

# TOASTMASTER®

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FEBRUARY 2012

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YOU TWEET

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# THE PERSISTENT TOASTMASTER



**“I have nothing to speak about.**

My life is so B-O-R-I-N-G. Maybe I should just quit Toastmasters.”

These surprising words from my mentee — a new Toastmaster — made me shudder. According to the National Science Foundation, the average person thinks 12,000 thoughts each day. Many of these thoughts could become terrific speeches. Yet too many members routinely discount the value of their own ideas. Many *do* give up on Toastmasters far too early. On average, 300 people quit Toastmasters every single day. Some leave because of job relocation or life changes, but many more leave because

of loss of interest, believing there is nothing more to gain from Toastmasters. The average membership is only 12–18 months. Imagine the gold miner who spends years digging for the gilded treasure, only to quit on the brink of discovery. All the time, money and effort in pursuit of riches are wasted. Similarly, the Toastmasters program requires dedication and effort, but it yields a marvelous bounty of success and confidence to those who persist.

I almost resigned from Toastmasters after my third manual speech in 1985. My evaluator mentioned so many “opportunities for improvement” that I felt overwhelmed; I believed it would take a lifetime to get it right. As Toastmasters, we all face obstacles, hurdles and frustrations: a disappointing speech, an overly critical evaluation or a nonperforming team member. At these times, a mentor or supportive clubmate can provide much-needed encouragement, perspective and inspiration. Often, we grow most during these times of testing and discouragement if we persist.

Toastmasters’ education program does not guarantee overnight success. Growth is gradual and steady if you attend meetings regularly, participate consistently and complete manual assignments. Yes, the Toastmasters program works, but you need to *work the program*. Persistence is the key. Set a goal and have your clubmates keep you accountable.

At some place along your Toastmasters journey, it will all get easier. You will find your voice and discover your natural power and influence. You will experience the confidence that comes from mastery built on a solid foundation of Toastmasters achievement. You will discover the resonant, authentic “sweet spot” that makes communication and leadership look easy ... and people will notice the Toastmasters difference!

We live in a hectic and busy world. Between family, work, and social and civic commitments, it is easy to get exhausted and believe professional development is expendable. But rewards come to those who are patient and who *persist*. You can learn it all at Toastmasters, a place where leaders are made. **T**

**MICHAEL NOTARO, DTM**  
International President

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**WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE**  
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Since 1924, Toastmasters International has been recognized as the leading organization dedicated to communication and leadership skill development. Through its worldwide network of clubs, each week Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million men and women of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their *competence* in communication so they can gain the *confidence* to lead others.

By regularly giving speeches, gaining feedback, leading teams and guiding others to achieve their goals, leaders emerge. They learn to tell their stories. They listen and answer. They plan and lead. They give feedback — and accept it. They find their path to leadership.

**Toastmasters International. Where Leaders Are Made.**



“We don’t say *about*. Just as in the United States, *about* is something we put on our foot in the winter to keep our toes warm.”

– Dawna Bate, ACS, ALB  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

## Finding Sanctuary

In the introduction to her article “From Pen to Podium” (October), Beth Black emphasized that a writer must maintain focus and ignore various distractions. She described it brilliantly: “All must be set aside to allow your brain the sanctuary it needs to manufacture a universe of possibilities.” This is exactly how I feel when I’m trying to immerse myself in a creative process: Got to find that sanctuary!

Ryan Jenkins, CC  
Peachtree Toastmasters  
Atlanta, Georgia

## Fascinating Issue

I found two articles in the October issue fascinating: The “Member Moment” about Toastmaster Rima Abou Mrad from District 20 was wonderful, and “The Benefits of Mentoring” by Bob Calandra was superb. The author mentioned every aspect of mentoring in and out of Toastmasters. In fact, the article actually depicts how individuals can reach the top of the success ladder by simply having a great mentor. I especially liked when the author provided suggestions for identifying mentees.

Thank you for the relentless work by the magazine family who, for years now, has continued to provide us with fantastic learning.

Balaji Nagabhushan, DTM  
Star of Arabia Club  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

## Going Up?

Thank you for the excellent, timely and encouraging article, “The Elevator

Speech” (October). The article follows our Toastmasters three-point habit, so it is easily memorable. It is also timely because I am in the final stages of looking for work. I find the follow-up calls and emails the hardest part of the search, but the article reminded me that I have the tools I need because of Table Topics.

Remembering that I have these tools electrified me with new energy to present myself as I would on meeting night — confidently and enthusiastically! Thank you Toastmasters, for these great, practical resources!

Philip Mizener  
Speak with Style Toastmasters  
Montreal, Québec, Canada

## Canadian **About Refute**

Thank you to Jenny Baranick for light-heartedly poking fun at us Canadians in the November issue. I’d like to correct a few misstatements she made.

New Brunswick lists both French and English as its official languages, so it isn’t just Québec that offers this challenge. There is also a large French-speaking population in Ontario and other provinces.

We don’t say *about*. Just as in the United States, *about* is something we put on our foot in the winter to keep our toes warm. They usually come in pairs, so are normally called *boots*. Most of the Canadians I know wouldn’t recognize a *wanigan* if they tripped over it. However, we will gladly take you out in the winter for some fun on our *toboggans* and then warm up with a *double-double*.

Please visit us in Canada, Jenny. If you are in the Kitchener, Ontario, area, come for a visit to my Toastmasters club. But bring your German-English dictionary: We have a large German community. It’ll be *wunderbar, eh!*

Dawna Bate, ACS, ALB  
Talk of the Town club  
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

## Men, Too

Thank you for printing the interview with Nancy Brinker in the November 2011 issue of *Toastmaster*. Unfortunately, both the interviewer and Ms. Brinker failed to mention that men, as well as women, can be afflicted with this disease.

As a male breast cancer survivor, I must point out that breast cancer can be more insidious in men than in women. It often spreads more rapidly to the bones and vital organs of men than it does in women.

For this reason, early diagnosis is extremely important. Perhaps this letter will serve to alert your readers that breast cancer does also strike men, and that early detection and treatment is necessary.

David J. Kingsley, ATM  
Great Fort Lauderdale club  
Plantation, Florida

## Toastmasters **Transformation**

I have been incarcerated for nearly 26 years. From my very first Toastmasters meeting in 1991, I was hooked! Since then, my life has been transformed from that of a selfish criminal to one of a helpful, law-abiding, productive man. Toastmasters is responsible in a great way for my transformation. The training and education I have established through my involvement with this awesome organization have opened many doors for me.

Toastmasters has helped me change my thinking from bad to good, and to communicate my good thinking in speech and behavior.

John C. Harvey, ACS, CL  
Men with Voice/Men with Vision  
Mansfield, Ohio

# SPEAK LIKE YOU TWEET

Try virtual audiences as a sounding board for your ideas.

By Tim Cigelske

**“Write like you speak.”** A seasoned editor gave me this advice when I was studying journalism in college; it sticks with me to this day. He emphasized that a well-written article should explain any topic as if you were having a conversation with a friend.

While I still try to apply his writing mantra, today I’ve updated it to

**“We learn just as much, or more, from observing and asking for help from others.”**

reflect what I try to do in Toastmasters combined with a new medium of communication: *“Speak like you tweet.”*

As I transitioned from a print journalist to a new role that required public speaking, Toastmasters taught me how to get comfortable through repetition and regular practice in front of a live audience. Now, through social media, I can further hone my communication skills through repetition and regular practice with a virtual audience.

Social networks have become a part of daily life for most people. Facebook boasts a staggering 800 million users, Twitter hosts U.S. President Barack Obama and politicians of both parties, and the new Google+ might be the fastest growing social network in history. With this comes no shortage of opportunity to customize social networks for learning about nearly any topic, including public speaking.

This may surprise people who view online networks as the opposite of interpersonal communication. But

if you are smart about how you use social media, you can develop speaking strategies that translate beyond the podium.

I personally use Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and other social networks as a sounding board to see whether my topics, phrases or jokes resonate with an audience before I try them out in person. When I post on

or browse social media sites, I consider questions related to Toastmasters and improving my communications skills, including:

- ▶ What subjects are relevant to people right now?
- ▶ How can my wording sound conversational and not stilted?
- ▶ Can I be more concise?
- ▶ Who are the people who have gained a large following and what are their tactics?
- ▶ What posts from others are getting the most reaction and why?
- ▶ Does my topic pique people’s interest?

Posting status updates is only one way to benefit from social networking. As we know from Toastmasters, we learn just as much, or more, from observing and asking for help from others.


One way to tap into this tool is by social media “crowdsourcing” — idea generation through the help of your network. This can help if you’re stuck for a topic and don’t know where to

begin. One easy way to do this is to ask for people’s favorite jokes. I used this trick once to fulfill my humorist role at a Toastmasters meeting.

How do you think I got the idea for this column? I simply asked on Twitter if others thought social media can help public speaking. I wanted to see if I was on the right track. I immediately started getting feedback from people in a variety of occupations:

- ▶ “Social media might help boost confidence,” wrote an owner of a local brewery. “So yes.”
- ▶ “Good way to test topics and jokes,” suggested an entrepreneur.
- ▶ “Absolutely,” a children’s book editor tweeted back. “Character limit forces succinct, powerful word choice. And, no one says ‘um’ on Twitter.”

Don’t get me wrong, there is still no substitute for standing up in front of a live crowd. I continue to learn every time I give a speech or fill a role in Toastmasters. But if you want to continue to learn outside of meetings and formal events, view social media as yet another way to grow in your communication abilities. Or to express yourself succinctly in less than 140 characters.

*“When you can’t speak, tweet.”* 

**Tim Cigelske** is a member of Marquette University’s Marq Our Words Toastmasters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He manages the university’s social media accounts. Follow him on Twitter @TeecycleTim.

# AROUND THE GLOBE

## ▶ INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

IT'S NOT OKAY



Depending on where you travel, making a circle with the index finger and thumb and raising the remaining three fingers could get you in trouble. People in the U.S. and the U.K. use this sign to let others know they are “okay.” Scuba divers use the same meaning for this sign when they are underwater.

In Brazil, Germany and some Mediterranean countries, however, this sign is considered vulgar. In France and Belgium it means “zero” or “worthless.” In Japan, this gesture means “money” or that you would like to receive your change in coins. When doing business abroad, research cultural body language in advance to ensure your visit is smooth.

## ▶ SNAPSHOT

Virginia A. Malik from Linden, New Jersey, climbed for seven days to Uhuru Peak (19,340 feet or 5,895 meters), the summit of the world's highest free-standing mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, Africa.



## ▶ WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN...

YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO AN ATTRACTIVE STRANGER?

**Members from the Pompano Beach Toastmasters in Pompano Beach, Florida, respond:**

“The most attractive stranger I ever met eventually became my wife. My attempt at a greeting can be compared best to my first attempt at public speaking. My anxiety was high, my mouth went dry, my stomach was all in knots and my mind went blank, leaving me without one cool pickup line. I opened my mouth and nothing came out. All I could say was ‘Hi!’” — KEITH HERRING, CC, CL

“I would establish eye contact, shake his hand and say, ‘What a pleasure it is to meet someone whose parents have been blessed by such a good-looking son.’” — SAUNDRA SACKS, ATM, CL

“Try to find something in common to mention to him or her. The best way to make people feel comfortable about *you* is to keep it about *them*. Compliments sweeten a first contact too.” — ANCA VAGUE, CC

*Congratulations to the Pompano Beach Toastmasters on their 50-year anniversary!*

## BOTTOM LINE

### Happy Birthday

Celebrate Charles Dickens' bicentennial in your club with themed activities, such as reading from his books. For more information, go to [dickens2012.org](http://dickens2012.org).

### Girls Not Allowed!

Women were not permitted to join Toastmasters until 1973. Today, more than 52 percent of members are women.



### New in the Digital Magazine

Tabs take you directly to articles. Audio and video features offer you a more comprehensive look at a topic. Visit [www.toastmasters.org/magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/magazine).

## ► COMMUNICATION TIP

### SHARE YOUR APPRECIATION

*"Silent gratitude isn't much use to anyone."* – Gladys Bronwyn Stern

Expressing your appreciation to an employee, a child or a significant other is essential to a happy, harmonious relationship. Acknowledgement lets the people around you know that you do not take them for granted. Get in the habit of thanking people for the things they do. Here's how:

- **BE SINCERE.** Honesty makes being appreciative a pleasure rather than a chore.
- **BE SPECIFIC.** Mention particular things people have done to receive the appreciation.
- **DON'T EXPECT ANYTHING BACK** from the people you thank. This is about them, not you.

Go ahead: Deliver a handwritten note, send a thank-you email or brag about the excellent work people do, or how they go out of their way to help others. Maybe you will be acknowledged next.

## MEMBER MOMENT

### A METAMORPHOSIS

Sujit Sukumaran, ACG, ALB, of Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), joined Toastmasters seven years ago to overcome his fear of public speaking. Despite suffering from cerebral palsy (CP), he is one of the youngest area governors in the Middle East and active in three Toastmasters clubs. Sukumaran hopes to complete his Ph.D. in psychology, set up his own training and consulting practice and help others find their voice.



Sujit Sukumaran

#### How has CP affected your life?

I was born premature with locomotive disabilities and difficulties speaking. I was shy and reserved. Today, after five surgeries, support [from friends and family], Toastmasters and 26 years, I have successfully challenged each impossibility that medical science walled me into. Though I have a visible disability, it has made me who I am.

#### How has Toastmasters made a difference in your life?

I have gone from feeling awkward about my disability to being a champion speaker at the Middle East District Conference in 2009. Being a district champion fostered my urge to mentor and give back to other Toastmasters.

#### What is your profession?

I manage Human Resources for Hayat Communications, a telecom infrastructure services provider. I oversee affairs for more than 500 people across the UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar. My Toastmasters skills have helped me reach out to [people of] different nationalities and solve their problems as neutrally and sensitively as I can.

Contact Sujit Sukumaran at [isujit.sukumaran@gmail.com](mailto:isujit.sukumaran@gmail.com).

## The Gift of Gab

Forget about candy this Valentine's Day! The *Interpersonal Communication* manual can help you sweet talk your loved ones. [www.toastmasters.org/226M](http://www.toastmasters.org/226M)

## Hall of Fame

See monthly DTM awards and club anniversaries of 20 years or more at [www.toastmasters.org/halloffame](http://www.toastmasters.org/halloffame).



## Attention, Toastmasters Historians

The Virtual Museum ([www.toastmasters.org/VirtualMuseum](http://www.toastmasters.org/VirtualMuseum)) is a great place for any historically valuable Toastmasters item. Email a description of your treasures to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).





# HOW TO STAND OUT

Make your speech memorable and connect with your audience.

By Warwick John Fahy, DTM

**I**n 1885, **Hermann Ebbinghaus**, a German psychologist, discovered a most depressing fact in education. People, including audiences, usually forget 70 percent of something they learned within a day — most within *hours* of hearing it. Sadly, this remains a problem today. But a new understanding of audience memory offers hope for improvement.

“Whenever I find something inspiring that makes me say ‘wow,’ I write it down as a story for a future talk.”

John Medina, a brain researcher and affiliate professor of bioengineering at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle, Washington, has stated that memory retention can be improved by using techniques that align with how the brain acquires, stores and recalls memories. Any public speaker can connect with an audience better — and be remembered better — by understanding three related approaches: the need to express a big idea, the power of five-minute modules and the best ways to inspire your audience.

## Your Big Idea

Crowns are symbols used to represent power and convey legitimacy to the person wearing them. But crowns are not only for

kings. You can wear one to represent your expertise. In a speech, your *crown of expertise* is your big idea and adds a powerful frame to everything you speak about. It provides the context for your talk and helps the audience understand the big picture before you go deeper into detailed content. Four examples illustrate this value:

▶ Professional speaker Simon Sinek has a big idea called “Start with why.” Sinek tells audiences that before they decide on a career, they should first understand what drives them by clarifying their passions in life.

▶ Yang Lan, a pioneer in open communication, created and hosted groundbreaking television shows. The popular show *Her Village* brings together China’s largest community of professional women (more than 200 million people a month).

▶ Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking finalist Rory Vaden presented a talk in China and explained his big idea as “Take the stairs.” He used it as a metaphor to denote, *literally*, stay in shape physically and also, *symbolically*, persevere on the rigorous pathway to success. It’s easy to understand, remember and pass along.

▶ Virginia “Ginni” Rometty, the first female chief executive officer in IBM’s 100-year history, pushed to expand the company’s fast-growing analytics unit, which blends data-mining software with services expertise. “It’s not about capturing markets,” she said, “it’s about making new markets.”

Express your big idea in three to five words and remember that it can be applied to your job, your experience, your background or any topic you like to speak about with passion. Creating a big idea for your next presentation will help the audience remember your point. When Vaden prepares a presentation, he always begins by asking himself, What is my message? And could I write this message in one line on a business card?

A big idea will help you focus your speech by filtering out ideas that are not relevant to your topic. Now it is time to build your content. This is where the second approach related to brain research becomes invaluable to your speech preparation.

## The Power of Five-minute Modules

Imagine that the content of your speech is like a necklace strung with diamonds. Each diamond represents five minutes of content — a content *module*. Rather than delivering one long sequence of data, a string of shorter modules will help the audience digest your material and stay on track during your talk.

# WHERE OH WHERE IS THE CONCLUSION?

By Milton Wood, DTM, Ph.D.

Recently, I listened to seven Toastmasters give speeches, and they all suffered from one consistent problem: lack of emphasis on the conclusion. Each of their speeches contained the traditional opening, body and conclusion; however, their conclusions were little more than a summary sentence or two. Emphasize the ending of your speech because it:

- ▶ **Closes your presentation.** The opening and body of your speech should set up the final message that you share and emphasize in your conclusion.
- ▶ **Expresses what you want your listeners to take away.** It is critical to make the most of your final shared thoughts because audiences often remember best what they heard last.
- ▶ **Provides a conceptually tight package that briefly restates your major points.** Make sure your audience understands and feels the importance of your message.

A strong conclusion can be the most powerful part of your speech. Pack power into your conclusion these two ways:

- ▶ **Plan your time wisely.** Try this rule of thumb: 15 percent of the content for your opening, 70 percent for the body of your speech and 15 percent for the conclusion. While speeches can vary, you shouldn't shortchange your conclusion — a sentence is too short!
- ▶ **Try writing your conclusion first.** Doing so focuses the rest of your presentation on the message you want to deliver. You will also quickly discover when you are cramming too many ideas into one presentation.

When you sit down to craft your next speech, remember the inherent power of a good conclusion and wow your audiences from now on!

**Milton Wood, DTM, Ph.D.,** is author of *Teach Public Speaking to Anyone* and multiple Amazon Kindle ebooks on public speaking topics. Learn more at [publicspeaksecrets.com](http://publicspeaksecrets.com).

Working your ideas into strong five-minute modules is a good way to start a great presentation. Looking for content? Why not begin with the Toastmasters manuals? I recently delivered five manual talks and identified five minutes of good content from each that I later used as part of a 40-minute presentation.

Trying out bits and pieces of a performance is nothing new. Stand-up comedians use this process to refine their acts all the time. In the documentary *Comedian*, Jerry Seinfeld routinely visits comedy clubs to try out new material and then selects the best parts to include in his larger, final presentation. You can use a similar process to create a speech that sparkles like a string of diamonds.

Refine your content with these three steps: test-edit-test. Don't just deliver a speech once. Instead, record every speech you deliver and listen to it. Observe when people react, perhaps by laughing. Extract those parts and try them again with a different audience. When different audiences react positively, you know you have good content.

But what if your material flops? Joe Rogan, an American stand-up comedian, explains how to omit content that doesn't work. "Try it on another audience. If it still doesn't go over well, refine it and try it on a third audience," Rogan said on an episode of his podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*. "If after three times of re-working a story, it flops every time, drop it!"

It is important to remember that flexibility is the hallmark of all great presenters. You can change the colors of your string of precious content stones depending on your message or audience. Also, each module could be delivered independently, if needed, or as part of a longer presentation. Take your time and select the right stones for the audience you will address. After you have settled on your content, all you need is a great delivery.

## Sparkle and Inspire

Most often, a speaker is asked to deliver a speech as a result of being a subject-matter expert. However, great knowledge and content is not enough. You need the ability to *inspire* and *entertain* your audience while delivering

great information. This requires that you deliver a plentiful supply of inspirational stories and anecdotes — and that they all relate to your big idea.

One way to find inspiring examples is through other people. While visiting Holland, I was inspired by Richard Bottram. To raise awareness for cancer charities after he lost his wife to cancer, Bottram conceived the idea of the Wheel of Energy situated next to Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. Powered by people running in it at all times, this huge wheel turned 24 hours a day for one year. Bottram committed to run a marathon every single day for a year; that's 365 marathons! This amazing effort kept his worthy cause in the public's mind and also engaged people around the world to come and run in the Wheel of Energy with him. As I listened to Bottram's story I thought, Wow. This is amazing. I now call this the *wow* test. Whenever I find something inspiring that makes me say "wow," I write it down as a story for a future talk.

To make an even deeper connection with your audience and to be viewed as a more authentic speaker, share inspirational stories from your own personal experience. For instance, in 2010, I completed an Ironman triathlon in 36 C (97 F) heat, which included

a 3.8-km swim (2.4 mi), 180-km bike ride (112 mi) and a marathon at the end. It was by far the hardest physical challenge I ever faced. When I told a friend about the race, he said, "So what does triathlon mean? Tri ... *not-to-die*?" The Ironman is indeed a tough race, but I learned about my own inner strength from the experience of training consistently for over a year and pushing through the heat and physical discomfort during the race.

Such an experience could reinforce a point in one of my talks. I could use my 12-month training regime to illustrate the message that small, consistent steps can overcome seemingly huge obstacles. Or I could use the heat as a metaphor for the challenges we all face along the way to achieving something worthwhile. In your own speeches, look for ways to connect your inspirational story to your big idea. Practice delivering your story briefly, and be sure to show how it links to your big idea.

Find your "wows." What are you doing that you take for granted but other people think is amazing? A single mother bringing up four children has a wealth of insights, experiences and wisdom that could benefit many people. Your work, family, hobbies, achievements, failures, where you spend most of your time — even where you *would*

*like* to spend most of your time — are all sources for inspirational insights.

Be open to finding your stories. Save newspaper clippings (or online links to them) that depict inspirational scenes from your life that you can use in your next presentation. Use any handy recording device to capture ideas and re-listen to them so that you remember to work them into a talk or develop them into five-minute modules.

You can engage with your audience by sharing a big idea, polishing your content into five-minute modules and becoming a collector of inspirational stories that connect to your big idea. Try these out with, "Project 10: Inspire Your Audience" from the *Competent Communication* manual. While you're at it, take a look at the skills you can develop with *The Entertaining Speaker* manual from the *Advanced Communication Series*. Put it all together, and your audiences will remember what you teach them. Isn't that the point? **T**

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# THE 60-MINUTE STRETCH

Going from amateur to ace.

By Douglas Kruger, ATMS, CL

**B**efore rising to eminence, 1999 World Champion of Public Speaking Craig Valentine was asked by a Toastmaster whether he would deliver a keynote for a corporation. Valentine was taken aback when asked: “How much would you charge?”

“I speak for free,” he said.

The Toastmaster pointed out that the corporation was prepared to pay him a few thousand dollars.

“Like I said,” Valentine answered, “I speak for *fee*.”

Of course, most people don’t join Toastmasters with the intention of pursuing full-time speaking careers.

When I joined a small club in Florida, South Africa, I wasn’t even aware there *were* professional speakers. I simply wanted to bolster my resume. But the skills and competencies learned in Toastmasters are easily transferable to the world of paid corporate keynotes, and some members even make the leap to full-time professional speaking.

If you are toying with the idea of becoming a professional speaker, which Toastmasters fundamentals will benefit you?

## All the Basics Apply

Everything you’ve learned in Toastmasters still applies in a professional setting — just slightly differently. Pauses are still the stuff of goose bumps. Vocal variety still speaks to the soul. Eye contact is imperative.

Structure, on the other hand, is a different matter. Constructing a seven-minute speech can be relatively simple. Three major points — or one long story — will often do nicely. You can generally memorize and deliver a word-for-word script.

Sixty-minute keynotes are more complex. Structure is often determined by the nature of the presentation.

## What Type of Talk?

Although the topics on the speaking circuit can be as varied as your imagination allows, these are the more common frameworks for professional speeches:

- ▶ The inspiring life story — “I Climbed a Mountain”
- ▶ The educational — “Insights Into the Chinese Economy”
- ▶ The instructional — “How to Outsell the Giants in Your Industry”

The *inspiring life story* is for those who have overcome great odds and

taken away lessons. Naturally, this type of speech is difficult to manufacture if you haven’t been eaten by sharks, ran with the bulls or managed Google.

The *educational* speech tends to be the byproduct of career or professional expertise. For instance, international speaker Clem Sunter, who once headed the Anglo-American Corporation, now talks on scenario planning and business forecasting.

The *instructional* speech can draw on anything for topic matter, which essentially means, if you can research it — and make it entertaining — you can speak on it.

Of course, you are not limited to any one structure. You might give an instructional speech while incorporating some of your own inspiring true-life stories.

Remember this rule: The more saleable your topic, the greater your chances of professional speaking success. You must offer value. Think of a speech as a *product* rather than just a presentation. People buy your time and expertise, not just your performance. If your speech doesn’t teach them to be more effective, to profit

more in their endeavors, or to be happier or better in some way, they will not pay for it — *no matter how good your delivery.*

Paul du Toit, a National Speakers Association Certified Speaking Professional, says that corporations usually pay for professional speakers in order to solve a problem. He explains that a speaker's reputation for presentation delivery is important, but companies will more than likely make their selection based on the speaker's reputation as a subject expert. "It's fair to say," adds du Toit, "that

**"The onus is on you as a professional speaker to pack 'audience candy' into your talk."**

professional speakers can be described as 'experts who speak.'"

Carol Dean Schreiner, DTM, is an expert on the subject of humor. A member of two Toastmasters clubs in Oklahoma, Schreiner gives many presentations and seminars related to humor (as well as storytelling and building self-esteem); she tells audiences about the benefits of laughter — how it helps us communicate and bond with other people, and boosts our mental and physical well-being.

"Laughter radiates a positive attitude and a winning personality, which protects and prolongs life," notes Schreiner, the author of four books and a speaker at past Toastmasters International Conventions.

### **Ten Times as Long as a Manual Speech?**

It's rare that a speaker can make six tips last for 60 minutes, so how do you fill the time? This is where professional speeches tend to differ from Toastmasters ones. You can afford to spend a few minutes introducing yourself beyond what the

emcee says, and a few more playfully creating rapport with the audience.

Thereafter, spend some time positioning your topic by detailing the problem that your presentation will help solve. Don't rush into solutions too quickly. Start by building tension about the problem and its consequences, then — once the audience has been prepared — move toward your proposed solution.

Here is a practical example. In my keynote "Position Yourself as an Industry Expert," I spend some time talking about "The Pie Man and the

Guru," a metaphorical tale designed to express how undesirable it is to sell "one pie at a time." I point out it is more profitable to position yourself as the guru, so that your customers come to you *en masse*. I spend a few minutes talking about how hard the pie man works, how small his returns are and how he must always approach his customers rather than vice versa.

My audience members, particularly the sales people and entrepreneurs among them, relate strongly to the pie man's plight. And the more I develop the emotional and psychological drain of being an industry "pie man," the greater their involvement becomes. Soon, they are completely invested in hearing the solution.

Thereafter, I return to a classic Toastmasters structure. I deliver each of my six instructional points with two or three stories illustrating that point, filling most of my hour slot.

Naturally, the same way that the best instructional Toastmasters speeches are also entertaining, the

onus is on you as a professional speaker to pack significant amounts of humor, emotion, stories and other "audience candy" into your talk. Remember, you have to hold their attention for an hour.

### **The Hardest Part**

... is the marketing. There is a good deal of truth in the idea that high-quality speeches generate spin-off work. However, the reality of working as a full-time speaker is that most of your day will be filled with marketing yourself. Many books are dedicated to this topic and they're often worth the money. Joining the National Speakers Association is, too.

Don't describe yourself vaguely in your marketing. A message like, "I speak on any topic, including sales, leadership, customer service or team-building" is insipid when compared to, "I speak on seven tactical ways to out-innovate your most creative competitor." The more specific your topic, the stronger your marketing appeal will be.

Professional speakers who started and continue with Toastmasters will always have an advantage. And many existing professionals would benefit greatly from joining a Toastmasters club. Are you keen to straddle both worlds? Try your hand at creating your first 60-minute presentation. **T**

**Douglas Kruger, ATMS, CL**, is a member of Sandton Toastmasters in Johannesburg, South Africa, who represented Africa in the finals of the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking in 2004, 2005 and 2007. He is the author of three books, including *50 Ways to Become a Better Speaker*. Reach him at [dougaskruger.co.za](http://dougaskruger.co.za).

# GET BACK ON TRACK

How to handle a lost train of thought.

By Howard Scott, ACB

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**Y**ou are going along fine. Sentence after sentence comes smoothly out of your mouth. The audience laughs at the appropriate spots. Their bodies are bent forward, their faces expectant. You pause, look around. They are eager for what comes next. And then —

“Dead silence is better than an apology. It can even add drama to a point while remembering words.”

and then — you forget. Your mind races, but for all the treasure in the world, you can't remember the *next* thought in your talk. Drops of sweat form on your forehead, your tie tightens and the silence turns rancid.

How do you proceed?

We have all been there. Anyone can go blank, lose a train of thought, or become distracted or confused if a key point is lost. No matter the situation, such a memory lapse can rattle the speaker, break the audience's concentration and reduce the overall effectiveness of the talk.

It can also be an opportunity. Yes, that's right, it shows that you are human and gives you a chance to display grace under pressure. Or, in Toastmasters terms, it offers you a chance to show off your ability to *improvise* — think Table Topics — until you find your way back on track.

There are other benefits. Recovering from a memory lapse gracefully usually helps a speaker garner audience support. People love to root for an underdog. What's more, discovering that you have the ability to recover will build your confidence to handle unpredictable situations

you might face in the future. Think of the witty way that 1974 Academy Awards co-host David Niven dealt with the sudden disruption of a stalker running behind him across the stage. Without missing a beat, Niven noted that “probably the only laugh that man will ever get in his life is by stripping off and showing his shortcomings.”

Of course, the most popular way to avoid memory lapses is to *practice, practice and practice some more*. The plan is to rehearse the speech so many times that you could recite the words in your sleep. Most speakers work through these repetitions an average of 20 to 50 times.

Sometimes a memory lapse occurs anyway. If it happens to you, try the following strategies to survive and thrive through the challenge:

**Use your visual memory.** Envision your notes for the presentation in your head. Picture the bulleted outline of that section of your speech. Can you see it on a 3x5 index card? Now look at the spot where you left off and *see* — in your mind's eye — what's next. Run through a mental list of some key words that might trigger recognition. While visualizing your way back, fool the audience into believing everything is going as planned. Try some of the following ideas for that.

**Do something physical.** It gives you time to think. For example, walk in a circle then pick up where you left off. The audience will think the movement is part of your performance. Prepare in advance a gesture so it appears rehearsed. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination. Take a humorous approach: Try dropping to your knees and staring at the presentation board, as if you're contemplating the information. Look up and raise your hands skyward as if you're appealing to the gods. Or turn to the side, and stare off into the distance as if you are deep in thought. Whatever you do, ham it up. Then laugh *with* the audience as you resume speaking.

**Tell a joke or anecdote.** If you make the joke/anecdote relevant, the audience will perceive it as a part of the performance. So, in advance, come up with an



appropriate comment and practice the delivery so the transition is seamless.

Former Toastmaster Janet Reese, DTM, principal of Reese Communications in Centennial, Colorado, says, “Have a universal hip-pocket anecdote — a current event, personal story, news item relevant to the speech — that you can slip in.” Denis Shevchuk, CC, CL, of the Moscow Free Speakers club in Moscow, Russia, agrees. “Sometimes I turn an embarrassing moment into a joke,” he says.

**Ask the audience a rhetorical question.** It could be as simple as, “What do you think?” Or choose a good rhetorical question for your subject. No response is required to give the speaker time to recollect. You could also try a *real* question. It could be, “What do you think happens next?” or “What is the circumference of the earth?” If no one knows the answer, supply it — 24,901.55 miles (40,075.16 kilometers) at the equator — then continue.

Joe Sharp, CC, of the Bright Monday club in Rochester, Minnesota, suggests this process: “Pause, calm yourself and ask for a response from the audience, like, ‘How would

*you* feel under these circumstances?’ Listen to the answer, paraphrase the response, thank the commentator, and by this time, you are on track.”

**Simply pause, looking at the audience.** Make strong eye contact with different people and take a minute to recover yourself. Something happens during pauses. The audience catches their collective breath. Emotions are stirred. Senses are heightened. The great jazz musician Miles Davis said about music, the thing is “not to play all the notes you could play, but to wait, hesitate and let space become part of the configuration.”

This also applies to speeches. “Never apologize for a lapse,” says Dick Dorsett, CC, of the Tumwater Talkers club in Tumwater, Washington. “Dead silence is better than an apology. It can even add drama to a point while remembering words.”

**Look casually at inked notes on your arm or hand.** Remember high school, where some students wrote information on an arm for a test? Then, it was called cheating, but now it is called a speech aid. Cast your head down as if in thought, and flip your

hand or arm to see the notes. Scan the notes. Of course, you must make sure the audience doesn’t ever see them. When you know what is next, look up as though you’ve just received an epiphany. This might seem like acting, but after all, you *are* a performer.

**As a last resort, look at your notes.** Though it won’t add points to your performance, reading from notes is not ruination. Regardless of whether you have to resort to this last-ditch measure or not, it is a good idea to make up a card of notes, if for no other reason that its presence is reassuring. You could keep some sort of prop at the lectern and pretend that you are moving there to pick it up. While grabbing it, take a look at your notes. Hint: Use big print and color coding!

With such an arsenal of strategies, losing your place will never again be a problem. 📖

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# A CURE FOR BLANKING OUT

What research found down memory lane.

By Matt Abrahams

**F**orgetting parts of your presentation when standing before an audience can have dramatic and traumatic implications. Consider politicians and how memory gaffes can damage their credibility. Exhibit A: Texas Governor Rick Perry, who suffered a long memory lapse during an early November 2011 nationally televised debate among U.S. Republican presidential candidates. Perry's painfully awkward stumble provided endless fodder for political observers, media pundits — and stand-up comedians.

Then, just days later, fellow U.S. presidential candidate Herman Cain suffered a similar memory lapse when newspaper journalists asked him about U.S. relations with Libya.

The public speaking students I teach, the executives I coach and the people I interviewed for my book *Speaking Up without Freaking Out* have all told me that their greatest fear about speaking

is forgetting their content. Thankfully, memory research offers some very specific advice for effective remembering — tips that can reduce speaking jitters and help us avoid embarrassment.

## **Take care of your body and your memory will follow.**

This sounds like what your parents told you: Eat well, exercise and get plenty of sleep. Unfortunately, with a big presentation deadline looming, people often fail to heed this simple advice. Paying attention to how you treat yourself can alleviate your anxiety and improve your memory. In the wake of Perry's and Cain's "brain-freeze" moments in the presidential race, scientists noted that anxiety, fatigue, stress and time pressure can all affect the brain's ability to retrieve information.

▶ **Eat a balanced meal.** Anna Miller, a nutrition professor at De Anza College in Cupertino, California, suggests eating

a healthy meal or substantial snack one to two hours before speaking. The meal or snack should "consist of healthy carbs, lean protein, healthy fats," says Miller. "Balance matters." Complex carbohydrates, nuts and oils help in memory formation and retention. So, like an athlete before an event, you might want to carbo-load when preparing an important presentation.

▶ **Choose your drinks carefully.** Caffeine facilitates creativity and productivity, but it also can bring on jitters, dry mouth and flighty memory. So it makes sense to go for an energy drink like Red Bull when preparing a speech, but it's not a good idea just before delivering it. As for alcohol, remember: Although alcohol might be tempting as a relaxation tool, laboratory evidence suggests it causes forgetfulness and "loosens the tongue," which might lead to undesirable outcomes.



► **Get physical.** Exercise can improve memory and reduce anxiety. Exercise physiologists and psychologists have found that people with lower percentages of body fat and lower average resting heart rates handle stressful situations better than those who are not as fit. Additionally, physical activity increases lung capacity and bolsters mental focus, two very important components for competent speaking. Finally, exercise allows for the release of pent-up anxiety and stress. Going for a walk, swim or bike ride prior to writing or practicing a speech can really help reduce

“Paying attention to how you treat yourself can alleviate your anxiety and improve your memory.”

anxiety and improve performance. The calming effect that results comes not just from getting outside and distancing yourself from your stress, but also from your body’s release of natural endorphins.

► **Catch a few Zs.** Research shows that high-quality, deep sleep is involved in memory formation. So a good night’s sleep helps you feel refreshed and remember more. Dr. Arjun Chatterjee, a Pulmonary, Critical Care and Sleep Disorders specialist, reports the importance of sleep: “The two major activities in sleep are restoration and organization. Your memories get organized in reverse order — the last thing experienced gets dealt with first. Thus, to maximize your rest and restoration as well as your memory organization, try to get lots of sleep the night before any major presentation.” Additionally, sleep helps with creativity and energy. So a good night’s sleep gets your brain

ready to learn and consolidates your new memories so that you can recall them more easily.

### **Where you learn is as important as what you learn.**

The location where you practice your presentation should be similar to where you will present it. This concept is called *state-dependent learning*. The context in which you learn helps you remember. For example, if you are going to give a speech in a small room with several windows, where people will presumably be quiet and attentive, you should

practice giving the speech in a small room with windows. Practicing in a place similar to where you will be presenting will facilitate your ability to remember. Also, you will be more confident because you know what to expect from the setting.

### **Consider the what, when and how of remembering.**

According to Palo Alto (California) University Social Sciences Professor Mark Healy, “You can change how you approach preparing and practicing your presentation, but your brain never changes its approach to organizing information and consolidating what it knows.” Over the past decade, those who have done academic research on remembering have changed their suggestions for the best ways to study.

Researchers are finding that, instead of relying on lengthy cramming sessions, varying what you study and taking breaks while learning helps in remembering your content. Further,

this approach reduces anxiety because you are not constantly feeling the heavy weight of time pressure. Next, self-testing appears more effective than repetition. For speakers, this new research suggests that you should focus on learning the content of your speech in multiple blocks of time — say 20 minutes each — with breaks in between. These breaks help with long-term remembering and allow the onslaught of stress hormones to abate.

While learning, you should practice different portions of your speech, rather than fixating on one part until it becomes fully memorized. Healy states, “Breaking your presentation into manageable, cohesive chunks helps your brain organize itself around your presentation.” Then, rather than simply saying your speech multiple times, you should test your recall of the content by asking yourself questions, such as “What is my central message?” and “How do I support my third claim?”

With help from memory research, you *can* maintain your poise. By eating properly, exercising, sleeping well, and focusing on where, when, how and what you practice, you will reduce your anxiety, improve your memory and avoid blanking out. **T**

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# THE LANGUAGE OF LAWYERS

Reaching a verdict on communication in the legal arena.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

**I**ntensely questioning a witness or eloquently arguing before a jury — that is what usually comes to mind when we think of the work lawyers do. Maybe that’s because of the explosive legal proceedings depicted in classic films ranging from *To Kill a Mockingbird* to *A Few Good Men*, and in television shows such as *Law & Order* and the old British series, *Rumpole of the Bailey*.

“Most people don’t understand that connecting emotionally is what communication is about.”

But those dramatic images of courtroom oratory don’t reflect the typical working lives of most attorneys. Their day-to-day efforts, attorneys say, often revolve around less-glamorous activities, such as doing legal research, drafting contracts and negotiating settlements. For many, writing skills are emphasized over public speaking. “Oral communication definitely gets underplayed to writing,” says James Grant, an attorney at Gordon & Rees, LLP, in Seattle, Washington. “There’s an expectation that you’ll write your briefs and when the motion comes, you’ll go and argue them.”

As it is in many careers, speaking proficiency is simply assumed. How-

ever, successful lawyers work hard at their communication skills — both listening and speaking.

## A Lesson Learned

Toastmasters International President Michael Notaro, DTM, a real estate attorney in Alameda, California, remembers how, early in his legal career, he represented a San Francisco fisherman in a case that went to trial.

As the proceedings wound down, he believed the verdict would definitely arrive in his favor. Then he delivered his closing statement.

“As I began speaking, I could tell the jury was paying no attention to me,” he recalled in a September 2011 article in the *Toastmaster* magazine. “They were bored. Juror number one was staring at ants on the ceiling. Juror number four was studying cracks in the vinyl flooring.”

When the verdict was announced, Notaro lost 11 to 1, with the jurors later saying his speaking was too mechanical and stiff. The attorney, now a 27-year Toastmasters veteran, said the experience taught him a valuable lesson about the impact of public speaking.

David Henderson, Toastmasters’ 2010 World Champion of Public Speaking, is a prosecutor in Bexar County, Texas, which includes the city of San Antonio. Representing victims of sex crimes, domestic violence and crimes against children, he argues before juries regularly. Henderson says he initially joined Toastmasters so he wouldn’t get visibly emotional in the courtroom. “I failed completely,” he confesses about that original goal. So he decided to make a new goal for himself: Help the jurors “to understand *why* I was emotional. That gets them emotionally invested too.”

A member of the Brighton Toastmasters club in San Antonio, Henderson showed just how well he could connect with audiences when he won the 2010 International Speech Contest with a powerfully moving presentation about coping with loss.

“Most people don’t understand that [connecting emotionally] is what communication is about,” he says. “They think it’s about articulating themselves well.”

## Confidence Is Key

Whether they are in the courtroom or the conference room, attorneys must convey confidence. Grant, who practices labor and employment law, says he exhibits confidence by using a “loud, unwavering tone without a lot of ‘ums’ or ‘ahs,’ having good posture

and ‘owning the room.’” He notes that sometimes this can be a tricky balancing act, because he has to show “appropriate humble confidence in front of a judge” yet also maintain a “stubborn confidence in [my] position.”

Toastmaster Karima Mariama-Arthur, who practices corporate law in the Washington, D.C., area, says it is important to show confidence as a female lawyer. “[I am] always mindful of how I’m sitting, holding my body and using facial expressions,” she says. “As a woman, sometimes gender plays a role. I try to have a stern, academic look, because if you’re smiling too much, they [opposing counsel] don’t take you as seriously.”

A member of two Toastmasters clubs in Washington, D.C., Mariama-

Arthur says she also displays confidence verbally. “I choose words precisely when describing an idea or getting at the heart of an argument.”

### Listening in the Legal Arena

To be an effective oral communicator, an attorney first needs to listen. “You have to listen to your clients so you can make their stories real to a jury,” says Henderson, adding that listening is a key part of earning his clients’ trust and becoming a zealous advocate for them.

Attorneys must also listen to the opposing side and the judge in any legal proceeding. Grant says sometimes a client might provide too much information during a deposition, but the opposing counsel won’t catch a

weakness in the case because of a failure to listen. “They obviously were going down the list and checking off the next question,” notes Grant. “You can’t be so dedicated to [a] list of questions that you don’t pay attention to the answer.”

Attorney David Pisarra, a member of Westside Toastmasters in Santa Monica, California, practices family law, focusing on men’s and father’s rights in custody and support cases. He stresses the importance of listening closely to a judge to make sure you hear his or her directions correctly.

### The Keys to Clarity

Mariama-Arthur emphasizes the importance of clarity to make sure she is understood by clients, especially in

## FOR THE RECORD

Toastmasters International President Michael Notaro, DTM, is a licensed real estate broker and principal attorney at the Notaro Law Group. He offers the following advice for lawyers and aspiring lawyers who want to hone their communication skills through the Toastmasters educational program:

### ADVICE

Learn to think and speak on your feet so you can successfully argue motions in court.

Learn how to make a persuasive argument.

Learn to make eye contact with jurors — not just the judge.

Learn to think about the purpose of communication at each stage of a trial. For example, an attorney should be the center of attention during a closing argument, but not during the questioning of a witness.

### PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Regularly participate in Table Topics and give evaluations, both of which require analyzing information and presenting yourself clearly with little to no preparation time.

Also consider “Project 1: Impromptu Speaking” in the *Specialty Speeches* manual from the *Advanced Communication Series*. This project will teach you how to anticipate and prepare for an impromptu speech that is five to seven minutes long.

Tackle “Project 9: Persuade with Power” in the *Competent Communication* manual. Then work through the *Persuasive Speaking* manual in the *Advanced Communication Series*.

When delivering manual speeches, know your material well enough to reference notes only briefly, so you can make lasting eye contact. Also see “Project 5: Your Body Speaks” in the *Competent Communication* manual, which includes tips on eye contact.

Work on “Project 3: Get to the Point” in the *Competent Communication* manual to practice identifying the general and specific purposes of a speech.

civil litigation, which she had exposure to as an intern at the Cochran Firm in Los Angeles. “We assume everyone is listening or moving at our pace, but they’re not,” she says. “We have to slow down, organize our thoughts and make a roadmap, so clients understand where they are and where they’re going.”

Lawyers need to be clear with witnesses and juries too. Todd Baldwin, a criminal defense attorney in Washington, D.C., remembers the story of a lawyer who asked a witness if he was shot in a fracas.

“We have to slow down, organize our thoughts and make a roadmap, so clients understand where they are and where they’re going.”

The witness replied, “No, I was shot midway between the fracas and the navel.” Baldwin recommends using simple, direct language.

Pisarra, the family-law attorney, says pausing is another technique to improve clarity. “The value of the pause is not just to remove the clutter words,” he notes, “but to allow the other side, particularly the judge, to understand what has been said. Many attorneys try to pepper the judge with facts, rather than letting a single fact hit a judge and sink in. A pause is better than a barrage.”

### Prepared for Cleverness

Not only do lawyers need to be confident and clear, they need to be confident and clear *off the cuff*. “You have to think on your feet in court,” says Baldwin. “Good lawyers are listening and reacting, rather than just going through a script.” This follows the nature of legal presenting, in which (with the exception of oft-dramatized opening and closing arguments in a

trial) lawyers seldom speak uninterrupted for long stretches of time. They have to be mentally quick in order to listen, analyze and articulate in a matter of seconds.

Speaking off the cuff doesn’t mean winging it. “It’s hard to have a pre-set speech, but you do need a complete understanding of what’s going on and what could come up,” says Grant, the labor-law attorney in Seattle. He prepares and rehearses his opening lines, but speaks from a one-page outline of his main argument and a thick binder with tabs for each area of

legal research he has done to address points that could possibly be raised by opposing counsel.

Mariama-Arthur agrees that it isn’t effective to follow a set strategy and script. She thinks of herself “as a chameleon” and points out that attorneys “have to be flexible, and sometimes you have to back away from a planned strategy so you can do what’s best for your client in a particular situation.”


### Always Improving

Successful attorneys need well-developed listening and oral communication skills, but not everyone comes by those skills in the same way. Many lawyers have a background in high school or college theater, debate or public speaking. Baldwin, who is trained in acting, doesn’t discount the experience he gained selling Kirby Vacuum Cleaners in college. “I was always closing [sales], which taught me a lot about working with people and selling.” He also finds

continuing legal-education sessions that provide hands-on practice with closing arguments, as well as classes offered at conferences hosted by the National Association of Trial Lawyer Executives, to be useful.

Other lawyers, like Henderson, Mariama-Arthur, Notaro and Pisarra, joined Toastmasters to hone their communication skills. “One of the things that Toastmasters has radically improved is my ability to do on-the-spot speaking through Table Topics,” says Pisarra.

And would-be lawyers with stage fright shouldn’t let their fears stop them from pursuing a legal career — even seasoned lawyers get jittery. After 15 years as a criminal defense attorney, Baldwin concedes, “I still feel nervous when I go to trial.” But he says routine hearings are much easier. “If you do it often enough, you don’t feel so nervous.”

For most in the legal profession, practicing law might not be filled with dramatic “you-can’t-handle-the-truth” moments, as seen in *A Few Good Men*. But the truth about being a successful attorney — no matter how much time a lawyer spends in court — is all about developing effective listening and powerful speaking skills. 

**Christine Clapp, DTM**, is a member of the United States Senate Toastmasters club in Washington, D.C. As president of Spoken with Authority, she develops the voice of experts who want to broaden their impact. Her new iTunes app is called *Master Public Speaking for All Occasions*. Contact her at [christine@spokenwithauthority.com](mailto:christine@spokenwithauthority.com).



# MIND YOUR LECTERN MANNERS

Let your etiquette shine in the spotlight.

By Robert A. Richert, DTM

**C**hris Gregory, DTM, of the Helmsmen Toastmasters in Huntington Beach, California, tells about a meeting where a Toastmaster shocked everyone *after* his speech. As it happened, this person was the final speaker before a break, and when he was done talking, he abruptly marched out the door. “We all just sat there wondering and waiting,” says Gregory. “Thankfully, the president came to the lectern and sent us on the break.”

Sound familiar? Incidents like this are not uncommon in most clubs — and it’s not always the inexperienced member who abruptly leaves the lectern unattended. Sometimes experienced members become carried away with their thoughts and just walk away.

Some people grip the lectern throughout their talk the way the *Peanuts* comic-strip character Linus clings to his blanket. In contrast, professional speaker Jack Nichols, DTM,

of the Int’l City and Professional Speakers clubs in Southern California, says that others treat the lectern like poison oak. “They will walk around it but not touch it,” he notes. “The lectern is not a crutch *or* a black hole; it is a tool for speakers. I use the lectern at every major presentation.”

The manner in which members approach, greet each other, speak at and leave the lectern is important in Toastmasters. Lectern etiquette and use are leadership training tools that teach us discipline, enable us to demonstrate good manners, provide for smooth transitions between program segments and help establish a sense of order. Here are some guidelines to help you properly use the lectern.

## **First, Lectern or Podium: Which Is It?**

In years past, Toastmasters International defined the lectern and podium as two distinct entities: The lectern was the stand that held notes, and the

podium was the raised platform on which a speaker would stand. Over the years, however, many metaphorical references to *speaking from the podium* have altered the usage of these terms so that the distinction is not as sharply defined as before. The *Oxford English Dictionary* now defines a podium as a *raised platform*, first, and a *lectern*, second. It should be noted that this second definition is used mostly in a figurative discussion of a speaker’s setting. For the purposes of this article, the original meaning of *lectern* applies.

## **Approach the Lectern and Greet Your Host**

Once you are introduced, don’t spend excessive time approaching the lectern. Avoid making side comments to people along the way. Approach in a confident manner, and shake hands with your host. (Throughout this article, the word *host* is used as a generic term for the member who introduces speakers, be it the Toastmaster, Topics-

master, General Evaluator or whoever else is filling that role.)

If you are carrying materials to the lectern, keep your right hand free so that you can comfortably shake hands. If both hands are full, put the objects down on or near the lectern and then shake hands. Substantial visual aids should be set up before you are introduced — and prior to the meeting, if possible.

### Control the Lectern

When you take control of the lectern, you are assuming a leadership role. My Toastmasters mentors used to say, “While at the lectern, a Toastmaster never appears apologetic.” They meant that you should be prepared, confident and in charge. Here are some suggested guidelines.

▶ Once you have greeted the host — and as your host is leaving the lectern — acknowledge him or her with applause. Next, turn to the audience members and greet them. The most commonly used greeting is, “Fellow Toastmasters and honored guests...”

▶ Set anything you are holding, including a pen, eyeglasses, notes or other objects on the lectern. Unless you intend to begin your speech by displaying one of these potentially distracting items, free your hands *before* you begin to speak.

▶ Step back a few inches from the lectern to avoid leaning on it. Next, spread your feet to shoulder width so you won’t rock back and forth.

▶ Do not use the gavel. It is for use only by the president or presiding officer.

▶ As the host, avoid leaving the lectern unattended. In general, Toastmasters etiquette discourages leaving the lectern unattended. However, certain situations may require you to leave the lectern briefly, for example to help set up visual aids, retrieve an object or in case of an emergency. If you must leave the lectern, always announce your intentions *before* you go — don’t just walk away! If you must leave the lectern for more than a few seconds, declare a brief *recess* first. Be careful with the terminology: Do not use the word *adjourn* when you mean *recess*, because adjourning the meeting means it is over.

### Leave the Lectern in Good Hands


It is never proper for a member to abruptly leave the lectern after speaking. If you are about to relinquish control of the lectern, always:

▶ Stay at the lectern until the next person arrives — the host, not the next speaker — to take your place.

▶ Shake hands with the host, pick up your materials and then relinquish the lectern.

▶ If you must cross paths with the host who has just approached, *step back and walk behind the host*. Never walk in front of the member taking control of the lectern.

▶ Walk directly back to your seat.

Use the lectern properly to increase meeting efficiency, help foster a professional atmosphere and promote leadership training. 

**Robert Richert, DTM**, is a member of the Century Toastmasters and Helmsmen Toastmasters clubs in Huntington Beach, California. Reach him at [richertart.com](http://richertart.com).

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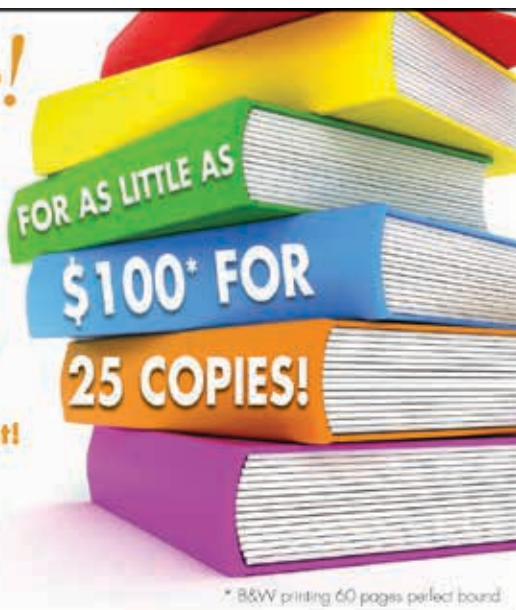
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# YOU ARE A BRILLIANT WOMAN

Seven things women should remember about public speaking.

By Tara Sophia Mohr

**Y**ou are brilliant.

Your ideas? Incredible. Your questions? Insightful. Your critiques of the status quo? Right on.

I keep meeting brilliant women like you, with compelling ideas to contribute, important businesses and organizations to build, and provocative questions to share. But so often, the way you communicate fails to command power. You equivocate, apologize and look away as you speak.

I do this too. We subtly undermine ourselves with our words and body

Of course you have questions. There is nothing surprising about it.

“In Toastmasters, we call these words, like ‘just’ or ‘actually,’ ‘verbal garbage,’” says Jana Barnhill, who served as Toastmasters International President in 2008–2009. “Many women don’t realize how those words sabotage their speaking.”

**3. Don’t tell people why the words you are about to say are likely to be wrong.** Avoid starting sentences with phrases such as, “I haven’t re-

**4. Don’t tell us you are going to “take only a minute”** to say something. Often, in presentations or meetings, I hear women say, “I’d like to ask you to take just a minute to consider this idea” or “Now, I’m going to take a few minutes to tell you about our product.” Think about how much stronger it sounds to simply say, “I’d like to tell you about our product.”

Go ahead and only take a minute, if that’s appropriate, but skip using the phrase “just a minute” in a talk or presentation. It sounds apologetic and implies that you don’t think what you are about to say is worthy of time and attention.

**5. Don’t make your sentences sound like questions.** Women often raise the pitch of their voice at the end of a sentence, making it sound like a question. Listen to your own language and that of women around you, and you are likely to notice this everywhere. Unsurprisingly, speaking a statement like a question diminishes its power.

Pam Fox Rollin, executive coach and author of *42 Rules for Your New Leadership Role*, says, “When I coach women executives, we look at how they can communicate more influentially. We may wish otherwise, but human brains are not wired to accept guidance from wispy, hurried, question-inflected voices.”

Make statements sound like statements — drop your tone lower at the end.

“Go ahead and only take a minute, if that’s appropriate, but skip using the phrase ‘just a minute’ in a talk or presentation.”

language. As a result, our ideas do not have the impact they could. Here are seven ways you might be undermining yourself — and seven ways to stop.

**1. Drop the “just.”** Avoid using phrases like “I’m just wondering ...,” “I just think ...,” and “I just want to add ...” The word “just” demeans what you have to say. It shrinks your power. It is time to say goodbye to the “justs.”

**2. While you are at it, drop the “actually.”** “I actually have a question.” “I actually want to add something.” “Actually” communicates a sense of surprise that you have something to say. Of course you want to add something.

searched this much but ...”; “I’m just thinking off the top of my head but ...”; “You’ve clearly been studying this longer than I have, but ...”

We use these kinds of qualifiers for several reasons. We do not want to appear arrogant. We are not completely sure about what we are saying. We fear being wrong, so we buffer the sting of a critical response by saying up front, “I’m not totally standing behind what I am about to say, but ...” Then, no one has the chance to say back, “Well, I know you strongly believe this, but I entirely disagree.”

No matter what the reason, this takes away from the power of your voice. It’s time to change the habit.

## ADVICE FROM FEMALE PIPS

More than 25 years ago, Helen Blanchard became Toastmasters International's first female International President. Since then, five more women have held that position, and more than half of the organization's 270,000 members are female.

Here are some time-tested tips from female past International Presidents to help all women in business:

- ▶ **Accept challenges.** "I accepted challenges that made me reach far beyond my comfort zone, time and again," said Helen Blanchard (1985–1986) in her memoir, *Breaking the Ice*. By going the extra mile and taking the time to prepare for challenges, Blanchard says you will earn the confidence of supervisors and likely land that promotion you've been looking for.
- ▶ **Work with change.** "Dramatic changes are taking place throughout the world," notes Pauline Shirley (1994–1995). "These changes are all-encompassing and happen at a more rapid pace than ever. It is essential that we constantly adjust to these changes." Shirley's advice: "In everything you do, strive to make a change for the better!"
- ▶ **Be a team player.** Other people's strengths will balance your weaknesses. Good communication is crucial. "Too often we work apart rather than together," said the late Jo Anna McWilliams (2000–2001). "A team can work more effectively and accomplish something much bigger than a group of the same individuals working on their own. Effectiveness comes from the diversity of skills and individual personalities of others."
- ▶ **Face your fears and find courage.** "We, as women, are just as intelligent, just as capable, just as worthy as men to be successful in business," says Jana Barnhill (2008–2009). "We just have to fight a little harder. In order to do that, we must have the courage, and the skill, to speak up. Don't let a lack of confidence keep you from your dreams!"
- ▶ **Be an active listener.** "To achieve your own personal brand of greatness and become an effective leader, you must listen, using your whole body," says Pat Johnson (2010–2011). "We need to listen to what someone says, and then we need to engage our brains to think about our response before speaking."

**6. Don't substitute a question for a statement.** You might think you are "suggesting" increasing the marketing budget by asking, "What about increasing the marketing budget?" in a meeting, but your colleagues aren't likely to hear an opinion (and certainly not a well-thought-out opinion) in your question. When you have something to say, do not couch it in a question.

Sometimes, of course, there are strategic reasons to use a question rather than a statement: to gently introduce an idea to a group that is likely to be resistant to it, for example. But women often turn to questions rather than statements because we are avoiding conflict, avoiding visibility and avoiding claiming power. We use questions because we

have heard old stories about it being dangerous or inappropriate to state our ideas definitively, and we can't see how sharing our perspective boldly and directly could actually hugely benefit our careers. It's time to let the old stories go.

**7. Punctuate and pause.** Imagine sitting across a table listening to a woman share this: "*We are working hard on this, because we want to get the business up and running by 2013, specifically April 2013, which is the target date, and we are very optimistic that with the right financing we can get there, and so that is why I've been approaching different investors every day.*"

You know this type of communication: Clauses get piled on top of one another, the speaker interrupting her own thoughts with digressions.

When we don't feel we have the right to take up space in a meeting or conversation, or when we are nervous, we tend to rush, and never leave a moment without words. Brief pauses between your sentences connote confidence and a sense of comfort in the role of speaker. Pauses allow the listener to absorb what you are saying and give you a moment to gather a deep breath and collect your thoughts.

How does it feel, in contrast, to imagine listening to this: "*We are working hard on this. We want to get the business up and running by April 2013. We are very optimistic that with the right financing we can get there. I am approaching different investors every day.*"

All that has changed is punctuation, but the second speaker sounds calmer and more on top of her plan. Punctuate and pause.

### How to Make Change

How do you begin changing your speech? Start by increasing your awareness of the unhelpful speech patterns you currently use and be mindful of your intention to speak differently.

### Focus on one habit at a time.

Executive communication-skills trainer Jeanne Marie Grumet recommends that you make changes to your speech patterns one at a time. Focus on one that stands out to you. For example, for a few weeks you might work on noticing when you use a question rather than a statement when you have an opinion to share. Then work on changing that. Next you might shift to noticing your “justs” and eliminating them.


**Practice, with feedback.** Barnhill stresses the importance of practice: “You cannot learn the art of speaking by reading a book about it. The only way to reach a high level of skill is through practice — but the right kind of practice — practice with appropriate feedback. Speaking practice must be followed with

constructive feedback about what you are doing well and what you need to do to make changes.”

Fox Rollin, executive coach and author, also believes feedback is essential to improving communication skills. She tells of one of her clients — a divisional CFO — who struggled with being taken seriously. “Her breathy, question-inflected voice came across poorly, especially on conference calls. Yet she had trouble evaluating her own voice. She asked a good colleague to be her ‘inflection buddy’ and let her know via chat and after-meeting feedback when she was on- and off-track in communicating powerfully. This made a huge difference for her in figuring out what works.”

**Keep being yourself.** Women have unique ways of communicating — ways that tend to be more

collaborative, consensus building and inviting. These new habits are not about adopting an authoritative communication style that doesn’t sit right with you in your heart. They are about giving up the self-diminishing patterns that stem from being afraid of power or from believing our inner critic, and as a result, sharing our ideas tentatively.

As Fox Rollin puts it, “Be yourself ... your most grounded, confident, influential self.” 

**Tara Sophia Mohr** is a women’s leadership and well-being expert, and creator of “10 Rules for Brilliant Women,” as well as the global Playing Big leadership program for women. Visit [taramohr.com](http://taramohr.com) to learn more.



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# THE VOICE OF SUCCESS

Meet FreeToastHost founder, entrepreneur and podcast host Bo Bennett, DTM.

**I**n 2004, **Toastmaster** Bo Bennett, DTM, used his high-tech entrepreneurial skills to build FreeToastHost (FTH) — the first free Web hosting platform specifically designed for Toastmasters clubs. The site provides templates and tools that make club and district websites easy to create and maintain. Today nearly 10,000 clubs and districts benefit from it. Bennett also hosts the official Toastmasters Podcast with his business partner, Ryan Levesque, CC, CL.

sance Advanced Toastmasters, he lives with his wife and two children near Boston, Massachusetts.

## **Q. When and why did you join Toastmasters?**

I joined Toastmasters in 2003 after a painfully embarrassing presentation I attempted to give at a conference. I froze like the proverbial deer in the headlights. Although my mouth was open, no words made it out. This continued for what seemed like several minutes

education is in computer science, religious studies, philosophy and virtually all the sciences. As for an occupation, I'd have to say philosopher, business owner and author — in the order of where my mind is most of the time.

## **You mention you are a philosopher; what advice can you offer?**

We all are philosophers to some extent, and we all can appreciate the wisdom shared by others. But when it comes to thinking and adopting a philosophy by which to live, we all need to be leaders, not followers.

## **What's the most common question you get about FTH?**

How clubs can *upgrade* from FTH 1.0 to 2.0. It is important to understand that it is not really an “upgrade process,” but more of a *rebuild* process where clubs create their new FTH 2.0 site while using their 1.0 site. When their 2.0 site is ready, they shut down the old site and start using the new. We have detailed information on this at [freetoasthost.org](http://freetoasthost.org).

## **What's your advice to people who encounter problems with FTH?**

Visit [support.toastmastersclubs.org](http://support.toastmastersclubs.org).

“When it comes to thinking and adopting a philosophy by which to live, we all need to be leaders, not followers.”

The author of the book *Year to Success*, Bennett has an impressive record of personal achievement. After paying his own way through college, he started a graphic design firm, which he sold a year later. A self-taught computer programmer, he created one of the first affiliate systems and Web hosting interfaces, Adgrafix, and sold it in 2001. The following day, he started his current enterprise, Archieboy Holdings, LLC, a holding company for individual Web ventures. Bennett then developed some of these ventures into corporations, which he sold at a profit. A member of Renais-

— possibly the longest minutes of my life.

At first, I denied that I really did that badly. Then I got very angry at anyone who said that I did. I bargained with myself that I would do better if given another chance. Then I just got depressed and didn't really care anymore. I finally accepted the fact that I needed help, and I joined Toastmasters.

## **What's your educational background and occupation?**

I graduated from Bryant College with a bachelor's degree in marketing, but my continuing



**Bo Bennett**

With FTH 2.0, we have an amazing team of “FreeToastHost Ambassadors” who, without being asked, started devoting much of their time to helping other club administrators with their move to FTH 2.0. Thank you, Alan, Jane, Roger and Bill. And of course, Brian, our lead technical advisor, is there to help.

**Tell us about a time when your Toastmasters training paid off.**

Prior to joining Toastmasters, I would have never attempted stand-up comedy. For about a year, I took my “act” to the local comedy club circuit. It wasn’t good, but no matter how poorly the audience was responding, I was relaxed. This allowed me to turn the would-be sympathy laughs into genuine giggles.

**What surprised you most about Toastmasters?**

The fact that it would become such a major part of my life. My initial goal was to join, learn to speak, then leave. I feel like one of those college kids who refuses to graduate.

**How did you get the idea for the podcast and what do you hope to accomplish with it?**

The idea came to me when my Toastmasters friend gave me a

CD from the National Speaker’s Association. It was like a monthly radio show distributed on CDs. I loved it — and I immediately started thinking about how I could make it better. Since I am not a member of the NSA, I did it for Toastmasters, starting with my district.

**What motivated you to write your book, *Year to Success*?**

I started writing the book in 2003, a couple years after I sold my first company of significant value. I wrote the book as “instructions” for my own children, who, hopefully, will one day understand the information and put it to practice.

**How do you define success?**

In a financial sense, it’s being financially free — that is, never having to work for money again, but being able to devote your life to that which you are most passionate. In a professional sense, it’s making what you consider a significant contribution in one or more fields. And in a personal sense, it is appreciating what you have.

**Which of your many achievements are you most proud of?**

I know it’s probably most politically correct to say something like “my chil-

dren,” but I’d have to go with becoming a multi-millionaire before age 30.

**Tell us about the work you did in the tech world and why it was successful.**

I was fortunate enough to see how the Internet was going to change the world, and I devoted my life to learning as much as I could about the new technology. I learned how to program, create websites and run servers connected to the Internet. This kind of skill set allowed me to build a very large company in a very short period of time.

**What’s your advice to others who seek success?**

Besides reading my book? My advice would be not to seek “success,” but to be passionate about making a significant contribution to society, in your own way, and success will follow. **T**

To learn more about FreeToastHost and the Toastmasters Podcast, visit [freetoasthost.org](http://freetoasthost.org) and [www.toastmasters.org/podcast](http://www.toastmasters.org/podcast). For information about Bo’s other Web ventures, go to [archieboy.com](http://archieboy.com). To learn more about Bo’s book, visit [yeartosuccess.com](http://yeartosuccess.com).

# WE CAN WORK IT OUT

When interpersonal dynamics lead to dynamite.

By John Cadley

**C**onflict resolution can take many forms. In marriage the husband says to his wife, “You’re right, I’m wrong,” and that settles it. In business the boss says, “Do it my way or you’re fired.” Among nations it’s a little more involved but no less direct. They attack each other with armies, planes and ships until everybody runs out of patience and/or money, and both sides say they won.

Conflict resolution among individuals (other than married couples; we’ve already seen how that works) is where it gets tricky. Just like Robert Fulghum says in the book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, we have to play fair and we can’t hit people. This severely limits our options. Nevertheless, conflict among people is a fact of life. In fact, we might even say it’s the one thing we can always count on to keep things interesting. Given that we can’t just haul off and paste someone in the kisser, the only method left for conflict resolution is interpersonal communication. In other words, two parties who don’t want to talk to each other *have* to talk to each other. (I told you it was tricky.)

It also makes a difference if the conflict is between two males, two females, or a male and a female (not married to each other). And finally, it is a given that in all cases, both people will invariably think they’re right. (Trickier by the minute, eh?)

In the two-male scenario, things get tough right away. Men don’t like the phrase “interpersonal communication.” It’s like saying “marriage encounter weekend.” However, thanks to the amazing alchemy by which the male ego can turn anything to its advantage, we have a solution. The hardest part of conflict resolution is initiating the dialogue, but for men this is easy, since it always takes “the bigger man” to make the first conciliatory gesture. The other guy wins, too, since — as we all know — it takes a “big man” to admit a mistake. So now we have two guys who each think he’s bigger than the other. Problem solved.

Female-to-female situations have an entirely different dynamic. No matter how intense the conflict, the process starts not with accusations, but with *apologies*. Phrases like “You know, this is probably just me but ...” or “I know I’ve probably missed something here ...” are usually how things get started. This works as a nimble ploy to soften the target so when the boom comes down, it will land with maximum force. Women who are particularly good at this come to be known as a Velvet Hammer. They say things like, “I’m sorry, it was wrong of me to put you in this position” (the velvet). “I shouldn’t have expected so much from someone with your education” (the hammer; Wham!). The woman on the other end doesn’t know whether to be grateful or start a catfight in the hallway.

Finally there’s the male-female scenario. Conflict resolution between men and women has been going on ever since the first hominid wrapped himself in a woolly mammoth skin to go hunting and gathering, and his mate said, “You’re not going to wear *that*, are you?” Yet once they enter the modern workplace, men and women must act as if this long history of gender warfare doesn’t exist. It’s a special game of pretend called “Let’s Be Professional,” where the man represses his Neanderthal feelings of superiority and the woman resists the urge to hand him a pillow and tell him to go sleep on the couch. Instead, they both bend over backward to appear sensitive to the needs of the other. Which can also backfire. If the man is too deferential, the woman thinks he’s being patronizing. (“Don’t treat me like a delicate flower, buddy. I’m wearing my big girl pants.”) If the woman is too accommodating, the man thinks she wants a date. (“Man, she’s practically throwing herself at me.”)

In this scenario the actual conflict is beside the point. The real resolution comes from the simple fact that a male and a female have sat down together, *quietly*, to resolve their differences without anyone throwing dishes, slamming doors or threatening divorce. Conflict resolved. **T**

**John Cadley** is an advertising copywriter in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at [jcadley@mower.com](mailto:jcadley@mower.com).

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**Peter Tannen, DTM**, from San Francisco, California, hiked the Great Wall of China on his 62nd birthday.



**Irene Uy, ATMB, CL**, from Cebu City, Philippines, visits Oedolgae Rock in Jeju, South Korea.



**Sanjay Narayanan, Chris Holmes, Andrew Siwo, ACB, and Adam Kornfield, ACB, CL**, from New York, New York, tour the Amazon rainforest, outside Manaus, Brazil.



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