


THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | SEPTEMBER 2022

TOASTMASTER®

ALSO INSIDE:

**The Value
of Having
Durable
Skills**

**Take the
77-Day
Challenge**

A professional headshot of Matt Kinsey, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a dark navy blue suit jacket over a light-colored dress shirt and a patterned tie with yellow and blue geometric designs. A gold pocket square is visible in his jacket pocket. A small gold circular pin is on his lapel.

**Meet
Matt
Kinsey,
DTM**

2022-2023 International
President

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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Leading from the Heart and the Head

Early in my career when I worked in retail, I learned a powerful lesson about leadership that still resonates as I begin my term as Toastmasters' International President. I was given the opportunity to manage a retail location in Houston, Texas. The location was losing money every month, with very poor customer service scores. After six months and a lot of work on my part, the store was performing much better. Sales had increased almost 250%, the store went from losing \$24,000 USD a month to making \$50,000 USD a month in profits, and our customer service score was up 25%.

I felt great. I felt like I had really accomplished something significant ... and I had. Then my regional manager came in. He told me that I was doing great—at half my job. He said I was doing lousy at the other half.

What he was talking about was the difference between head-led leadership, where you focus on results, and heart-led leadership, where you focus on relationships and the well-being of your team. I was leading with my head, and he wanted me to lead with my heart.

According to Naz Beheshti in a recent *Forbes* article, head-driven leadership has a strong focus on goals and being disciplined. Heart-led leadership focuses on the team and building trust. As with any style of leadership, they both come with a set of advantages and challenges.

The most successful leaders know to combine the two, determining when to focus on results and when to focus on the team dynamics.

The reality is that you are best served by learning to do both. Results are important. They are a measuring stick that can help determine if the team is meeting its mission or not. The team members are equally important. I know I prefer to work on a team where there is trust, mutual respect, and effective team relationships. The most successful leaders know to combine the two, determining when to focus on results and when to focus on the team dynamics. They use their head to support their heart, but they start with their heart.

This interplay between heart-led and head-led leadership is vital during times of change. Because our world continues to evolve rapidly, the ability of leadership to successfully predict the future has been weakened. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, the world changes further. Trust within the team is essential to receive the best outcomes.

Which style of leadership are you most comfortable with? Do you see yourself as results focused, or team focused? Would your team agree with you? I encourage you to explore these questions within your teams and remember to start with your heart.

Matt Kinsey, DTM
International President

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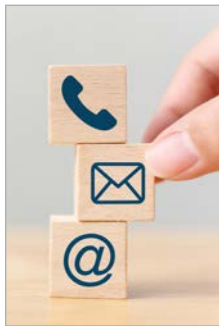


News

Renew Your Dues

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

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



New Districts Emerge in India

Due to continued growth in India, three new Districts reformed from Districts 41 and 98. Please welcome District 124, District 125, and District 126!

Watch Convention On Demand

Anyone who registered for the 2022 International Convention, either in person or online, can continue to view or revisit portions of the event via [Toastmasters On Demand](#) through October 26, 2022, at no extra cost. Anyone who did not purchase a ticket prior to convention can purchase an on-demand, All-Access pass, available this month for \$60 USD. Certain sessions are free and available to anyone, including the Annual Business Meeting, the President's Inauguration, the Board of Directors Briefing, and the Hall of Fame.

Resources

Apply for the 2023 Accredited Speaker Program

If you're thinking about applying for the [Accredited Speaker Program](#) in 2023, applications will be accepted starting January 1. Start planning and putting together your application now. This rigorous program is a multi-step process designed to give professional speakers who earn the AS designation a competitive edge by having their talents recognized by Toastmasters International. Applications are due to World Headquarters by January 31, 2023.

Looking for some expertise? Check out this [list](#) of many current Accredited Speakers who are willing to share their experience and advice.

Introduce Everyone to Toastmasters

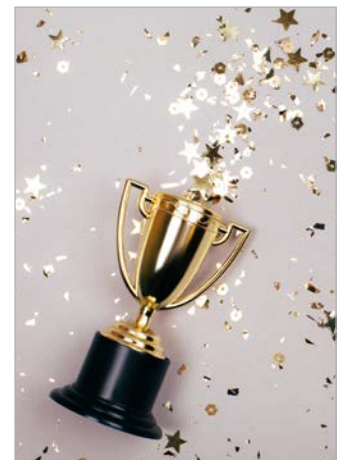
If you're looking for ways to take Toastmasters outside of the club setting, then a [community-based program](#) might be what you need. Whether you're aiming to teach non-members the fundamentals of public speaking or trying to get local teens to learn communication skills, Toastmasters offers several programs. Discover more information about the Speechcraft, Interpersonal Communication, and Youth Leadership programs.

Reminders

Speech Contest Eligibility

One of the eligibility requirements to compete in the International Speech Contest is to have earned certificates of completion in Levels 1 and 2 of any path in the Toastmasters Pathways learning experience, or have earned a Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) award.

Up through the end of the 2021–2022 speech contest cycle, members could also qualify for the speech contest by having completed six speech projects in the *Competent Communication* manual in the traditional program. Beginning with the 2022–2023 *Speech Contest Rulebook*, the CC manual component was eliminated as an option and the ability to apply a DTM award was added. This means that members can apply either their work in Pathways, or the completion of the DTM award, toward contest eligibility. Read more about contest eligibility rules in the 2022–2023 [Speech Contest Rulebook](#).



Remember to Fill Out Membership Applications

All new, dual, and reinstated members who join a club are required to fill out the [Membership Application](#), available in 11 languages. Clubs are also required to keep copies of all applications. Transfer applications must be sent to membership@toastmasters.org for processing, as transfers cannot be completed in Club Central.

Traveling Toastmaster



Members of **HCA CREATIVE ARTICULATORS CLUB** of Nashville, Tennessee, gather for a meal and to review their printouts of the *Toastmaster* magazine.

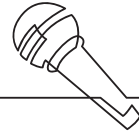


CURTIS HELT, DTM, and **CRISTINA SCOBLE, DTM**, of Las Vegas, Nevada, enjoy a trip to Mykonos, Greece.

Members' Forum

Heard Around the World

Rupinder Singh of New Delhi, India, asked members of the Official Toastmasters International Facebook Members Group who they would invite if they could have a fictional character as the keynote speaker at the Toastmasters International Convention. Below are just a few of the creative answers.



John Galt

(Atlas Shrugged)

MELISSA TRIPLETT • Florissant, Missouri

Master Yoda

(Star Wars)

ALICIA CURTIS • Jannali, New South Wales, Australia

James T. Kirk

(Star Trek)

JOSH KELAHAH • Fairview Heights, Illinois

Baron Zemo

(Marvel Comics)

ANIKET AMDEKAR, DTM • Bangalore, Karnataka, India

I'm torn between

Emperor Palpatine

(Star Wars) or

Lord Vetinari

(Discworld) or

Lord Asriel

(His Dark Materials)

with a side option of

Professor Ratigan

or **Cruella de Vil**

(Disney)

MARK SNOW, DTM • Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Optimus Prime

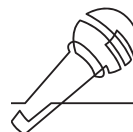
(Transformers)

SAMANTHA DOMINIQUE RICHMOND • Cape Town, South Africa

Wonder Woman

(DC Comics)

JACQUELINE MCINTYRE • Jackson Heights, New York



Snapshot



Members of the Midnight Sun club in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, participated in a snow sculpting competition in March 2022. The carving team, Tamlyn Mafika, Jerney Kerklaan, Liam Miszczak, and Alvin Ahnassay, created the large sun sculpture in the background. More club members gathered to celebrate their accomplishments and add the Toastmasters name and logo to the snow.



Communication

Active Listening Tips

Toastmasters not only helps members develop speaking skills, but it also improves their listening. In fact, the Pathways learning experience has a Level 3 elective project focused on this important skill—“Active Listening.” September 15 is International Day of Listening, and the perfect opportunity to review and implement a few of the tips from the “Active Listening” project:

- Give the speaker your full attention; remain relaxed and engaged.
- Respect the speaker’s point of view.
- Reserve judgment.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Notice the speaker’s comfort level and excitement.
- Give nonverbal cues to show your interest.
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding.

Whether you’re having a conversation with a friend or listening to a fellow club member’s speech, keep these tips in mind. Nod to show understanding, avoid distractions (like your phone), and don’t think



about your response while the other person is still speaking. Pause, sit back, and listen. It will improve your relationships and connections with others. For more on active listening and its benefits, [read this article](#) from the *Toastmaster*.

Why Engineers Should Train in Public Speaking

This one skill alone gave me exceptional career mobility.

By Sol Rosenbaum

I can honestly say public speaking is the single most important skill I have developed through the years. The stereotypical engineer is into math and science. The stereotypical engineer focuses on the analytical side of a problem. Stereotypical engineers want to be left alone with their calculations. So it is no surprise that the culture of public speaking within the engineering world is weak. I'm not ashamed to admit that I accidentally stumbled into a love for public speaking while searching for an undergraduate academic class that promised an easy A.

As all engineers know, if you are taking a non-technical elective, you want something relatively easy to juxtapose with the brutal engineering classes already on your plate. A friend recommended a public speaking class. I'm not a quiet person and would certainly be branded as extroverted, so public speaking was not something I worried about. In the end, the class was indeed an easy A. However, what I gained, unexpectedly, is a life skill that has helped advance my career. Looking back at close to two decades in the engineering field, I'm glad public speaking has been part of my repertoire.

When it comes to success in the engineering world, nobody would argue that you need to have solid technical skills. I'm certainly not saying you should forget about them and start developing your public speaking skills in their place. However, public speaking is the specific capability that has given me a disproportionate ability to have career mobility.

I can already hear the pushback from the engineering crowd:

Seriously? Is public speaking really useful for engineers?

But I don't plan to speak to groups.

I work with numbers and calculations, not words.

I'm not interested in engineering sales positions.



Sol Rosenbaum

In my mind, the problem lies in how engineers view public speaking. They may envision an overly energetic keynoter getting a small stadium of audience members all pumped up. They may think about church pastors or perhaps a stand-up comedian in a room full of people waiting to be entertained. However, that's a very narrow view of public speaking. There are many examples of the need to communicate well throughout one's entire career, starting with those initial job interviews.

In fact, I remember my first engineering interview and how I failed spectacularly. The interviewer asked me a question about design. I gave a garbled and rambling answer, trying to figure out what he wanted. Instead of collecting my thoughts and answering clearly, my response completely missed the mark. I immediately saw the confused look on his face. Needless to say, I never heard from that guy again.

Once you're hired and in the thick of the engineering world, the list of public speaking situations continues:

- Promoting your company's technology to a handful of investors? That's public speaking.
- Representing your firm to potential employees at a job fair? That's also public speaking.
- Discussing your team's latest project at a staff meeting or voicing your opinion on a project's direction? Once again, public speaking.

So even if you never speak to large groups, you can see how speaking with confidence and clarity is a worthwhile asset.

To put it bluntly, if you don't have the ability to push your ideas forward and gain buy-in from others, then you are setting yourself up to be a step behind. Being able to publicly convey your ideas is one of the most powerful ways to gain career mobility and control of your destiny.

As one moves through an engineering career, there are often ways to set up your work to avoid assignments in certain disciplines that are not to your liking. In fact, I openly admit I haven't touched chemistry or calculus since I took them in my undergraduate studies.

However, for most of us, it's difficult to completely avoid public speaking throughout our work lives.

This is why I promote the value of proficient public speaking to all engineers, and particularly to the younger engineers I mentor. This prepares them early in the professional game to master an often-undervalued expertise that's crucial for a long and successful career.

Sol Rosenbaum was the 2021-2022 Vice President Education for Modi'in Toastmasters in Modi'in-Maccabim-Re'ut, Israel. He is the owner and principal of SR Engineering & Consulting and founded www.TheEngineeringMentor.com to mentor young engineers as a way of "paying forward" the guidance he received over the years.

Hidden Gems in Base Camp

Uncover two advanced Pathways projects to help hone your skills.

By Bill Brown, DTM

Have you ever read a book or watched a movie where, if a character said a secret word, a door magically appeared? Pathways has some of those same features built into it.

No, they are not activated by a secret word. They are activated by the progress that you make in Pathways.

In this article, we will look at two of them—the Pathways Mentor Program and the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) project.

Don't let the name fool you. The Pathways Mentor Program is not about mentoring a member in Pathways. It is about mentoring a member in any topic, but it is found in Pathways.

You might be thinking, *I have explored every square inch of Base Camp and I can't find it.* That is because it is only available to those who have completed Level 2 of a path. And you have to know where to look for it.

On your Base Camp home page, in the lower left-hand corner, you will see a section called “Suggested Learning.” There are a number of additional articles and podcast episodes on key skills pertinent to each level. In that same section, if you have completed Level 2, you will see a link to the Pathways Mentor Program. Select that link to go to a project page where you can activate the program. When you do this, the link disappears from the Suggested Learning section and the Pathways Mentor Program is added to your Paths and Learning page.

This is an optional program that gives you advanced training and experience in mentoring. You don't have to do it, but if you want to develop your mentoring skills, this is a program to consider. There are three projects that must be done sequentially, and you only have access to the next one on the list when you have completed the previous project.

The first project is simple. In it you assess your expertise, experiences, expectations, and goals.

The real work begins in the second project. In addition to some training, you are challenged

to mentor a member in a short-term project. Upon completion, like all Toastmasters projects, there is an evaluation—both for your protégé and for you. Yes, your protégé gets to give you feedback on how good a mentor you have been.

Once you have finished the second project, you receive the activation button for project three. This is a larger mentoring project with a six-month duration. Again, training and feedback are involved.



If you want to hone your mentoring or leadership skills, the Pathways Mentor Program and the DTM project may be what you are looking for.

Upon completion of the program and a full path in Pathways, you will receive the designation of Pathways Mentor.

When I heard about this program, my first question was “Do I have to have this designation to be a mentor in Toastmasters?” No. In fact,

each club can decide their own requirements for who can be a mentor. This program does not need to be part of the consideration. But if you want to be a better mentor, whether it is in Toastmasters or in your professional or personal life, this program just may be for you.

Another one of these hidden gems is the DTM project.

If you are an old-timer like me, you probably remember that to earn your DTM you needed to complete a High Performance Leadership (HPL) project. That has changed in Pathways. Some paths require an HPL as part of Level 5, while others have it as a Level 5 elective. If, however, you want to earn a DTM, you must complete a separate [DTM project](#). This is where you put together all the leadership skills you have learned in the program to build a team and design a unique project that benefits an organization.

This is also one of those initially invisible projects. When you have completed one path and have finished Level 3 in another, you can ask Toastmasters to activate your DTM project option. Email educationprogram@toastmasters.org. From this point, you can work on the DTM project in parallel with your second path.

In addition to completing the two paths and the DTM project, you must also serve in other capacities to earn your DTM. Those are outside the scope of this article. I suggest that you refer to the full description on the [Toastmasters website](#).

If you only want to focus on the paths, that is perfectly fine. But if you want to hone your mentoring and leadership skills, the Pathways Mentor Program and the DTM project may be what you are looking for.

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.

Are You Ready for a 77-Day Challenge?

Commit to daily short video recordings and watch your skills soar.

By Darren LaCroix, AS

The vast majority of people join Toastmasters to become a better speaker, or at least get more comfortable with public speaking. But sometimes we need an extra push, an extra challenge if you will, to really help ourselves grow, and grow quickly.

I know how powerful and affirming it is to be able to express yourself verbally. Since 1998, I have been coaching speakers across the globe, and in 2001, I was named the World Champion of Public Speaking. During the pandemic, when in-person speaking ceased, I realized how important it was that people get comfortable talking conversationally to a camera lens. I had seen other challenges online and wanted to develop something like that to help my students improve more quickly. I came up with the 77-Day Challenge, and it has helped many fellow Toastmasters dramatically increase their skills and find their voice. It's simple, it's powerful, and it costs nothing.

The Challenge

The challenge I developed involves doing one live video on your favorite platform every day for 77 days. These "speeches" can be as short as one to two minutes, or they can be longer. Think of them as a prepared Table Topic of your own choosing. I found it helps to have a pad of paper handy throughout the day so you can collect your thoughts and ideas on possible topics. Jot down any lessons learned from your life, along with a simple story about how you learned the lesson, and a short message. Try not to overcomplicate it.

I don't recommend practicing ahead of time; the goal is to get comfortable, not to deliver the perfect speech. When I'm getting ready to turn on my phone's camera, I look over my list and choose the topic I feel most passionately about at that moment. Don't overthink it, just begin. The point is to do it live. Don't record several takes and upload the best one. That defeats the purpose. If you have one that you feel is truly horrible, you can delete it, but I'd be willing to bet it's worse in your head than it is to

your audience. You will make mistakes. That is part of the point and where your own growth lives.

One of my students and fellow Toastmasters, Sara McGill of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, was extremely nervous doing her first live video. She thought she ended the recording, but she had not. Her big sigh of relief that it was over was all captured on the video. Rather than start over, she left it up. She wanted to show her own kids that making mistakes is a critical part of growing.

Why 77 Days?

In 2001, I was competing in the International Speech Contest, which was set up differently than it is today. After winning at the Semifinals, I had 77 days to write a completely new speech for the World Championship. I took this seriously, and I started working with Mark Brown, the 1995 World Champion of Public Speaking. During those 77 days, I changed who I was and how I saw myself. My self-belief changed over those 77 days. Even if I had not won the contest, I was forever a more engaging, audience-focused speaker.

I wanted to replicate that experience and feeling for others, and so I chose 77 days. If the challenge was 100 days, it might be too much to commit to. If it were only 10 or 30 days, I honestly don't think you would get significant breakthroughs.

It's easier to do now than it was 20 years ago. Back then, I would get up early, drive to a breakfast club, deliver my speech, get feedback, and drive to work. I'd take an extended lunch and drive across town to deliver my speech, get more feedback, and then drive back to work. After work, I would drive to a community club. Lots of driving!

You don't even have to drive now. With the advent of online and hybrid meetings, it is much easier to visit multiple clubs. You can reach out to a club anywhere in the world and ask if you can speak. However, with this challenge, it's actually even easier than that to have an

audience. You hold the key to rapid growth in the palm of your hand. You can simply open your favorite app and deliver a live speech anytime. You have a built-in audience, whether live on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or WhatsApp. Viewers can even give you feedback in the form of comments.

Extra Support

When I developed the challenge, I did it through a Facebook group, and members shared their videos on their own social media pages. This is something anyone could replicate. Your club could take on the challenge, or you could get a group of like-minded people together and support and encourage each other.

McGill, who took the challenge two years ago through my Facebook group, found that having other people doing it at the same time helped her be accountable and was also inspiring. “Not only did I see myself grow from the challenge, but I watched all the other participants make huge strides in their speaking skills,” she says. “The transformation I saw my peers make, from timid and uncomfortable in the beginning to feeling



from his alcohol addiction. He shares his stories from his experience.

Mark Brown says, “You have a story to tell, and someone needs to hear it.”

Push Yourself to Get Results

So why would you want to do a speaking challenge when you can go to a weekly or bimonthly club meeting? What would you say to an Olympic swimmer who only went to the pool once every two months? Would they ever become a world-class swimmer at that rate? Now think of how often you speak.

And it's not just novice speakers that find the challenge rewarding. Stephen Box, DTM, of Sugar Hill, Georgia, who has been a member of three clubs, says, “The challenge has also given me a lot of clarity on where I wanted to take my business.”

Benefits and Growth

The daily videos aren't perfect, but they aren't supposed to be. If you search the hashtag #77dayvideochallenge, you'll see there are over 5,000 posts. Watch them to get inspired, then challenge yourself.

“I've become a better speaker. I've become a better listener. I've become a better thinker,” says Kory May, DTM, of Iowa City, Iowa. “All those things are happening because of the constant repetition of making that effort.”

A lot can happen in 77 days. If you truly wish to become a world-class presenter, present! Present often. Make more mistakes. The experience teaches you more than any course ever could. Up for the challenge? Grab a friend to join you. You'll both never be the same.

Darren LaCroix, AS, is the 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, an Accredited Speaker, and a Certified Speaking Professional. He is also the co-host of the [Unforgettable Presentations](#) podcast and author of *17 Minutes to Your Dream*. Learn more at www.17MinutesToYourDream.com.

The challenge I developed involves doing one live video on your favorite platform every day for 77 days.

confident and accomplished by the end, was incredibly inspiring.”

Another benefit to the challenge is that by doing something every day, you start to understand what your passion is, or what you want to say to the world about yourself. Chic Miller of Ponchaoula, Louisiana, and former District 68 Director, says, “It has given me a clearer focus on who my audience is from responses I've gotten. It has also sharpened my ability to deliver in a more conversational style.”

What makes Miller's live videos so inspiring? He shares the path he found to freedom

If you want to be a great speaker, you have to practice speaking.

Back in the 1990s, before I found Toastmasters, I was attempting stand-up comedy. One of my comedy mentors told me, “Any day you don't go onstage is a day that you don't grow.” What? I thought I had to be good every time I went up onstage. He told me, “No, but you have to go up onstage to get good.” That is why as soon as I discovered Toastmasters, I joined four clubs. I wanted to quadruple my failure rate because that is what I needed to do to grow faster. Experience is the greatest teacher.

Are You Sabotaging Your Presentation?

Don't let these missteps trip you up.

By Joel Schwartzberg

Sticking the landing isn't just about completing your speech; it's about reinforcing your point.

You prepared and practiced your speech, honed your point, and perfected your slides and stories. The audience is engaged as you deliver it, inspired as you enter the final minute, and then—self-sabotage!

In gymnastics terms, you didn't stick the landing. Instead, you used ideas that diluted or distanced your point instead of reinforcing it. This misstep is a sharp dagger in the side of your impact on the audience because your final words represent your last and most potent opportunity to leave the audience with your biggest idea.

What did you do to end on such a low note? Perhaps it was one of these five mistakes:

1 You fell prey to "Last Slide Syndrome."

How many times have you seen a speaker end a presentation with "Well, that's the last slide ..." or "So, that's all I got ..." or even "With that said ..."? These phrases may be self-soothing but what you're really telling the audience is that you just wanted to get through the presentation, not deliver a valuable point. Understand your true point and end with an expression that reinforces it.

2 You rushed into the next piece of business.

Some speakers end with a concluding point, then rush into the next piece of meeting business, such as a Q&A session or introducing the next speaker. Remember that your audience needs twice as long to hear, digest, comprehend, and apply relevance to your point as you need to merely communicate it. Rushing into another meeting moment robs your audience of that critical moment of reception.

This doesn't mean you can't start a Q&A or introduce another speaker following your speech. Just *pause* before you do—as if starting a new book chapter—and allow your final point to sink in.

3 You outsourced your authority to a dead guy.

Some people think it's a good idea to end with a brilliant quotation. It's not a good idea, and here's why: *You* researched the topic, did the work, created your presentation, and otherwise qualified yourself to make



these points. Why outsource the final reinforcing thoughts to someone you've never met, doesn't know you or your presentation, and is likely long dead?

Ending with a famous quotation may be entertaining, even thought-provoking, but it's typically irrelevant because there's such a shallow connection between the quote and your point. Remember: *You* are responsible for creating, sustaining, and conveying your point. Finalize that role by ending the presentation yourself.

4 You didn't reinforce your point.

Sticking the landing isn't just about completing your speech; it's about reinforcing your point. So don't just end on your last piece of data, last slide, or last story. End by restating your overall point clearly, concisely, and confidently, then stop. Often, audiences will only remember the last thing you say, so take the opportunity to convey the idea that matters most.

Strengthen that reinforcement by using starter phrases like the traditional "In conclusion ..." You can also use phrases such as "Here's the thing ..." or "If you take one thing away from my presentation, I hope it's this ..." and then make your point once more.

5 You didn't look up.

Whether in a room or on a Zoom call, eye contact is critical, especially at the very end of your presentation. If your point is a nail, your eyes can be the hammer. So whether you prepare far in advance or immediately in the moment, say your final reinforcing words directly to your audience, who appreciate it—not to your notes or PowerPoint slides, who couldn't care less.

Realizing that the ending of your presentation may be more important than any other moment can help you prepare for and practice that ending in a way that will sustain your audience's interest and inspiration.

Joel Schwartzberg is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a U.S. national nonprofit; a presentation coach; and author of *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.

Monitoring the Money

When it comes to keeping members in good standing, the Club Treasurer is priceless.

By Kate McClare, DTM

Ask Lynne Zander, DTM, why the Treasurer is so vital to the success of a club and its members. She'll tell you about the Toastmaster who made it to the District level of a speech contest but was disqualified for failing to pay dues on time, which eliminated the member from good standing. The Toastmaster had paid the money, but the Club Treasurer had not submitted it to Toastmasters International World Headquarters. No one in previous rounds of the contest had thought to confirm the member's standing. (Disqualification must occur even if the ineligibility of a member is discovered at a later level.)

"How sad it was that they had advanced all this way only to lose the opportunity to compete," says Zander.

The lesson here is how crucial the Club Treasurer's responsibilities can be, and that collecting dues is just one part of the job—without proper attention to the other duties, like submitting the dues, it can all fall apart. Keeping accurate records is crucial, says Zander who belongs to four different clubs in Ontario, Canada, and has served in a number of club officer roles, including Treasurer.

The Treasurer is akin to the club's accountant. That means managing the club's bank account, issuing checks approved by the Club Executive Committee, filing tax documents, submitting dues payments for new and renewing members, and keeping accurate financial records.

Zander is an enthusiastic advocate of the role, appearing in a bilingual [video](#) produced by District 61. She's bright and engaging when talking about a job that can seem dry.

"We all love money," she says in French and then English, "but you have to be responsible when you're the treasurer of a group. It's really important, because you are dealing with money that club members have paid."

Yet Zander is no monetary genius. She doesn't have a financial background. Her accounting tools? A spreadsheet to track income and expenses and a binder to hold bank statements and receipts. More important than financial knowledge, she says, are reliability, responsibility, trustworthiness, and honesty.

Allan Kaufman, DTM, is Treasurer for Randallstown Network Toastmasters in Pikesville, Maryland. He served as a financial officer with the United States Army Reserve, is a former statistician for the U.S. government, and holds a master's degree in business administration (MBA). Yet he, too, does the job with only a spreadsheet, and believes it's the soft skills—persistence, consistency, and honesty—that matter most.

Kaufman has been Club Treasurer for many years and jokes that he stays in the role because "it's too hard to change the paperwork at the bank." But if he takes himself lightly, he's serious about the responsibilities of watching over the club's money.

You should become Treasurer for one reason, he says: "Only if you want to help the club stay in business."

And that brings up what's on every Club Treasurer's mind every six months.

"Getting people to pay their dues is a major challenge," Zander says. She has accepted installment payments from members having financial struggles—a practice that should be an exception, not a rule, she adds. A club can offer small discounts to members who pay for a year instead of just six months; just be sure you're careful in tracking the payments. (Clubs can only provide discounts for club-level dues, not for international-level membership dues.)

Zander and Kaufman agree that collecting dues is mostly a matter of persistence. "Email [club members] once, email them again, and then start calling on the phone," Kaufman advises. "I call them and ask why they're not renewing."

When dues notices have gone out, all the bank accounts are caught up, and bills have been paid, there's just one thing left for the Club Treasurer to do, Kaufman says: "Sit back and enjoy the meeting."

Top Treasurer Tips

Lynne Zander, DTM

- ◆ Keep detailed records. All expenses should be pre-approved and accompanied by receipts.
- ◆ Keep your club informed about finances.
- ◆ Plan a budget at the beginning of the program year and give an accurate accounting at the end of the year.

Allan Kaufman, DTM

- ◆ Start collecting dues early, about five or six weeks before they're due to Toastmasters International World Headquarters.
- ◆ Email the first invoice, send a follow-up email, and then make phone calls to unpaid members.

For more information, read about the Treasurer role in the Club Officer Training [facilitator guide](#).

Kate McClare, DTM, is Vice President Public Relations for Miami Advanced Toastmasters in Miami, Florida. She always pays her dues on time.



Meet Matt Kinsey, DTM

The 2022–2023
Toastmasters International
President is a man
of many talents.

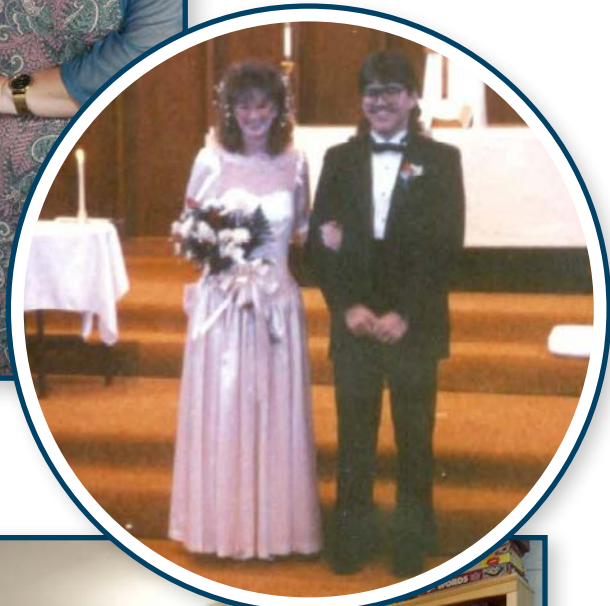
By Laura Mishkind

Matt Kinsey, DTM, is a father, grandfather, and husband, as well as a musician, business owner, Boy Scouts volunteer, bicyclist, and bookworm. The 2022–2023 Toastmasters International President, elected last month at the International Convention, has an eclectic mix of interests



Matt with his family: wife, Jeanine; son, Brandon; daughter, Erin; and grandsons Brandon and Ayden.

Matt and his wife, Jeanine, on their wedding day.



and hobbies, with much to offer his fellow Toastmasters. But he's also open to learning more himself—which is apparent when you find out that he plays eight instruments and takes on every speaking opportunity he can.

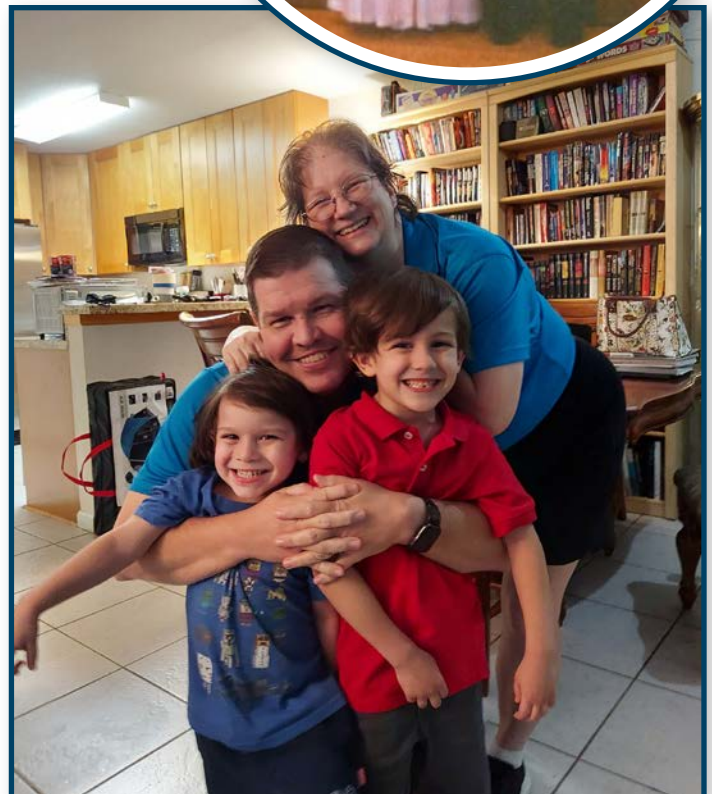
After serving as a minister for two years and participating in speech and debate for most of his schooling, Kinsey didn't feel nervous speaking in front of people. So, what prompted him to visit his first Toastmasters meeting? Honestly, he says, it was because the club was giving out free food. However, what he found most intriguing about Toastmasters wasn't what was on his plate—it was the evaluation portion.

"It was a challenge for me, because I was really good at finding everything somebody did wrong, and I was also good at receiving [comments on] everything I'd done wrong. I was not good at receiving things

"There's no doubt in my mind that I am prepared to face whatever is thrown at us this year."

I'd done well, and I wasn't good at sharing things others had done well," Kinsey explains. "I knew I needed to get better at it. That's really why I joined, and I evaluated every chance I got. I was speech evaluator my very first meeting."

Kinsey says his ability to effectively evaluate others improved over his nearly 20 years as a Toastmaster, and he has come to love the program. He has earned the Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) designation five times, been a member of seven clubs, and chartered one with his wife, Distinguished Toastmaster Jeanine Kinsey, all while building his business.



Matt and Jeanine, enjoying the grandkids.

In 2007, Kinsey left his corporate job and started what became an IT-managed service provider. “Essentially we were the IT department for our customers,” he explains. After 14 years of continual growth, Kinsey merged with a few other companies to create a larger entity in December 2021. Now he serves as the managing director and chief information security officer and the company manages just shy of 500 client workstations.

Learning Through Setbacks

Kinsey’s Toastmasters and business experiences led him to adjust his leadership style as well—though he says that took a while. After serving in numerous roles from the club to District level, Kinsey ran for International Director in 2014—and lost. But he says that loss is one of the best things that ever happened to him.

“There were lessons I needed to learn, and the only thing that was going to bring that into focus was when it became an obstacle for me,” Kinsey says. “I was succeeding despite some of these blind spots I had. If you’re doing well, you don’t tend to reflect as much. I needed that time.”

One of those blind spots Kinsey faced was understanding heart-led leadership versus head-led leadership. He spoke with many leaders and Past International Presidents, and even hired a professional business coach to find out what was inhibiting his success. They all pointed out that he was focused on results—not relationships and people.

Kinsey explains, “That has drawbacks, and when you’re results-focused and you’re not getting the results, your less admirable traits come out.”

While he still loves to see results, Kinsey has learned to slow down and connect with people. Describing himself as a direct communicator, he puts value in learning others’ communication and leadership styles. Fortunately, it wasn’t difficult for him to learn how to put people first and focus on what they needed from him before diving in.



Matt and cycling buddies just before a 100-mile charity bike ride, May 2016.

Plans for the Future

Kinsey is focused on being the kind of President Toastmasters needs. “We need inspiration right now. We need focus. There are so many distractions.” He explains that leaders can get distracted from their District’s or club’s mission, and he wants to motivate other leaders to home in on what their members need to achieve their District or club mission.

“We need courage,” Kinsey says. “Not just on my part as President, but courage on the part of the Board and our Region Advisors and our District leaders. Whatever I can do to inspire people to have courage—I think that’s what we’re needing right now.”

With a laser focus on courage and inspiration, Kinsey is looking forward to the opportunity to make a difference in Toastmasters. He’s ready to bring his own unique style to the Board and feels prepared to tackle difficult issues and find solutions—something he genuinely likes to do.

“What we do as an organization matters. What we do on a daily basis matters to this world. This is a noble movement because we are empowering people to go out and make a difference in their world.”

“It’s funny because it was just a real lesson in how relatively small changes create this huge impact,” he says. “I didn’t feel like I made any massive changes, but if you talk to people, they think I massively changed.”

By focusing on leading with his heart and making connections rather than only looking for results, Kinsey noticed people’s perceptions of him shifted for the better. He ran for International Director again in 2016, and after two years of self-reflection, coaching, and tweaking, he won. He represented Region 8, encompassing seven Districts in the United States and the Caribbean.

Looking back, Kinsey believes that the experience of not being elected in 2014 ultimately made him a more effective International Director and International Officer. His journey was exactly what it needed to be to give him time to grow. And today, he feels fully prepared to serve as International President.

“I love working on thorny, sticky issues where there’s no answer. We just have to navigate through it and figure it out the best we can,” he explains. “Those are the types of problems that keep me awake at night, in a good way.”

Kinsey is looking at the role of International President from a unique vantage point. Shortly before his interview with the *Toastmaster*, he had the sudden realization that he’d been saying “when I *assume the office of* President,” not “when I *am* President.” This slight shift in wording brought to his attention that he is much more stewardship focused than focused on the position itself. “It’s not about me being the President. It’s about me holding the chair of President.”

Kinsey has been surrounded by good examples of stewardship-focused leaders while serving on the Board of Directors. He is most proud of the way they approached the pandemic.

“We took care of people first, business second, and money third. The first decisions that came out were to protect the health and safety of our



Matt and Boy Scout Troop 397 aboard the USS Yorktown aircraft carrier in South Carolina.



Presenting at one of his many speaking engagements.

members,” Kinsey explains. The Board worked to find ways to continue operating around the world in a safe way.

After helping to tackle the daunting issues related to COVID-19, Kinsey is ready for the 2022–2023 term. “There’s no doubt in my mind that I am prepared to face whatever is thrown at us this year.”

A Family Affair

While he’s proud of the Board and its accomplishments, as a parent, Kinsey will never forget the moment when he was recognized as his son’s father in the Toastmasters setting. “It told me he had created his own space and name for himself in Toastmasters,” Kinsey explains.

That’s right—Kinsey’s son, Brandon, is also a longtime Toastmaster and DTM. In addition, his daughter, Erin, was a member in 2013, but she shifted her focus to working and raising her two children with her husband, Justin. Everyone in the Kinsey family joined Outspoken Toastmasters—the club Jeanine and Matt chartered in 2010.

Both of Kinsey’s children live within a few miles of his home in Coral Springs, Florida, and have helped him stay grounded while he follows his passions, which include playing instruments such as the trumpet, Irish flute, piano, and French horn; reading (he has three books in progress at any given time—fiction, nonfiction, and a business-oriented one); and riding his bicycle, which he estimates he’s ridden a quarter million miles in his lifetime. If you’ve heard any of his keynotes, he has likely spoken about bicycling or a related analogy.

Kinsey’s son inspired his love for another nonprofit when Brandon introduced him to The Boy Scouts of America 26 years ago. “When he was in second grade, he dragged me to a meeting, and I left as the Den Leader,” Kinsey recalls. “Then I became Cub Master.” And his involvement only grew from there. Kinsey has led numerous hiking trips for Boy Scout troops, including out-of-state backpacking trips to New Mexico, and out-of-country trips to England and Ireland to celebrate 100 years of Boy Scouts in each of those countries.

Two of the awards hanging on his office wall were given out and determined by the scouts—the Vigil Honor and the Scoutmaster Award of Merit. Kinsey says, “Those are the ones that are really important to me because it’s the kids who decided I am worthy of that recognition.”

Ultimately, Kinsey says he loves working with and helping others. He enjoys volunteering for Boy Scouts because it does so much for young people. Not only that, but it reminds him of his dedication to and passion for Toastmasters.

“I look at scouting and Toastmasters, and fundamentally they’re doing the same thing, which is helping people build their confidence,” he



Hiking at Philmont Scout Ranch, Cimarron, New Mexico, in 2015 while serving as Scoutmaster.

shares. “They’re all about building people up in a positive and supportive environment.”

Pushing Forward Together

Kinsey juggles many talents and interests, so it should come as no surprise that he plans to continue pushing himself during his term. “I will continue to seek feedback to make sure that I keep growing and challenging myself,” he says. He wants to set an example for others to also challenge themselves. “It’s my job to help them along the way.”

Kinsey says he’s a big proponent of connection and moving forward and, fittingly, compares the Toastmasters journey to riding a bicycle. “It’s very difficult to balance a bike that’s not moving. It’s very easy to balance a bike that’s moving,” he explains. “I think life is the same way. If we’re static and we’re not growing, it becomes really hard to find that balance.”

One of the most important things Kinsey wants members to know is that he truly believes in what Toastmasters stands for. “What we do as an organization matters,” he says. “What we do on a daily basis matters to this world. This is a noble movement because we are empowering people to go out and make a difference in their world.”

Kinsey is ready to make a difference in his time as the 2022–2023 International President. Are you?

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

The Irish Oracle

Ted Corcoran's wisdom and generosity uplift members around the world.

By Paul Sterman

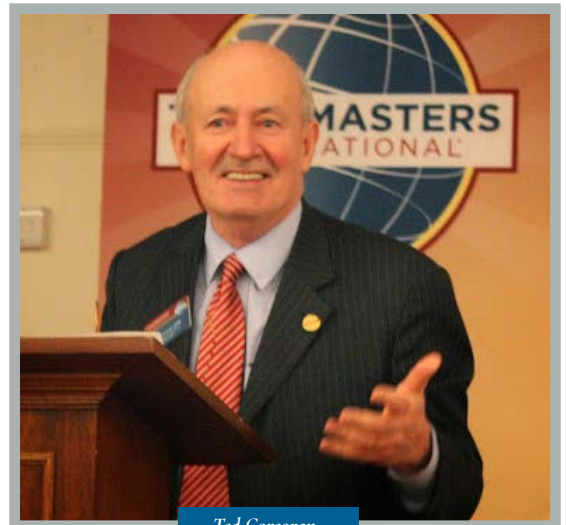
Asked how he's doing during a recent video call, Ted Corcoran, DTM, admits he's had better days. Health issues have taken a toll. Toastmasters' 2003–2004 International President, who turns 79 this month, has had hip and spinal surgeries in recent years and uses a walking stick to get around.

He might be slowing down physically, but Corcoran's passion for Toastmasters and enthusiasm for helping fellow members remain undiminished. As does his encyclopedic command of information. The man is a fount of Toastmasters knowledge and history.

"I have never met anyone like him who can recall names, dates, and locations, years after the event took place," says Tammy Miller, DTM, AS, a Past International Director. "He can recall all the Districts, where they are located, and the people in the Districts."

Ann Gibson, a fellow club member of Corcoran's in the Fingal Toastmasters Club in Dublin, Ireland, calls him "the Oracle." "It's absolutely amazing what he knows," she says.

His imprint is everywhere. A Toastmaster since 1985, Corcoran is a kind of unofficial advisor to Fingal Toastmasters, his home club, of which he is the founding President. He speaks regularly to other clubs in District 71 (parts of the United Kingdom, and Ireland) and beyond,



Ted Corcoran

requests his help on a speech or poses a question about policy or asks for advice on an officer role.

Why such an enduring commitment to the Toastmasters program?

"Because it's making people's lives better and making their careers better," says Corcoran.

Major Contributions

Corcoran has made an indelible mark on the organization over the years. He is a big believer in recognition and helped create what eventually became the Distinguished Club Program.

The affable Irishman is just as renowned for his wit. Corcoran is quick with a quip and unspools one anecdote after another. In conversation he laughs often, whether

"Ted has a gift for helping people believe in themselves to accomplish anything they desire."

—TAMMY MILLER, DTM, AS

often delivering his customized presentation on how to write a speech in 10 minutes. This year he has given several long talks about the history of District 71, which celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2022. Several years ago, he compiled a history of Toastmasters in the UK and Ireland dating back to when the first club was formed there in 1935 (in Southport, England). The District honored Corcoran in June for outstanding leadership and service.

Corcoran is also a valuable resource for World Headquarters staff, including serving on committees that study Toastmasters topics. And as members around the world can attest, he will happily assist every Toastmaster who

joking playfully about American tourists or the pronunciation of an Irish city's name or describing meetings that go on too long.

Corcoran is also a connoisseur of toasts ... particularly those of an Irish flavor. He is a lover of Irish language and culture in general, and also a fervent fan of Gaelic football, especially the team represented by County Kerry, where he grew up near the town of Killarney. He has lived in Dublin for nearly 55 years, and besides the Fingal Toastmasters, he also regularly attends his other Dublin club, the Swords Toastmasters. (He's also an honorary member of many other clubs in Ireland.)

Ann Gibson and her husband, Paul Egan, DTM, have become close friends with Corcoran in their 20-plus years in the Fingal club. The Dublin couple say he's a constant source of friendly conversation, encouragement, and guidance.

When Gibson was asked to serve as District Administration Manager for the 2022–2023 program year, she knew exactly who she'd call to glean insights about the role. "I've already booked a session with Ted."

Leadership Lessons

Corcoran worked for many years as manager of safety for Irish Rail, and also as a management consultant. One of his favorite sayings is "What the management regards as important, the staff pays attention to," meaning that leaders at every level, whether inside or outside Toastmasters, set the tone for the group they're working with.

Corcoran penned a 2008 book called *The Leadership Bus*, and in 2019 wrote one called *Hiring a Car and Walking After It: A little book of life lessons*. He says his style is to help others discover for themselves what they want to achieve and how to get there. About 10 years ago, he was asked to attend the Fingal club's Executive Committee meetings along with the club officers, in case he could be of help given his wealth of Toastmasters experience. He has done so ever since.

"It works very well," he says. "If [the officers] want an answer to a question, I answer it. I do not try to persuade or dissuade them. But I give them the information, and it saves time. And it gives them confidence."

The Fingal club has been a model of excellence, achieving President's Distinguished status in the Distinguished Club Program every year since 1999, Corcoran notes proudly. The club has a fun, collegial, and caring environment, while also maintaining high standards, "and Ted is at the heart of that," says Egan, his fellow member.

When Tammy Miller first met Corcoran at a Toastmasters luncheon in 2003, she was a new District Governor, and her District (District 13, in western Pennsylvania) was in perilous shape. She talked to Corcoran—International President at the time—about



Ted Corcoran (right) met with Bertie Ahern, then-prime minister of Ireland, in Dublin in July 2004. Ahern congratulated Corcoran on his year of service as Toastmasters International President. Photo by Kevin Forde

the pressure she was feeling. "Ted put his arm around me, looked me straight in the eye, and said, 'Tammy, I know you can do this, I believe in you.'" It was just what she needed to hear.

"I really believed that he thought I could do it," she says, "and if someone in that position thought I could, well, then, maybe I could!"

With Corcoran's continuing support and coaching, she thrived, and so did the District, creating more clubs and adding more members than at any time before, she says.

Miller says Corcoran also inspired her to run for International Director in 2005, and she won. She says of her longtime friend: "Ted has a gift for helping people believe in themselves to accomplish anything they desire."

Song Master

As much as his wide-reaching contributions to this organization, another undeniable part of Corcoran's legacy is singing. Well, maybe not his own singing, but the Toastmasters Sing Along. He and fellow Irish Toastmaster Brian O'Connor started it at the 1992 Las Vegas Convention and it's been a beloved convention tradition ever since, bringing people together for social bonding through song. While it started as a

small affair, it eventually drew hundreds of hearty participants. The typically after-hours program was not always a part of the official convention agenda, but it is now.

Rotarian Rewards

Corcoran, a Rotary member since 1991, belongs to the Rotary Club of Dublin, one of the first Rotary clubs established outside North America, back in 1911. He served as President of the 50-member club in 2001.

Among the Rotary projects he's been involved with: the construction of both a primary and secondary school in Zambia. His club provided a substantial part of the funding. The two schools have had a huge impact on the young Zambian students, says Corcoran.

"I take great satisfaction out of that."

As he does from helping fellow Toastmasters, whether assisting with speech ideas, doling out pertinent information, or offering reassurance to new members and veterans alike.

Says friend and fellow member Ann Gibson: "Everybody needs a Ted Corcoran."

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



Soft Skills *Are Now* **Durable** *and in* **Demand**

Skills are no longer soft and hard—they're durable or perishable.

By Stephanie Darling

One of the biggest shake-ups in the post-pandemic business world has been the soaring demand for workers with an expanded range of skills, including some that were not as vigorously sought after in past years as they are now.

The technical and professional knowledge needed to perform a job are still a given. However, employers are now looking beyond practical experience and into more wide-ranging skills rooted in behaviors and personalities. Employees who excel at behavioral traits are most likely to demonstrate empathy, innovation, cultural responsibility, curiosity, ethical conduct, positivity, and many other talents that are vital in a global economy. This expanded view has led to clearer definitions for what have been known as soft and hard skills. The new terms are literal: durable or perishable.

What Are Durable Skills?

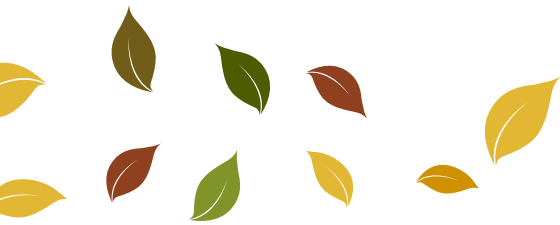
The nonprofit [America Succeeds](#) recently identified 10 core durable competencies now greatly in demand from today's workers: communication, creativity, collaboration, character, mindfulness, self-awareness, leadership, growth mindset, fortitude, and critical thinking.

These skills are considered long-lasting and transferable across job descriptions and careers. Some—such as empathy and leadership—are inherent in many people, but they can also be learned and refined by those who don't come by them naturally. And that's where Toastmasters can step in.

Speaking clarity, active listening, considering viewpoints other than your own, impromptu speaking, supporting colleagues. Sound familiar? Toastmasters have been practicing and sharpening durable skills for nearly 100 years.

"Every single Toastmasters meeting is an exercise in teamwork, problem-solving, conflict management, creativity, and leadership," says Nina John, DTM, director of coaching for Envy Communications, and a member of the Chennai Toastmasters Club in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. "Organizing meetings, recruiting for roles, creating an agenda—all offer invaluable practice."

Toastmasters' education has clear relevance for companies that seek durable skills but may not have boundless training budgets, adds Linda Patten, DTM, a veteran corporate trainer and member of Heart2Heart and Leaders Worldwide, two online clubs based in Oakland, California.



Patten says that Toastmasters is a cost-effective option for companies to augment upskilling efforts. "It's what we're in the business of doing, right?" she says. Toastmasters clubs also allow companies to support an ongoing training program, rather than being forced to focus only on practical skills development when training budgets are tight. "Companies want instant change, and with durable skills, the change is more subtle than successful lines of code," explains Patten, a member of the Forbes Coaching Council.

Durable Versus Perishable

Matthew Daniel, a principal consultant for Guild Education, headquartered in Denver, Colorado, uses the image of a tree to portray the concept of durable and perishable skills. The strong trunk represents fundamental and lasting capabilities, while the branches represent the continual sprouting of accepted industry knowledge that may stay relevant for several years. Perishable skills—often tied to technology—are the leaves, constantly growing and falling with change.

Perishable skills have a strikingly short life span of about two years, Daniel notes in an article for *Chief Learning Officer* magazine. Durable

skills—which highlight character traits and innovative mindsets—are viable for about seven years and foster talents that grow more polished with time and experience. Human resource experts also now see that durable skills, once considered vague, unteachable, and unmeasurable, are identifiable in the hiring process.

"These are some of the most teachable, and practice-able skills," says John, who is also the author of *Navigating Corporate Seas*. For example, the ability to clearly express ideas, listen carefully, and consider different points of view "are essential to structuring productive client and staff meetings that yield results." And meetings, regardless of the format, are almost sacrosanct in business.

Gordon Pelosse, a member of the Forbes Human Resources Council, recalls participating in an employer-organized research exercise to see if the desired durable skills would show up in job candidates whose resumes already verified technical and academic qualifications. Candidates were asked to make a brief presentation, using their choice of topic and communication approach.

Within a short time, Pelosse says, a number of candidates were authentically showing initiative, enthusiasm, curiosity, critical thinking, knowledge about the company they were interviewing with, and other desired attributes. The potential hires were quickly obvious.

Another factor in the demand for durable skills is, ironically, the explosive growth of technology. There is a complex interdependence

Durable skills are the type of talents that grow more polished with time and experience.

between primarily technology-skilled workers and those who are adept at applying talents such as negotiation, analysis, mindfulness, and cultural intelligence. To be successful, cross-functional teams from diverse areas of the company need to be armed with behavioral and technical skills. While not every person will excel at every required skill, the team together can represent 100% proficiency, or greater.

The Toastmasters Boost

Toastmasters specializes in developing skills, so if you or someone you know needs a boost, you've come to the right place. The Pathways learning experience, for example, trains 300 competencies across 11 specialized learning paths, with complete and select translations available in 12 languages.

Additionally, club roles are time-tested and tailored to train behavior-oriented talents. For example, leadership responsibilities and time management? That's the Toastmaster of the Day. The timer, grammarian, and Ah-Counter learn to listen, collect details about meeting elements such as speech timing and language usage, and share at the end of each meeting, so everyone can learn from their observations. Table Topics® foster creativity, quick thinking, self-awareness, and much more. Evaluators gain



Toastmasters' education has clear relevance for companies that seek durable skills but may not have boundless training budgets.

real confidence in their critical-thinking assessments and the ability to share—as well as receive—constructive feedback.

Toastmasters helps members polish what John calls “some of the most essential skills in the workplace,” including communication, teamwork, and time management. “I would rate these three among the highest, since roles, tasks and responsibilities must be clearly assigned and understood.” These skills are practiced in every club meeting.

Club meetings give everyone endless opportunities to practice all types of speaking—from humor to personal to persuasive—and members get to hear a wide variety of perspectives, which encourages diversity and inclusion, she adds.

Additionally, officer and other leadership positions offer real-life responsibilities in positions from the local club to international levels.

Durable Skills in the Business World

In John's opinion, practice makes progress, especially when expanding skills to keep one's proficiency profile high above perishable status. Even experienced staff members need upskilling to react knowledgeably in continually changing business environments. “I work with clients who are generally very experienced but they're still looking to raise their presentation skills for global audiences,” says John.

Lanie Denslow, founder of World Wise Intercultural Training and Resources, in Northern California, and a member of BAWOM Toastmasters

in Oakland, California, agrees workers will need the know-how to function capably in an increasingly global workplace. “When it comes to durable skills, I think communication and collaboration are essential no matter where you are in the world,” she says.

John trains clients for a variety of proficiencies, including vocabulary, structuring of material, storytelling talents, and voice modulation. Empathy and civility, perhaps once undervalued in business, set a baseline for successful interaction. People need to communicate clearly—a critical element any time people work together. John sees more leaders working on interpersonal communication skills these days. “Many of my clients are also looking for better ways to relate to staff members or colleagues, or to have better outcomes with difficult conversations,” she says.

Without question, the demand for technical and academic training will always be important. However, the new work world is also placing a high priority on capabilities that favor thoughtful, collaborative, engaged, and empathic leaders. These skills, once considered “soft,” are now considered vital.

Alexandra Levit, author of *Humanity Works: Merging Technology and People for the Workforce of the Future*, puts it like this: “Durable skills ensure career durability.”

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



Toastmasters Go to Work in Hollywood

Talent agents thrive on speaking skills.

By Emily Sachs

Here's how one corporate club leverages Toastmasters skills in a fiercely competitive industry that demands superior communication talents.

With built-in triumphs and extraordinary personal transformations, Toastmasters meetings have all the ingredients of a hit reality TV show. Just ask WME NSTV Toastmasters Club in Beverly Hills, California, whose own members are talent agents representing some of Hollywood's most successful non-scripted television productions and stars. And since its formation in January 2021, the club has witnessed a dramatic growth in its members.

“It was really born out of the pandemic and a desire to build community, really targeting some of our assistants and coordinators and tapping into areas that are fundamental to what we do,” says WME partner and club co-founder Sharon Chang, whose first introduction to Toastmasters International was through her husband, a former Toastmaster.

WME, the industry's longest-running entertainment, sports, and fashion talent agency, helps its signed clients find opportunities, pitch projects, and

negotiate contracts. The work is heavily reliant on agents' abilities to think quickly and effectively utilize their verbal communication skills.

When Chang approached company management with the idea of creating a club, she was advised to talk with another partner at the company, Meghan Mackenzie. As it turns out, Mackenzie was already familiar with the concept. "Toastmasters had always been in my orbit," she says. Her late father, Robert Mackenzie, placed second at the 2010 World Championship of Public Speaking. Her mother, Dari Mackenzie, is a longtime member of Toastmasters 90210 in Beverly Hills, California. Dari helped mentor the WME club.



Sharon Chang



Meghan Mackenzie

The club was chartered on “a desire to build community ... tapping into the areas that are fundamental to what we do.”

—SHARON CHANG

Members meet monthly in an extended virtual session with staff from both the Los Angeles and New York City offices and represent a cross-section of roles from assistants to executives. Far from being a challenge, this broad spectrum of backgrounds and experiences has been a most unexpected benefit.

“We all started at the same time within the Toastmasters universe—and it has bonded us together in a really unique way,” Mackenzie says.

The club emphasizes a culture of respect and starts each meeting with a reminder that the meeting room is a “safe space” for authenticity and vulnerability, regardless of title or seniority. “Everyone feels free and liberated to bring their best selves to the table,” Chang says. “We are intentional about this, and want to make sure that no one feels like they’re in a hierarchical environment.”

Prepared speeches and Table Topics® can be industry-related—such as one memorable Table Topics where participants had to self-identify as a cast member on various reality shows—but they have also veered into the very personal. Mackenzie says that seeing assistants in a different light has helped senior staff pinpoint who might have potential to be future agents.

In fact, several assistants in the club have leveraged their Toastmasters experience to prepare for WME’s competitive agent trainee program,



Meghan Mackenzie (right) and her mother, Dari Mackenzie, a longtime member of 90210 Toastmasters in Beverly Hills, California, and mentor to the WME club.

which includes a notoriously daunting panel interview as part of the application process. One assistant who didn’t get selected the first time then joined Toastmasters, Mackenzie says. Not only did she write her subsequent application essay about how the club grew her confidence, but she also aced the panel questions thanks to her Table Topics practice. She is now in the trainee program.

In a cutthroat industry not typically known for being kind and gentle, the club’s founders say they want to use their influence to change the culture and encourage more listening, intentionality, and focus.

“Toastmasters has become a massively important part of that and reflects the supportive environment we’ve tried to create,” MacKenzie says.

Emily Sachs is a freelance writer in Brooklyn, New York. She is President of *Kidney Stories Toastmasters*, a virtual club for the transplant community, and a member of *Brooklyn Toastmasters*. She is also the Administration Manager for District 119, and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Level Up With Online Education

Whether taking or teaching a course, you'll find your Toastmasters skills come into play in the online classroom.

By Megan Preston Meyer

It's 8:30 on a Tuesday night, and instead of winding down for the evening, I'm signing on to another Zoom call. This one isn't for work, though, and it's not for Toastmasters. It's an online Introduction to Philosophy course.

Philosophy? you ask. *And so late in the evening? Won't that put you to sleep?* I understand why you might think that, but this is not your typical class. The screen is filling up with people from around the world—Lebanon, London, Texas, Beijing—and from all walks of life—economists, taxidermists, writers, and airline pilots. The teacher, Mahmoud Rasmi, has a Ph.D. in philosophy from the Universidad de Salamanca in Spain and taught for seven years at universities in Lebanon. Two years ago, he left academia and decided to try teaching entirely online.

His timing couldn't have been better. Online courses, like online everything, gained in popularity during the lockdown. Platforms like MasterClass, edX, and Udemy boomed, and smaller, more specialized platforms like Network Capital and Interintellect sprang to life. And for good reason: Taking an online course is a convenient—and fun—way to learn new skills. But don't limit yourself to participating; *teaching* an online course is a fantastic way to put the communication and leadership skills you learn in Toastmasters to use.

Flexibility and Community

Whether you want to upskill or reskill in hopes of a career shift or just unwind after a long day while learning something completely unrelated to work, there's an online course for you. You can find classes on everything from podcasting to computer programming, from linguistics to legal strategy. The beauty of online learning is in its flexibility—you can choose the style of teaching and amount of interaction, the topic and degree of depth, and even, in most cases, when and where you learn.

Many platforms offer video-based, on-demand courses that you can work through on your own schedule. There are also a rising number of live, cohort-based classes, like the ones Rasmi teaches. Similar to an online Toastmasters



meeting, these virtual courses encourage discussion and foster community—during class sessions and afterward. Taking an online course is an excellent way to meet people who share your interests, form connections, and expand your network.

When One Teaches, Two Learn

Thinkers from Aristotle to Robert Heinlein have recognized that “when one teaches, two learn.” Taking an online course is an incredible way to gain new skills, and when you're ready to level up, consider teaching one. Designing and leading an online course is a unique way to showcase and improve your communication and leadership skills while continuing to learn about your subject matter. For people with aspirations of pursuing public speaking professionally, it's also great way to kickstart a career in communication—or at least dip a toe in.

But wait, you say. Who am I to start an online class? Why would anyone listen to me? I don't have a doctorate. “Credibility is not limited to credentials only,” Rasmi says. It's about “showing what you are capable of doing.” Democratization of content, the trend that began with the tools and platforms that made it easy to publish blogs, self-publish books, and create videos, is making its way into online education and training.

Translating Concepts

The prerequisites for teaching online are a) an interest in the material you'll be teaching, b) a bit of business and marketing know-how, and c) communication skills. The Pathways program will give you a leg up on the last one, and there are other resources out there, as well.

Bill Monsour, DTM, is the co-founder of the [European Trainers Network](#) (ETN), an organization for Toastmasters in Europe who are interested in teaching and training. Its mission is to “provide networking opportunities and serve as an information resource for its members.” It does so by not only helping members to “develop their training skills, but also their business skills,” Monsour says. The

ETN emphasizes proven adult learning methods and offers regular masterclasses on marketing and promotion; one recent session focused on optimizing LinkedIn profiles, for example.

During the lockdown, the ETN understandably saw increased interest in virtual training methods. Online or in person, though, the foundations of effective teaching remain the same—they're just enhanced. "Moving online doesn't mean that you don't need all those skills that you had before. In fact, it's all the same skills, plus new skills on top—technical skills," says Mansour. "You need to reimagine [communication] in the online environment. It's like translating one language to another; you can't do it literally, word-for-word, you have to look at the basic concepts and understand how, in the new world, that concept is done in a different way."

One area in need of translation is audience engagement. Just like in Toastmasters meetings, when you're not in the same physical space as others, you need new ways to interact. "There are all sorts of tips for engaging people [online]," Mansour says. "We use breakout rooms quite a bit ... to enable discussion that wouldn't otherwise happen." Whiteboard tools like Miro, which enable annotation and col-



Tools and Tinkering

That said, the right tools can make an online course easier to manage. After two years of tinkering, Rasmi developed a meta-course called You Too Can Teach Online. In it, he describes how to choose the right platform(s) to build and manage class material—and your community. Course-management platforms like

tantly, he played around with his teaching approach. At first, "I was doing regular university stuff, and that's not what people were signing up for." Now, he tries to make his courses "as entertaining as possible." Instead of listing names, dates, and dry philosophical theories, he uses storytelling techniques to craft "an interesting narrative that people can relate to."

His style is working. Since May 2020, when 44 students enrolled in the online existentialism course he advertised on Twitter, Rasmi has taught over 700 students from more than 30 countries. "I'm not here to just teach people about philosophy," he has realized. "I think the reason everyone signs up for my courses is to have a good time, and, along the way, maybe learn a thing or two."

That's certainly the case in this particular class. The discussion is lively, and the session goes late—well past my bedtime. The lecture is over, so we're free to leave, but the conversation is still going strong. "We're here for the entertainment," one of my classmates says. We all agree—and no one signs off.

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.

Designing and leading an online course is a unique way to showcase and improve your communication and leadership skills.

laboration, are also excellent ways to raise the engagement level.

At the same time, Mansour warns, don't get too distracted by the technology. "Remember when PowerPoint first came in, and people were all excited that 'we can make something spin,' and 'we can make all these different colors and fonts and stuff? Once the wizardry and the novelty wore off, it became 'death-by-PowerPoint.' People get caught up in the technology and the excitement of it, and they lose the human element." That human element, not a flashy platform, is what sets successful online teachers apart.

Teachable and Podia allow you to create and house recorded lectures, slides, and recommended readings; encourage community and host discussions; and receive tuition payments. You can also combine a-la-carte options for course materials, community building, and payment processing.

The possibilities are plentiful, and the choices can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to have it all figured out before you begin. When Rasmi started out, "I had Zoom. That was it." And he wasn't even an expert user: "I didn't know ... how to mute all students." He kept tinkering and learning, but more impor-

10 Ways to be a Better Speechwriter

How to wield your words and get to the point.

By Elizabeth Danziger

Have you ever read a report at work or listened to a club speech, and at the end, had no idea what the writer or speaker was saying? We all have. When communicators do not know how to express themselves clearly and succinctly, everyone suffers.

I love language and the power words have to persuade, request, inform, or entertain. In fact, I founded Work-talk Communications Consulting specifically to train people to become clear, confident writers. And of course, language skills extend to the spoken word as well. Before

end up delivering none. Supporting points are fine, but they must aim toward your goal. Remember, audience members should be able to summarize what you said in one sentence. Your listeners will not be able to sum up your message succinctly unless you deliver it clearly. And you cannot deliver your message clearly until you crystallize it for yourself. That is why I encourage the people I train to know their primary point *before* they start to write. Ask yourself, “If listeners could remember only one thing from my speech, what do I want that one thing to be?”

Ask yourself, “If listeners could remember only one thing from my speech, what do I want that one thing to be?”

founding my business, I worked as a freelance writer, editor, and speechwriter. I saw people struggle to express themselves clearly, and I knew that you don’t have to be a “natural writer” or a “natural speaker” to write and speak successfully. Communication is a skill, and like all skills, it improves with practice. Moreover, applying a few basic principles can transform your writing, and thus your speeches.

Here are 10 tips to help you wield words for results.

1 Eliminate the obvious. While it pays to touch on ideas your listeners are familiar with, stating something they already know will make them tune out. Eliminate the phrases that will make audience members say, “I know *that!*” For example, if you are speaking to a group of finance experts, you would not explain what a debit is.

2 Make one point. The title of my book *Get to the Point!* says it all: Proficient writing makes one central point. When you try to make multiple points, you may

3 Take your readers on a journey. Good writing tells stories. Listeners or readers want you to take them from *here* to *there*. For example, this article takes you from wondering how to write well to understanding valuable tools that support your writing success. Take your readers on a journey from inaction to action, from confusion to clarity, from wherever they are to the place you want them to be.

4 Be choosy with your stories. Have you ever remembered a brilliant TV advertisement but couldn’t say what product was advertised? That’s a case of telling the wrong story. The advertiser caught your attention but failed in the ultimate goal: to impress the product’s name on your memory. Similarly, when you choose a juicy but irrelevant story, you waste precious attention on words that won’t carry you to your destination. Instead, have a reason for including every story in your writing or speech. Stories are your most powerful tools; use them wisely.



at it the next day and are amazed that we had been so mistaken. You can improve everything you write if you let it rest for a day or two and return to it with fresh eyes. You will also benefit from having “a second set of eyes.” Ask a trusted friend or colleague to give you feedback before finalizing your draft.

8 Speak authentically. As the Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde wrote, “Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.” No one can be you, and you cannot be anyone else. You may learn from other peoples’ styles but never mimic them. If your favorite speaker is crisp and concise, model your speech after their approach, but don’t try to fill their shoes. Otherwise, you might sound phony or affected. You can ask friends or fellow club members for their opinions, but your writing or speaking has to sound like you.

9 Keep it simple. “Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler,” said the world-renowned physicist Albert Einstein. Your readers and listeners are distracted and overwhelmed. If what you write or say is difficult to understand, they will tune you out in a nano-second. Instead, hook their attention with a fact or question about their interests and make your point simply, but not simplistically. Simplicity is elegance. Being simplistic is condescension.

10 Have something to say. Blogger Jeff Hadeen wrote, “Without something to say, no one is a good writer.” Ideas may need to marinate for a while before they’re ready for expression. Don’t rush. Wait until you have something to say.

Then, once you know your point, you can return to point number one and start writing.

Elizabeth Danziger is founder of *Work-talk Communications Consulting*, a Los Angeles, California-based company that trains teams to write clearly. She is a former Toastmaster and the author of four books, including *Get to the Point!* Second Edition. For more information and to sign up for *Writamins* monthly writing tips, visit www.worktalk.com.

5 Choose vigorous language. Using active verbs rather than passive ones will make your writing more vibrant. (An active sentence would be, “The speaker presented her ideas.” The passive form would be, “Ideas were presented by the speaker.”) When you have a choice between a word that ends with *-ation*,

6 Cut! Cut! Cut! In writing, and in speaking, less is more. You may have a wordy rough draft—that’s normal. Just be sure to follow the writing advice of British author and literary critic Arthur Quiller-Couch to “murder your darlings.” If you think a phrase is just too brilliant, you should probably delete it. Delet-

Ideas may need to marinate for a while before they’re ready for expression. Don’t rush.

such as *consideration*, choose the verb that hides within the long term, in this case *consider*. Avoid long, flowery, convoluted sentences. Your listeners will yawn. For example, let’s look at this sentence: *We are pleased to inform you that your application has been received and that it is being taken under consideration.* This sentence takes 20 words to deliver this message: *We have received your application and are reviewing it.*

ing your favorite phrases is tough, but attention spans are shrinking all the time. Edit yourself ruthlessly and your readers and listeners will reward you with their attention.

7 Put your draft aside before you present it. We’ve all had the experience of writing a speech in a day and congratulating ourselves on how brilliant we are. Then we look

Word Games

Funny how a simple little diversion can turn into a harrowing existential threat.

By John Cadley

People love word games. They help pass the time in airports, provide just enough of a mental challenge to keep the old synapses firing, and elicit a pleasant feeling of satisfaction when completed successfully. No matter how badly the day has gone, if you can finish *The New York Times* crossword by filling in “obumbrate” for “to darken or overshadow,” a rainbow appears, and you know the sun *will* come up tomorrow.

The first word game I ever played was Hangman. Your opponent draws both a gallows and short lines underneath the image for the letters of the word he or she is thinking of. You guess a letter. If it's in the word, it goes on the appropriate line. If it's not, your opponent starts drawing a stick figure, piece by piece, hanging from the gallows. You must get enough correct letters to guess the word before the stick figure is complete. In other words, you win or you die. But then this is true of all word games. Failure to complete word puzzles invariably results in a mini death of the ego, causing one to question what moral failure of character has made you ignorant of a six-letter word for a leguminous African tree.

The most popular word game appears to be Scrabble, which has been going strong since 1938 and is now played in 30 languages across 121 countries. Do you hear that low din in the background? It's the sound of roughly 1,432,678 heated arguments taking place simultaneously around the globe, in everything from Mandarin Chinese to Creole French, as to whether “snollygoster” is a legitimate word.

If you've never played Scrabble I would advise you to refrain. As noted, Scrabblers take their game seriously. Angry confrontations can result in players pelting each other with the game's small wooden tiles. If you see



someone with little square indentations on their forehead, it's probably a player who insisted that “irregardless” is a real word. My hope is to spare you from having a face that looks like a checkerboard.

Also, the game is addictive. Scoring 72 points with “maieutics” floods your brain with dopamine, causing a rush you will long to repeat. Just ask the American actor Alec Baldwin, who was removed from an American Airlines flight for refusing to put his cell

Angry confrontations can result in players pelting each other with the game's small wooden tiles.

phone away because he was playing an online Scrabble-like game called *Words With Friends*. Apparently, Mr. Baldwin would rather be stranded in an airport eating stale fruit bars from the amenities cart than lose to a complete stranger halfway around the world.

Another long-running word game is the American television show *Wheel of Fortune*. Much like with Hangman, the object is to fill

in enough letters to guess the word, and here too, failure can result in death—a death by public humiliation. In one episode the mystery word was “self-portrait” and the contestant had enough letters to guess it easily, and yet for some reason she blurted out “self-potato”! I don't know what happened to the unfortunate soul, but rumor has it she joined the *Survivor* TV show and ended up in Cuba's Canarreos Archipelago, where she was voted off the island but refused to leave and disappeared into the jungle. Much like Mr. Baldwin in the airport, it seems the poor woman would rather live with spiders, snakes, and poisonous frogs than return home and die a thousand deaths being called The Self-Potato Woman.

All of which brings us to the new fave rave in word games—Wordle. Invented by a Brooklyn-based software programmer to give his partner a distraction during the pandemic, Wordle took off like Jeff Bezos' rocket ship and is now played by millions, perhaps because of its simplicity: six tries to guess a five-letter word, with each guess adding correct letters and eliminating wrong ones. You should get it in six tries. The average seems to be three or four. Apparently, I'm not average. Working today's Wordle, I'm on my fifth try with only one correct letter and only one more chance—the Wordle player's equivalent of running from a pack of wolves and ending up at the edge of a cliff. What's worse, I know my wife got it on her third try. My vanity won't let me ask her for a clue, and my ego won't let me lose. I'm in a double bind that's killing me. But then that's the thing with word games, isn't it? You win or you die.

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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