.

“Dress is definitely an issue,” he adds. “Sometimes disabled speakers are told: ‘Tone down your disability.’”

That is not an option for Imani Barbarin, who has cerebral palsy and walks with metal crutches. Of course, mobility devices like crutches and wheelchairs aren’t attire, but they are part of a speaker’s appearance and can have a powerful impact on how he or she is perceived—and in turn, how comfortable a speaker



Imani Barbarin

she worked for an investment firm, but now that she has transitioned to a new career, her appearance reflects her mood.

“I experienced this trauma as a kid so now as a 34-year-old I say yes, we’re talking about disability and social justice, but it can also be fun,” she says. “I actually want that reflected in the clothing that I wear as well. I like to wear

Saudi Arabian Mohammed Qahtani, DTM, 2015 World Champion, and Darren Tay of Singapore, 2016 Champion. Neither was a native speaker of English and both spoke with accents. Same for Shurooq Albanna, who, clad in the traditional clothes of her country and faith, was the first Arab to place in the championship when she came in third in 2013.

Follow in these champions’ footsteps—whatever your hairstyle, makeup, abilities, choice of clothing, or cultural background. Let your own identity shine through in your speech. Let the audience get to know you and embrace who you are. Let those seven seconds—and the moments that follow—work for you. It’s the best way for the speaking stage to bring us together.

As Beverly said in the conclusion of his championship speech, “Open your culture, your mind, your heart, to people who are different from you. Show the world that acceptance despite difference is not an unbelievable story.”

“The beauty in speaking is when you bring yourself to your speech.”

—STEPHANIE THOMAS

using such devices feels in front of his or her audience.

This may start within those first critical seconds when the audience initially sees the speaker. Barbarin’s crutches can be an unwelcome attention-getter. When she gets near the microphone, they can cause ear-splitting feedback.

“When I’m onstage [and they cause feedback], my crutches need to be farther away from me than I’m usually comfortable with,” says Barbarin. “Usually somebody has to help me ... and either take them offstage or put them a little bit further away from me when I’m onstage.”

People with disabilities don’t need to ignore their appearance—quite the opposite. Yu used to wear a standard muted business suit when

big colorful earrings because usually my hair is a little shorter and it’s black, so it stands out.”

She gives other speakers the same advice.

“If your preference is to wear a rainbow-colored dress and that makes you feel confident, then that’s great,” she says.

Diversity in Champions

In the November 2016 issue of the *Toastmaster*, Christine Clapp, DTM, [addressed](#) some of the myths surrounding the World Championship of Public Speaking®. Among them was the idea that non-native English speakers and people who speak English with an accent cannot win. She countered this myth by pointing out the success on the championship stage of both

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist and Vice President Public Relations of the Pearland Toastmasters Club in Pearland, Texas. She is president of the Houston chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and recently was honored with the Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member award from the society’s national organization. She is also a co-founder of the COVID-19 Wall of Memories. Read more about her at www.ruthnasrullah.com.

Building Your Club Policies

This living document caters to your unique membership.

By Laura Mishkind

All clubs have Toastmasters rules they must abide by. But what if you have a brand-new rule you want to add? That's where the Club Policies come in. Club Policies are created by club members to enhance the rules already in place. They're unique to your specific club, and allow your club to make the environment safe, welcoming, and catered to your members.

Want to have a specific dress code to better enhance the professionalism of your club? Or maybe you would

prefer that club members can only be President once they've first served in a different officer role. You can make these stipulations part of your Club Policy.

Toastmasters International. These include the expectations for admission to membership, membership responsibilities, dues, meeting rules, and more. Articles outline club expectations and keep the basic club experience consistent all over the world. It's important that a guest can walk into a Toastmasters meeting anywhere and know exactly what they're going to get—how to apply for membership, how meetings are run, key officer roles, and mutual respect.

The Club Policies allow your club to provide the positive Toastmasters learning environment that is expected around the world, but with a unique twist.

The Club Policies are a living document that the Club Secretary keeps on file; they do not have to be submitted to World Headquarters. Policies can be in paragraph or bullet form or whatever method works best for your members. There's lots of freedom in these policies. They can be adjusted at any point during the program year, but they must remain up to date to best meet the needs of your club.

Club Policies cannot contradict any rules or regulations in the Toastmasters International governing documents, but there is quite a bit of flexibility—as long as the majority of members are in agreement.

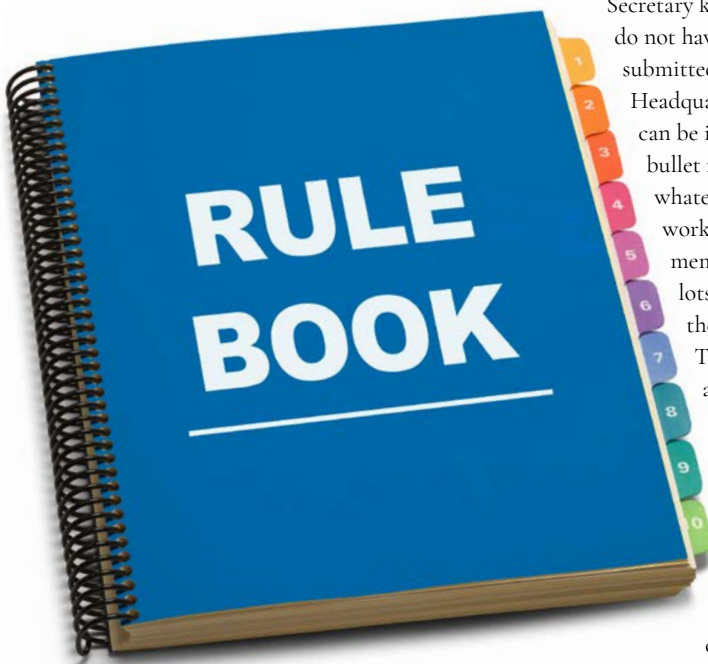
To adopt a new policy or amend an existing one, there must be a club vote with quorum (a required minimum of members) during a business meeting, including Toastmasters meetings. As a reminder, it's important that the Club Policies are kept up to date to ensure they meet the needs of your specific members and consider the state of the world around you. Your Club Policies must follow local and federal laws.

An up-to-date Club Policy allows your club to provide the positive Toastmasters learning environment that is expected around the world, but with a unique twist that matches your membership. Consider what could improve your fellow members' club experience, discuss it with the club, and bring a few ideas to a vote. Whether it's the decision to have club officers only serve in one club each program year or simply a new way to greet one another, your club will know what policies will best meet the needs of your membership.

How does this differ from the Club Constitution? The Constitution has articles that must be followed by all Toastmasters clubs—they're the Rules and Regulations all clubs agree to follow to be part of

If you or your club members have further questions on how to create, amend, or maintain the Club Policies, please email clubquality@toastmasters.org.

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



Postmodernism

You don't know what you know, your reality is not real, and it's existentially impossible for you to run a red light.

By John Cadley

Occasionally, I come across the word “postmodernism.” Intellectuals use it to characterize the world we live in. But I'm not an intellectual. In fact, a friend advised me never to engage in a battle of wits because I would be going into a fight unarmed.

The word confused me. I assumed the period we live in right now is modern, or of the time (modern furniture, modern fashion). But the prefix “post-” means “after.” How could I be living *after* the time I'm living in *now*? It made no sense. But that's because I'm not an intellectual. I think literally; intellectuals think conceptually. To me, a lawn mower is a lawn mower. To an intellectual, my Toro SMARTSTOW® Personal Pace Auto-Drive™ High Wheel Mower is a cultural symbol of the pathological bourgeoisie drive toward greater leisure by applying scientific knowledge for practical purposes. Who knew?

Call it pride or vanity, but I don't like not knowing what other people *do* know, unless they're in the beef jerky-making business. So I decided to investigate postmodernism and see what it's all about. If you're short on time I'll give you the executive summary: **Everything you see, think, and believe isn't real.** Got it? Have a nice day.

Postmodernism is intentionally hard to define. If, as the theory claims, the world has no intrinsic meaning, then the word to describe it should be no exception. For example, the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives”—which certainly is meaningless in the sense that one can only respond, *What the @#*&* does THAT mean?*

I'll try to explain. In this context, “modern” refers to all the collected wisdom of the world's great thinkers, from Plato to Joe the bartender, who, like wise parents, told us,



“This, my children, is how the world works.” Then, around the 1950s, a bunch of intellectuals came along like gum-snapping juvenile delinquents and said, “Yeah? Who says so?” Hence, *postmodernism*.

Postmodernists are skeptical on a grand scale. They don't question some things; they question everything. *Why should I listen to Socrates? He couldn't even write. He had to get Plato to take notes. And this Descartes guy with his “I*

Postmodernists don't question some things; they question everything.

think, therefore I am.” We think he isn't what he thought he was. Gravity says things fall down? We're spinning on a ball in space. There is no up and down. And if Shakespeare was the greatest writer of all time, how come he never made The New York Times Best Seller list?

These statements all spring from postmodernism's overarching view that the truths and values we accept as established knowledge are no more than the subjective opinions of some

self-important old guys who want us to think like they do. Their “facts” are actually symbols of oppression meant to form a vision of human life as they prefer to see it.

If the conclusions derived from this viewpoint are accurate, I'm afraid I have some depressing news: There is no universal truth. You can't really “know” anything. “Reality” isn't real. There's no innate human nature—it's all social conditioning. And two plus two may or may not equal four. It's entirely up to you.

If you choose to become a postmodernist (they give you a test with no right answers, so it's pretty easy to pass), you'll lead an interesting life. Even something as simple as a traffic ticket can lead to a discourse worthy of Aristotle: *Your honor, this ticket says I ran through a “red” light, but that is not true. “Red” is a wholly arbitrary term applied to a particular segment of the visible color spectrum somewhere between 380 and 750 nanometers—a so-called scientific “fact” which I do not accept. There is no absolute criterion by which you can prove the light was “red,” and consequently no way you can pronounce that I broke “the law,” which is in itself a totally subjective social construct invented by the elite to arrogate all power to themselves.*

If you can get away with that, let me know. I'm in.

Of course, the conundrum is that if the postmodern world is absurd—i.e., having no rational connection to human life—then none of us exist. When I told that to my wife, she reminded me that if we don't pay our nonexistent mortgage we're going to have a nonexistent house. I pondered those words as I mowed our nonexistent lawn and thought—maybe I should stop listening to intellectuals.

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

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

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

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

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