

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | DECEMBER 2016

# TOASTMASTER®



**DAVID**  
**REICHEL, ACS**  
**Game Developer**  
**Beats the Odds.**

**How to Speak Up at  
Special Occasions**

**Online Clubs Connect  
Members Around  
the World**



## Special Times Need Careful Preparation

With the festive season fast approaching and members around the globe gearing up for vacations and time spent with family and friends, it is often easy to overlook just what goes into making these times so special. Whether we spend holidays with family or friends, or even alone, few of us consider the planning, preparation and team effort required to prepare for these gatherings.

We often take such efforts for granted. Food, presents, entertainment and catering just seem to materialize, and we may think not much effort is needed on our part. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. Any special event requires all the participants to play their part for the event to be a success. Your club meetings are also special events that require the same participation.

The third commitment of the Toastmaster's Promise is: "To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments."

Whether your club meets weekly, once every two weeks or, in the case of many advanced clubs, monthly, your full involvement is required if it is to deliver the stimulation, opportunities and enjoyment we all expect on a regular basis from our club. The meeting roles are the framework on which our personal development and satisfaction are dependent.

### Learning to successfully undertake any role is great training for life.

Each role we play—from timer to Toastmaster, from Table Topicsmaster to grammarian—develops our leadership skills in incremental ways. Each role is important as it ensures the meeting as a whole provides an opportunity for member involvement, growth and development. Your contribution to club excellence is to prepare to participate fully in whatever role you are assigned. Take on each role with enthusiasm even if it is not your favorite choice.

Learning to successfully undertake any role is great training for life. Few of us get to select every aspect of what we do on a daily basis in our career or as members of our family and community. Why should it be any different in Toastmasters? Prepare and welcome the opportunity to participate fully rather than avoid a role or not give it your wholehearted focus.

Imagine what the festive season would be like if no one prepared the traditional feast, brought the expected gifts, organized the entertainment or made an effort to cater to guests. Your club meetings are your festive events and their success depends on your commitment to fulfill your responsibility to your fellow members.

I wish you all a happy and safe break over the coming weeks whatever your faith, creed or culture. I look forward to catching up with all of you in the new year. Always *Remember the Member*.

**MIKE STORKEY, DTM**  
International President

# TOASTMASTER®

**Publisher**  
Daniel Rex

**Managing Editor**  
Suzanne Frey

**Senior Editor**  
Paul Sterman

**Associate Editor**  
Mary Nesfield

**Editorial Coordinator**  
Shannon Dewey

**Graphic Design**  
Susan Campbell  
Bianca Montoya

## 2016-2017 OFFICERS

**International President**  
Mike Storkey, DTM  
**International President-Elect**  
Balraj Arunasalam, DTM  
**First Vice President**  
Lark Doley, DTM  
**Second Vice President**  
Deepak Menon, DTM  
**Immediate Past President**  
Jim Kokocki, DTM  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
Daniel Rex  
**Secretary-Treasurer**  
Jennifer Quinn

## 2016-2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Margaret Page, DTM Region 1	Matt Kinsey, DTM Region 8
Jim Kohli, DTM Region 2	Steve Chen, DTM Region 9
David McCallister, DTM Region 3	Michael Osur, DTM Region 10
Monique Levesque-Pharoah, DTM Region 4	Teresa Dukes, DTM Region 11
Magnus Jansson, DTM Region 5	David Fisher, DTM Region 12
Vera Johnson, DTM Region 6	Nagaraja Rao, DTM Region 13
Russell L. Drake, DTM Region 7	Elisa W. Tay, DTM Region 14

## TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®

P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690 U.S.A.  
+1 949-858-8255 • Fax: +1 949-858-1207  
Voicemail: +1 949-835-1300

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## CONTACTING WORLD HEADQUARTERS

For information on joining or building a club, visit:

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)  
[submissions@toastmasters.org](mailto:submissions@toastmasters.org)  
[letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org)

Article submission:  
Letters to the Editor:

To change address, log in to:

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

## Toastmasters International Mission:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



## WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)

The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to the *Toastmaster* magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A. Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$45 semi-annual dues.

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

Copyright 2016 Toastmasters International, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Toastmasters International, the *Toastmaster* logo and the Toastmaster International Emblem are trademarks of Toastmasters International registered in the United States, Canada and many other countries. Marca registrada en Mexico.

Printed in U.S.A.

Connecting with other members is an important part of the club experience. These clubs found fun ways to interact in an outdoor setting.

Members of ►  
Rhetorik im Gebrüder  
Schmid Zentrum club  
in Stuttgart, Germany,  
hold a meeting in the  
Tannheim Mountains, in  
the Austrian state  
of Tyrol. The club  
regularly organizes  
hiking trips that serve  
as extra meetings,  
with members giving  
prepared speeches in  
the great outdoors.



◀ More than 70  
members from  
District 59 gather  
in a small village  
in Portugal for  
workshops and  
to share the best  
speeches from the  
speech contests  
of divisions D, L  
and M.

Members of the ►  
Dogwood Club in  
Atlanta, Georgia,  
celebrate their  
3,000<sup>th</sup> meeting  
with a kayaking and  
canoeing trip on the  
Chestatee River in  
Dahlonega, Georgia.



**Send your fun club photos to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org).** Include a description and your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) or 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the Toastmaster magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if Toastmasters materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

## Features



12

Q&A

### David Reichelt, ACS: Beating the Odds

Colorblind creator of Color Switch mobile game app hits the jackpot.

*By Greg Gazin, DTM, PDG*



22

PRESENTATION SKILLS

### It's a Special Occasion

Be prepared to speak up!

*By Maureen Zappala, DTM*

## Articles

16

SMEDLEY FUND

### GIVE A SPECIAL GIFT THIS SEASON

Help serve the needs of members through the Smedley Fund.

*By Jasmine Shafik*

18

PROFILE

### FINDING HIS CALLING

Sunil Robert Vuppula escaped poverty in India through his passion for public speaking.

*By Missy Sheehan*



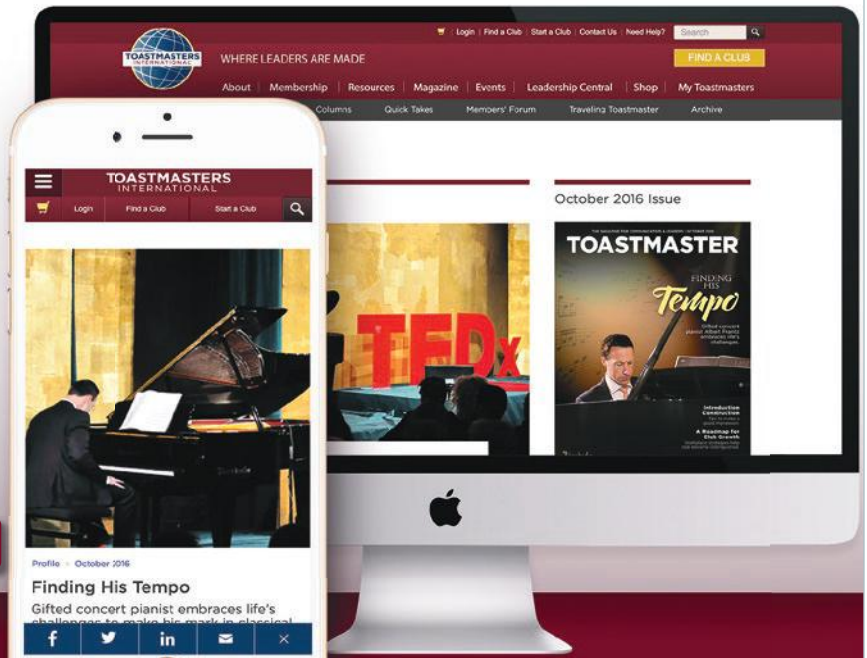
## Introducing the **TOASTMASTER** magazine online!

View the new web-based version of the magazine. You'll find it by clicking on the magazine tab on the Toastmasters International website browser. You'll be able to:

- ▶ Read it from your desktop, laptop, iPad, tablet or smartphone
- ▶ Enjoy favorite articles at your leisure and scroll through photos with ease
- ▶ Click on links for additional resources

Visit: [www.toastmasters.org/Magazine](http://www.toastmasters.org/Magazine)

To stop receiving the print edition, email [membership@toastmasters.org](mailto:membership@toastmasters.org).



## Articles

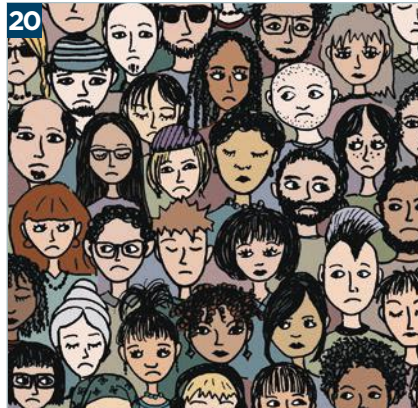
20

HOW TO

### WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR AUDIENCE TAKES OFFENSE

Address criticism outright to avoid later conflict.

By Jesse Scinto, ACS, ALB



26

ONLINE CLUBS

### ONLINE CONNECTION

Meeting remotely links members around the globe.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM



29

MENTORING

### ONLINE MENTORING

Delivering feedback remotely goes a long way toward helping members.

By Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM

## Columns

2

VIEWPOINT

Special Times Need Careful Preparation

By Mike Storkey, DTM  
International President

11

MY TURN

The Vows of Marriage

By Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D., ATMS, CL

30

FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT

Dog Tales

By John Cadley

## Departments

3

MEMBERS' FORUM

6

QUICK TAKES

10

TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

## ▶ MEMBER MOMENT



# A Lifetime of Laughter

BY SHANNON DEWEY

When George Gilbert was 12, his parents put him on a stage to perform in front of 800 people at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, California. The happiest place on earth had suddenly become the scariest.

Fortunately for young Gilbert, show business ran in his blood. His parents, Tulara Lee and George Gilbert Sr., were considered one of the funniest comedy acts of their time. Gilbert grew up in their humor-filled family home in Las Vegas, Nevada, where he would often brush shoulders with famous entertainers at parties his parents threw. It's a house full of many memories that he still lives in today.

Gilbert, ATMS, CL, is an 18-year Toastmaster and Accredited Speaker. His career as a stand-up comic began at a young age, and while he went on to perform at comedy clubs and conventions—even pairing up with his mother for a double comedy act—Gilbert ultimately became a professional speaker with a focus on humor.

Today he delivers entertaining presentations on the importance of humor in business to professional organizations, and he's a member of two Toastmasters clubs in Las Vegas.

## What was life like as a child with famous parents?

Comedian Jack Benny once said that my parents were the funniest act he had ever seen. They performed a physical comedy act all over the world with the great stars of their day, including Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope and Sammy Davis Jr. I had the best childhood, with comedians and entertainers always coming over to the house. There was always laughter and music.

## Why did you join Toastmasters?

I had been doing professional stand-up comedy since the age of 12, so I joined Toastmasters when I was 36 to help me segue from stand-up to motivational humor.

In 1994, four years before I joined, my former wife had a kidney/pancreas transplant, and after she recovered I wanted to share how we had used humor to get us through those tough times. I had also made a promise to myself that if she got her transplant, I would use my speaking skills to talk about the importance of organ and tissue donation. Joining Toastmasters helped give me the structure and content I needed to make the transition, and I used the Accredited Speaker Program as my blueprint to becoming a professional speaker.

## Talk about your career.

I have traveled across the country speaking about the role humor plays in the workplace and the benefits of laughter in life. What keeps me going is making people laugh and inspiring them to overcome tough times. My motto is "Laughter is a wellness program everyone can afford."



*Top: George Gilbert entertains military family members at a free show in Spring Mountain State Park, just outside of Las Vegas, Nevada.*

*Bottom: Gilbert and his former wife, Dori (left), pose with red noses at the hospital in June 2016. Gilbert often uses humor to cope with challenging times.*

I formed my company, Originally Speaking, in 2003 to further my speaking career by promoting my presentations and now my books.

## What kind of humor do you use in your presentations?

One example, from my presentation "Take Two Laughs and Call Me in the Morning," I talk about when my former wife was in the hospital recovering from her transplant. When I walked in the room, I saw her looking at herself in a mirror with a scowl, complaining that she now looked ugly with all the staples down her torso. I said "Are you kidding? You look like a *Playboy* centerfold. And even they have staples down the front!" Then she laughed, realizing this was just a temporary situation.

## What advice do you have for members?

Get up in front of an audience as often as you can. The old comedians backstage would tell me, "Georgie, you need a place to be bad." You need a safe place, such as Toastmasters, to get up as often as possible to break in your material and work on your timing.

Learn more about George Gilbert at [www.originallyspeaking.com](http://www.originallyspeaking.com).

*Shannon Dewey is the editorial coordinator for the Toastmaster magazine.*

▶ **SNAPSHOT**



**Meeting in the Mountains**

Members of Infosys Toastmasters, Chennai, India, took a trip to Zero Point (Yumthang Valley) in North Sikkim, India—15,000 feet above sea level—and held an outdoor meeting. The photo was taken by club member Subhadip Banik, DTM.

▶ **ADVICE FROM THE PROS**

## Don't Race the Pace

**BY BILL BROWN, DTM**

Pace is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can greatly enhance your presentation. On the other, it can be one of your biggest enemies. It all depends on how you use it. Pace is the speed at which you speak. Like all aspects of vocal variety, it is best when it is varied.

By speaking swiftly, you can indicate speed, urgency or danger. By speaking slowly, you can suggest tension, finality or fear. Slowness of pace can also indicate slowness of action. And it is a good way to emphasize a word or phrase.

Note, however, that I did not list “talking swiftly to cram more words in.” This is a frequent practice—people speaking at a constantly swift pace.

The typical Toastmasters speech is a maximum of seven minutes long—and strictly timed. Going over time is frowned upon and will get you disqualified in a speech contest. When members write their initial speech, it is typically nine minutes long. They then have a choice to either edit their speech down to seven minutes or talk swiftly to get it down to that length. Guess which option most choose? Yep, they choose the latter, which is what I did when I first joined the organization.

So why does it matter? Sounds communicate the literal meaning of your words, expressiveness communicates something else—an implied or secondary meaning. Expressiveness is best achieved when your words have duration. Speaking quickly limits or eliminates the lengthening of individual words, and, thus, limits expressiveness. If your sole purpose is to communicate information, and intellectual connection is your only objective, speaking quickly can be effective. (That is, if you are not speaking so quickly that people can't understand what you are saying.) If, however, you want to connect with your audience on both an intellectual and an emotional level, you will find it much more effective if you slow down to a normal pace.

You might ask, “Yes, but don't some professional speakers speak quickly? Doesn't that indicate that it is effective?” Yes, to a point. I would suggest that these speakers have found a way to introduce some expressiveness into their style; however, when I hear them, I think to myself, How much more effective could they be if they slowed down and stretched out their words?

This article was reprinted from Bill Brown's *Speech Delivery Tips* email series. Find out more at [www.billbrownspeechcoach.com](http://www.billbrownspeechcoach.com).

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



# Frank Lee

BY MARY NESFIELD



FROM LEFT: *Frank Lee, Dongxia Su*

Frank Lee, an award-winning film producer from Hong Kong, served as an advisor for technology companies before moving on to produce films. In 2009, his documentary *Sons of Cuba* won 14 international awards. But he was a Toastmaster first.

In 1980, Frank joined Taipei Toastmasters while working in Taiwan. He remained active in Toastmasters after returning home. He helped start the Putonghua Speaking club, and then formed the Shenzhen New Experience Toastmasters club. Most recently,

he was part of a team that started the Hong Kong New Experience Toastmasters club.

In 2014, freelance writer Dongxia Su was invited by a friend to attend a meeting of the New Experience club. She joined the Shenzhen club, and Frank became her mentor.

**Tell us about Frank.**

Frank writes lyrics and film scripts and produces films and documentaries. He encourages me to be active as a club officer in Toastmasters and also guides me in my career. For example, I wished to write scripts for China’s TV and film industry. Frank introduced me to a script writing workshop where I learned more about the many ways to tell an interesting story.

**What do you like best about him?**

He encourages creativity and innovation and teaches us how to effect changes to make a better world. He pursues excellence and selflessly guides those of us in the younger generation. For example, when a former member of our club taught 10 physically handicapped individuals to speak publicly in English, Frank gave him encouragement and support. Whenever I am in a challenging situation, his words guide me as I march forward.

**What has he taught you?**

Frank says a truly successful person is one who “has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul.” He has helped us to understand that real success is about improving the world.

**NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!**

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to [MentorMoment@toastmasters.org](mailto:MentorMoment@toastmasters.org).

▶ VISITING A CLUB WHILE TRAVELING

Santosh Suryawanshi, charter president and current vice president public relations of the Dresser-Rand Toastmasters club in Pune, India, sits with members of the Shut Up & Speak club in Elmira, New York. Suryawanshi visited the club when he traveled to the United States for work.

“This kind of meeting effectively shows how Toastmasters helps us get in touch with different cultures and people, and how it makes us [feel] comfortable and safe when we are far away from our own country,” Suryawanshi says.



*Santosh Suryawanshi (center, holding magazine)*



▶ LEADERSHIP

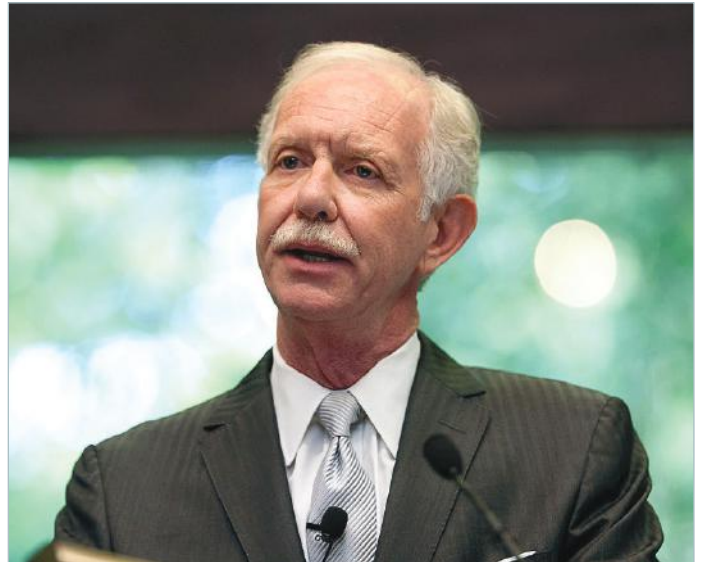
## Leadership in the Air

On January 15, 2009, pilot Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger made an emergency landing on New York’s Hudson River after US Airways Flight 1549 hit a flock of geese. It was dubbed the “Miracle on the Hudson,” and Sullenberger’s leadership and skill were credited with saving the lives of all 155 passengers and crew members onboard the plane.

The new film *Sully* explores that dramatic episode in depth. Released in September, the movie stars Tom Hanks as Sullenberger. Back in 2010, *Toastmaster* magazine published an article about Sullenberger. Author Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG, interviewed the pilot about a range of leadership-related topics, including crisis communication and teamwork. In light of the new spotlight on Sullenberger, it’s worth reflecting on some of his comments from the December 2010 article.

On the importance of preparation and hard work: *“I didn’t have time in those incredibly intense 208 seconds from when our airplane hit the birds until we landed in the Hudson River to learn what I needed to learn. I had to have already learned it. I had to have invested the preparation, put in the hard work and paid attention for decades—during thousands of hours of flying time. The same is true in many other areas of our lives, including leadership: It’s a daily process.”*

On how to improve an organization’s culture: *“It’s not just the organizational charts that we develop or the procedures we have. It’s how we lead and treat people, and how we view*



Pilot Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger

*each other, that really ultimately makes the difference in whether or not we are able to achieve these efficiencies.”*

Toastmasters have also weighed in on Sullenberger’s leadership qualities in the wake of the film’s release. In a LinkedIn discussion on the Official Toastmasters International Members Group page, Jean McAllister, DTM, of Blue Mountains, Canada, noted that when the pilot was hailed as a hero, “he gave credit to everyone who contributed to diverting the disaster. He was humble and thankful to his team.”

▶ MEMBER CONNECTIONS

Theodoros Trachanidis and Theodoros Reppas of the Thessaloniki Toastmasters club in Thessaloniki, Greece, plant the Toastmasters flag at the top of Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece. According to Greek mythology, the mountain was the dwelling of the Olympian Gods.

The two men were joined by fellow club members Xenofon Zades and Panagiotis Xourafas (not pictured) in the challenge to reach the top of the mountain. After a 10-kilometer hike (about six miles), the mission was accomplished.



Theodoros Trachanidis (left) and Theodoros Reppas

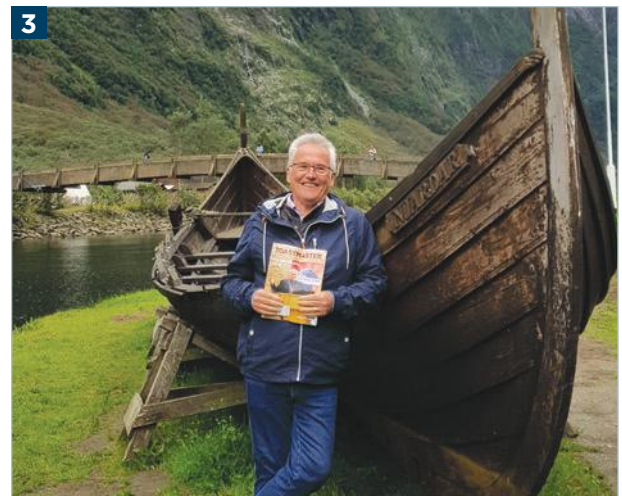
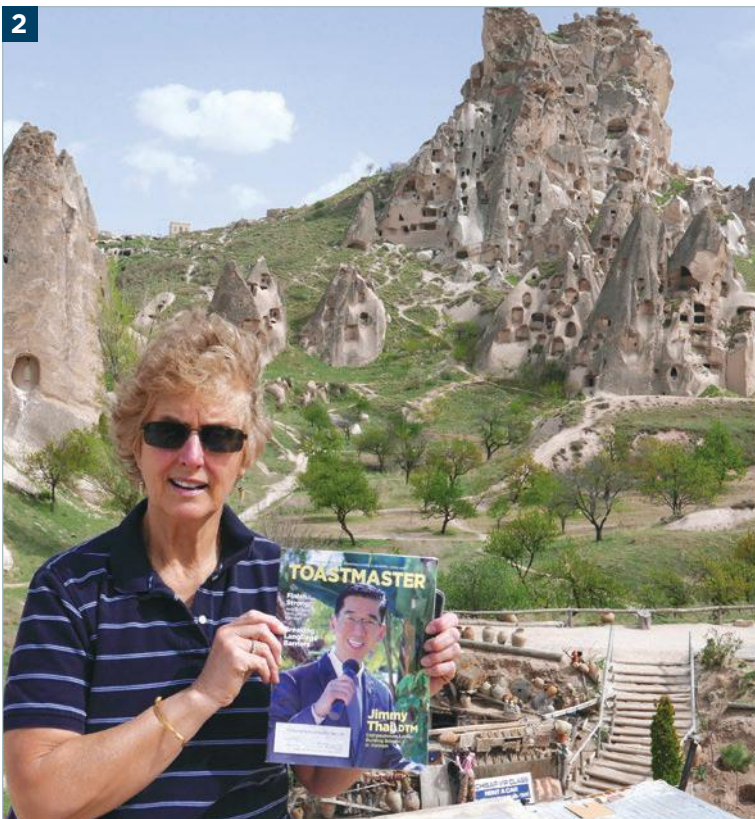



**1 | OLIVER MORIN-GILBERT, ACS, ALB,** from Gatineau, Canada, stands near the steaming lava in Leirhnjúkur in Iceland.

**2 | VIRGINIA A. MALIK, ACB,** from Linden, New Jersey, poses near a village of rock houses in Uchisar, Cappadocia, Turkey.

**3 | GREG HAYES, ACB, ALB,** from Beacon Hill, Australia, discovers a historic Viking ship in Voss, Norway.

**4 | VASINI RAMAKRISHNAN, CC, CL,** from Eugene, Oregon, visits the National Archives Museum in Washington, D.C.



 **View more photos on** Toastmasters International Official Fan Page on Facebook.

 **PICTURE YOURSELF HERE!** Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit [www.toastmasters.org/Submissions](http://www.toastmasters.org/Submissions). Bon voyage!

# The Vows of Marriage

Officiating my niece's wedding was a precious gift.

BY CAREN SCHNUR NEILE, PH.D., ATMS, CL

I am making my way down an aisle in a fancy Los Angeles hotel ballroom, tottering on spiky black heels, sweating lightly under my blue silk dress, surrounded by 200 family members and friends. My hands are vibrating from excitement. Up ahead is the wedding canopy known as a “huppah,” the primary symbol of the traditional Jewish marriage ceremony.

It all feels like a dream—but it's not. My beloved niece Rebecca and her fiancé, Alex, have, incredibly, asked me to officiate at their wedding.

My mind travels, like one of those wiggly, black-and-white movie flashbacks, to another family wedding, more than 25 years earlier. That time my cousin was getting married, and his brother delivered a wedding toast that was both heartfelt and hilarious. With all my soul, I envied his ability to speak to a crowd. What a gift, I thought, to be comfortable enough to celebrate aloud one of life's most precious moments.

“One day,” I silently promised 2-year-old Rebecca, who was sitting on my lap, “I will be able to do that, too.”

Not long afterward I joined Toastmasters, and a few years after that, I realized my dream of becoming a professional storyteller and teaching storytelling studies at a local university. Not a day went by that I wasn't thankful for those opportunities. But this—this was different.

My niece and nephew are of different faiths, so they did not want to hire a member of the clergy to marry them. Who did they know with the ability to pull off the job with aplomb, and without nervousness or shyness? It was one of those rare times in life when instead of asking in time of need, “Is there a doctor in the house?” someone asked, “Is there a speaker in the house?” And there I was. First I completed a brief online form to become a wedding celebrant, and then it was time to work on the ceremony, a job that took most of the following year working with an informal committee of friends and family.

On the evening of the wedding, I opened with a folktale about a wise man who runs out of food and water while traveling through a desert. He almost loses hope, when he spots a coconut palm tree in the distance, drags himself to it and collapses in its shade. Eventually he cracks open a coconut and drinks and eats



*Caren Neile officiates the wedding of her niece Rebecca and Rebecca's new husband, Alex.*

PHOTO CREDIT: CURTIS DAHL PHOTOGRAPHY

until he is ready to go on. Before he leaves, he wonders how he should bless the tree, which already has all it needs. His blessing: that the tree's saplings—its offspring—will inherit its bountiful gifts and share them in their own time.

Then I welcomed the guests to the union of two extraordinary people and their families, and the ceremony began. I wasn't the only one to speak; the bride and groom had selected readings for their friends. But I served as master of ceremonies, just as I had learned to do in Toastmasters meetings. Alex's three aunts helped perform his Indian wedding traditions, which, with information contributed by his mother, were explained by one of his closest friends. Toward the end of the service, I told another story—thanks in large part to the Toastmasters *Storytelling* manual—that ended, “The key to your success and happiness is ultimately in your own hands.” Using

the body language skills I had learned in the *Competent Communication* manual, I spread out my own hands. Next I read for the couple the vows I had created, which had felt a lot like writing a ceremonial speech:

“Do you, Rebecca, intend to cherish, respect, support and nurture Alex in body, mind and spirit, as long as you both shall live?”

“Do you, Alex ...?”

Finally, they exchanged rings, and I pronounced the pair husband and wife.

“This ritual symbolizes the awesome power of words,” I said to the crowd. “Think about it. With the words spoken here today, we have created a married couple.”

By the way, Rebecca recently joined Toastmasters and is happily making her way through her first 10 speeches. That's the power of public speaking.

And for this ability, do I feel truly grateful?

I do. 

**CAREN SCHNUR NEILE, PH.D., ATMS, CL**, is an affiliate professor at Florida Atlantic University. She is a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine and has spoken at two *Toastmasters International* conventions.





# DAVID REICHELT, ACS

## BEATING THE ODDS

Colorblind creator of Color Switch mobile game app hits the jackpot.

BY GREG GAZIN, DTM, PDG

**W**ith a sea of more than 2 million choices in the Apple App Store, the probability of one mobile application standing out from the others is quite small. Even smaller is the chance that such an app will garner more than 130 million downloads. But this dream turned into reality for Toastmaster David Reichelt, creator of the mobile game app called Color Switch.

Not only did Reichelt, ACS, beat the odds and slay his Goliath, his underdog story plays out like a Hollywood movie.

Developing Color Switch or any app for that matter was never on his radar growing up. Reichelt dropped out of high school. He has no formal computer programming or business experience and also has the added challenge of being colorblind.

Thirteen years ago, unsatisfied with where his life was going, Reichelt, then 23, joined the U.S. military and became a medic. In his down time, he learned to perform magic tricks with playing cards and entertained the troops. He eventually became a magician at Hollywood's famous Magic Castle nightclub.

While his career paths seemed haphazard, he's always been firm in his belief in the power of the mind. Instead of easily dismissing random bits of information as being unimportant, he built a habit of being open to them.

"The biggest change in life could be in the apparently smallest piece of information or unrelated experience presented to you," says Reichelt, a member of the Imagination at NBC Universal Toastmasters, a closed club that meets in Universal City, California.

Such an experience was presented to him in 2013. After moving to pursue a degree in theater at California State University, Northridge, he became intrigued after glimpsing his new roommate playing a dinosaur game and developing an app on his computer. After reading his roommate's reference books on the subject of game development, Reichelt was hooked. He sold off roughly \$4,000 worth of film gear, hired a programmer and started developing his first game. It was an absolute disaster. But he didn't quit. After making 40 games that failed, he chalked it up to experience and took a year to regroup.



*David Reichelt, creator of the Color Switch mobile game app, drives in style in his branded car. Reichelt's app has garnered more than 130 million downloads since its launch in December 2015.*

"Every failure or mistake is a learning experience," Reichelt says. He treated his experiences like a game, waiting for failure to come so he could retrace and analyze his thought process.

That philosophy served him well, as he stayed on track despite failures with games and an abundance of naysayers. He decided to no longer outsource and learned to make games himself, consistently researching and studying areas like game design, color theory and graphic arts, and always asking for help and applying what he learned. He mastered creative thinking techniques from reading books such as *Thinkertoys* and picked up skills from *The Art of Game Design* by Jesse Schnell. He downloaded apps, analyzed them and learned from online forums, dedicating 15 or more hours a day to his dream of creating a successful game app.

Reichelt knew software existed to simplify game creation. And after some trial and error, he stumbled across Buildbox, a tool he could learn in a day. It helped him to become productive right away.

Then, Reichelt had an epiphany. Within 10 minutes, this non-programmer cobbled together a demo, inspired by the colors and shapes of the classic arcade game Pac-Man, and discovered what would become Color Switch.

He knew he had a hit.

"The first time I played it I couldn't put my phone down for four hours and that's when I knew I was on to something," he says. It took him another week to finish all of the other levels.

**"Your secret weapon is your brain. It can be your biggest asset or your biggest obstacle."**

— DAVID REICHEL

The goal of the game is simple: Play a ball through endless obstacles. The challenge, Reichelt says, is to match the color of the ball with the color of a section of an obstacle. The ball changes colors after each obstacle it maneuvers through.

---

Color Switch launched in December 2015. It's available for both Apple iOS and Android devices and, as of October 2016, it was the most downloaded game on the Apple App Store. It also broke a record by being Apple's No. 1 app overall for 28 days. The game has now been surpassed by Pokémon GO, but remains one of the most downloaded games of the year.

### **Why did you join Toastmasters?**

I joined because I wanted to become a stage magician and knew that public speaking skills were essential. So I looked up training and found Toastmasters. In 2011 I joined a club in Las Cruces, New Mexico, at the first meeting I attended, and did my Ice Breaker at my second meeting.

### **How did Toastmasters play a role in your career?**

Toastmasters had an immediate effect on my performances as a magician. After a while, I noticed that I wasn't very nervous when I showed up for gigs. I got so used to presenting every week that that confidence went into my magic work. Also, since Color Switch has skyrocketed, I can articulate better and have done many interviews in many formats, like radio, television and live stream, without being nervous. I got that skill from Toastmasters 100 percent.

Seeing what I've accomplished so far drives me to want to learn even more as a Toastmaster and as a game designer. It's had a huge effect on me in that I thirst for knowledge even more now.

### **Despite being colorblind, you developed an app that involved color. Why?**

I wanted to make something that could have universal appeal. So I made it as simple as possible, narrowing my thinking to colors and shapes. Pac-Man was a big inspiration because I saw how much of a success it has been for over 30 years, and it is really about colors and simple shapes.

### **Did that challenge help or hinder your ability to create the game?**

I suppose it helped me in a way. Since I am bad with colors, I had to study "color theory," which enabled me to choose a good color palette by learning how colors go together. I was able to use specific colors by using color-picker tools and the color wheel.

### **Your game is so successful, but given that it's free, do you make money?**

As far as money, yes I make plenty. It's like a TV show. Ad companies pay to have their ads play during the show. It's the same for games. Ad companies pay to have each ad displayed during a game played. You can imagine that with 130 million players, we have a lot of ads playing.

### **You took a risk, sold off all your possessions, then had 40 miscues. What motivated you to continue?**

I just knew that I had hit upon something that I could be good at and that I enjoyed doing. Plus, I knew that I could create something that would allow me to do this business anywhere in the

world from my phone and make my dream of traveling a reality. Also I knew that, being in that kind of position, I would be able to give back and help my family, friends and others.

### **How does being a magician tie into game development?**

A big part of magic is surprise. When you surprise an audience, they can ooh and ah or laugh or cry in amazement. So I took the same sense of surprise that I learned as a magician and put it into my game with great effect. I take knowledge from anything I've done in the past, like theater or being a medic, and put it into my game design.

### **What do you think contributed to your success?**

My mom played a major part in fostering in me the desire to learn, reading to me all the books I could handle as far back as I can remember. Since then, I've always wanted to improve my thinking. If you improve how you think, you will improve what you do. Also, being willing to fail, and embracing that. Failure leads to success eventually. Also, the military helped me get out of my comfort zone, and then, of course, there's Toastmasters!

### **What advice would you give someone who is hesitant to try something new?**

You don't realize the power of your mind. If you at least start to improve how you think by using creative thinking techniques in books such as *Thinkertoys* by Michael Michalko, you'll embark on a very powerful journey, taking your life into unforeseen places. Get over not wanting to leave your comfort zone and do something you never thought you'd do. You'll grow confidence, enabling you to try more new things. You'll gradually see your life change and improve.... Your secret weapon is your brain. It can be your biggest asset or your biggest obstacle.

### **What's next for you?**

I have many things planned. Next year I'll travel all over Europe and sing and play guitar in my rock band! Also, I plan on speaking in every country I visit, essentially about my backstory before Color Switch and how I got to where I am today. I will also share valuable tools that anyone can use to change their own life and realize their own goals.

I'm constantly updating Color Switch and also working on many more games. In a few years I plan to open my own movie studio and develop films. I'm always looking for new creative outlets.

*Color Switch is available from the Apple App Store (iOS) and Google Play (Android).* ■

---

**Greg Gazin, DTM, PDG**, is a member of the New Entrepreneurs Toastmasters club in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He is a tech columnist and a small-business and technology speaker, author and podcaster. Greg is also one of the hosts of the official Toastmasters Podcast and author of Corey OutSMARTs the Butterflies. Learn more at [www.GadgetGuy.ca](http://www.GadgetGuy.ca).



## Give a Special Gift This Season

Help serve the needs of members through the Smedley Fund.

BY JASMINE SHAFIK

As the year comes to an end, it's time to reflect on the last 12 months. You may ask yourself, Has my year been better because of Toastmasters? As a member, you are not only improving your own life, but also the lives around you in your club and community.

In 1965, after four decades of service, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, founder of Toastmasters International, reflected on the magnitude of the organization. "I am impressed by the fact that a simple idea, put to work in so simple a manner, has grown into such an instrument for service for so many people," he wrote in *The Story of Toastmasters*. "It must have met a real need."

Since then, members' needs have evolved due to a wide range of cultural, social and economic situations. Today, the membership exceeds 345,000, with 15,900 clubs in 142 countries. As membership continues to increase, so do the needs of the individuals we serve.

The Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund® (Smedley Fund) is an opportunity for you to be a part of creating solutions to meet

these needs. Contributions to the Smedley Fund are restricted to educational purposes and are not used for operating or capital expenses of Toastmasters International. Disbursements from the fund are determined by the Board of Directors. Therefore, your entire gift will be stewarded to help others benefit from Toastmasters' programs.

Imagine increasing the offering of translated materials, adapting materials for the disabled, creating contemporary content for young adults in colleges and universities, investing in new and developing markets, and building tomorrow's leaders by focusing on youth programs. Also imagine providing hope and healing through the Toastmasters experience for those in homeless shelters or in transitional living, rehabilitation or correctional facilities, or offering support to those suffering losses due to extreme economic hardship or disasters.

As Dr. Smedley once said, "We must suit our methods to the needs. Today's emergency may be our opportunity."

Mohammed Murad, DTM, Toastmasters' 2014–2015 International President, says giving to the Smedley Fund, as he did recently, can bring you great fulfillment.

"It is very satisfying to understand that this fund will be used in developing programs and making sure that the organization is going forward to fulfill the dreams and the vision of Dr. Smedley," says Murad, of Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

### Contributor Types and Recognition

As a contributor, you will help create new possibilities in the realm of communication and leadership. The more contributions are raised, the more individuals will benefit from the Toastmasters experience.

In 2017, the Smedley Fund will offer a new recognition structure that will focus on four contributor types: individual, club, corporate and legacy. All contributors who give cumulative lifetime gifts of \$1,000 or more (which begins accruing in the 2016 calendar year) will be recognized in the following ways:



**Individual Contributors:** If your Toastmasters experience has led to improvements in your life, consider celebrating your success by contributing to the Smedley Fund. Members and non-members who contribute will receive an attractive contributor ribbon. Individuals who contribute lifetime gifts of \$1,000 or more will receive a level-specific lapel pin.

**Club Contributors:** Toastmasters clubs may make a donation by taking up a special collection or by contributing from the club treasury. All club contributors will receive a 24-inch banner ribbon.



DIAMOND (\$50,000+)



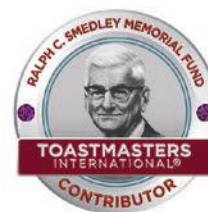
RUBY (\$25,000+)



EMERALD (\$10,000+)



SAPPHIRE (\$5,000+)



AMETHYST (\$1,000+)

Clubs that contribute lifetime gifts of \$1,000 or more will receive a level-specific trophy.

**Corporate Contributors:** If your company aligns itself with the Toastmasters values of integrity, respect, service and excellence, consider a contribution to the Smedley Fund. All corporate contributors will receive an engraved plaque. Companies that contribute lifetime gifts of \$1,000 or more will receive a level-specific crystal recognition piece.

**Legacy Contributors:** When you make a planned gift to the Smedley Fund, you demonstrate your commitment to continue Smedley's legacy for generations to come. Planned giving involves providing a future contribution through your financial and estate plans, such as making a bequest to Toastmasters International by including language in your will or living trust, or by designating Toastmasters International as a beneficiary in your retirement plan or life insurance policy.

### Other Ways to Give

**Honorary Gifts:** Contributors can honor an individual or occasion while also making a meaningful gift to the Smedley

Fund. For example, donations can be made in recognition of another member's service to their club, district or community. Toastmasters International will send a notice of the contribution to the honoree without disclosing the amount.

**Memorial Gifts:** During the holiday season, we often remember our lost loved ones and celebrate what they held dear. You can make a gift to the Smedley Fund to show how much that person's life has meant to you. Upon request, Toastmasters International will send a notice to a surviving relative about the donation without disclosing the amount.

**Recurring Gifts:** Setting up a monthly, quarterly, semiannual or annual gift is an easy and convenient way to make a difference in other members' lives year-round. For example, a monthly gift of \$7.50 or a semiannual gift of \$45 can help cover Toastmasters dues for a member in need.

**IRA Gifts:** In December 2015, the United States Congress passed a permanent tax law allowing contributors to take a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from an Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA) account, up to \$100,000 annually, when the contributor

reaches age 70½. This choice allows you to make a pre-tax contribution to the Smedley Fund, while also avoiding possible penalties if you do not take your IRA Required Minimum Distribution by year-end. Please consult your financial advisor to see if this is a good option for you.

### How to Give

Would you like to give the gifts of self-expression, confidence and leadership to others this season? You can make an online contribution or print out a contribution form at [www.toastmasters.org/Smedley](http://www.toastmasters.org/Smedley). Your gift, no matter how large or small, is an investment that

will pay dividends through the personal and professional growth of individuals around the world. **Gifts must be processed or postmarked no later than December 31, 2016, to count for this year-end.** Toastmasters International holds a 501(c)(3) nonprofit U.S. Federal tax exemption (EIN 95-1300076), which means that your contribution may be listed as a tax deduction if you live in the United States. If you live outside the United States, please consult your tax advisor to find out if your donation is tax deductible.

Sylvia Crew-Rynski, ACS, ALB, says one of the reasons she gave to the Smedley Fund recently is to help Toastmasters who may not be able to afford membership dues. "I felt that some way I wanted to make a contribution to these individuals so that they could participate in Toastmasters," she says.

Likewise, Hettie Allsup, DTM, says she wanted to give something back because she has benefited so much from her experience in Toastmasters. "Being a contributor," she says, "allows me to give some of the goodness I have received to someone else."

**Jasmine Shafik** is Toastmasters International's fundraising coordinator.

## DID YOU KNOW?

For the first time in the history of Toastmasters International, an annual campaign was launched during the 2016 International Convention in Washington, D.C. The goal was to raise awareness of, as well as contributions to, the Smedley Fund. During the four-day event in August, 84 generous contributors gave a total of \$10,144.

## Finding His Calling

Sunil Robert Vuppula escaped poverty in India through his passion for public speaking.

BY MISSY SHEEHAN

**F**or Sunil Robert Vuppula, discovering at a young age that he had a natural talent for public speaking was the beginning of a lifelong journey—one that led him out of a downward spiral of poverty, fear and violence and onto a path to becoming the accomplished communications professional he is today.

Vuppula, ACG, ALB, overcame a number of obstacles growing up in Hyderabad, India. While his family lived comfortably during his early childhood, Vuppula says his life “became topsy-turvy” at around age 11 when his father lost his job.

“The next seven to eight years were the most dark and despairing days of my life,” he says. “My family was staring down the barrel of absolute abject poverty. In India, when you lose your job, it’s too bad for you. There are no food stamps, no social security, no aid. You’re just another one of the millions struggling to survive.”

While Vuppula battled feelings of resentment, fear and helplessness about his family’s economic situation, his public speaking skills—he competed in speech contests as a youth—gave him hope for a better future. “Public speaking was something I could clutch onto to stay afloat,” he says. “In this entirely dark cloud of my existence, the only silver lining was my ability to express myself in front of a crowd.”

Now 47 and a U.S. citizen living with his wife and two sons in Edison, New Jersey, Vuppula credits his talent for



*Sunil Robert Vuppula speaks at a South Asian Leadership Summit in East Rutherford, New Jersey, in 2013. Vuppula found his calling in public speaking after overcoming a number of obstacles as a child growing up in India.*

public speaking with changing his life and inspiring him to pursue a career in communications. He started on this professional path by working as a door-to-door sales representative and as a journalist and radio announcer before moving into marketing and public relations.

Since 2008, Vuppula has served as head of marketing for the Americas and Europe for TCS Financial Solutions, part of the global information technology services, consulting and business solutions firm Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Vuppula also is an author, leadership coach and motivational speaker who has helped thousands of people through his speeches, leadership programs and mentoring.

“Today I’m on a mission to transform the world with my communication skills,” he says.

### Finding His Calling

Vuppula’s first experiences with public speaking were during youth competitions

at church and school. When he went to college at 15, his speaking abilities led to his involvement in student politics, which he says can be violent in India. Vuppula admits he was an angry and defiant young man, and amid the violence he experienced, he resorted to carrying a knife—“to defend myself, to threaten others and to feel secure. My life was riddled with a lot of these violent skirmishes.”

Shortly before his 18th birthday, he reached a turning point in his life when he won a speech contest at a nationwide youth festival. “That was the day that I decided, Hey, I have something going on, and if I neglect my gift of public speaking and continue in my violent and rebellious ways, I could end up bitter and angry for the rest of my life,” he says. “I decided then that if I was going to build a career, it would be in communications, and I kind of intuitively knew that was my calling.”

After studying history, political science and public administration to earn a

bachelor's degree from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University in Hyderabad, Vuppula set his sights on getting the additional higher education he needed to build a successful communications career in India. The obstacle in this case was that from about age 18 he was working to support his three siblings and his parents, making it virtually impossible for him to attend full-time classes.

To earn his master's degrees in business administration and journalism and communications from Osmania University in Hyderabad, Vuppula had to convince school officials to give him a chance to pass the first semester's courses even though he couldn't attend classes regularly. He then spent his days working and his evenings catching up on what he missed, with help from classmates.

Vuppula's passion fueled him during those long days, helping him succeed in his educational endeavors and in his early career. "I just had this love for speaking, this love for communication," he says.

### Getting to the Next Level

The next major turning point in Vuppula's life came in 1999 when he helped found the Sunshine Toastmasters club in Bangalore, where he had been working as director of marketing communications for Acer India. Joining Toastmasters, he says, helped him take the next step as a communicator, and he credits the experience with giving him the tools to advance his career.

"Toastmasters teaches you how to use gestures and pauses—pauses for impact, pauses for purpose," Vuppula says. "When you use these skills in the corporate world, you stand apart and you really shine."

In 2004, he moved to London while serving as manager of public relations and corporate affairs for the company i-flex Solutions (which is now Oracle Financial Services). In 2005, he moved to the United States, where he worked as director of marketing and communications for Oracle for nearly three years before joining TCS Financial Solutions.

In his current position, Vuppula manages marketing campaigns as well as large events where he serves as emcee, moderates discussions and conducts on-stage interviews. He says his Toastmasters training has given him the confidence to excel in these roles.

Since he first became a Toastmaster in Bangalore, Vuppula has sought out a club in every city where he's lived. He joined the Jim Friend Toastmasters in Edison in 2008. He's since served as president of the club and as director of Area 51. He also is

**"Public speaking was something I could clutch onto to stay afloat."**

– SUNIL ROBERT VUPPULA

a member of ACES, an advanced Toastmasters club in Iselin, New Jersey, and the club's vice president public relations.

Vuppula's dedication to Toastmasters has paid off, according to Thomas Somers, DTM, vice president membership for both the Jim Friend Toastmasters and ACES clubs. Since Vuppula joined the Jim Friend club, Somers says, he has become a more confident and articulate speaker. "His pace is also better, and he's using more vocal variety and more gestures," Somers adds.

### Making a Difference

Toastmasters has also helped Vuppula hone his leadership skills. "He's a great mentor," says ACES Club President Arvind Kandaswamy, CC, CL. "He likes to bring people to club meetings and encourages members to participate in officer roles."

Vuppula's talent as a leader and communicator has opened many opportunities for him. Aside from his position as head of marketing for the Americas and Europe for TCS Financial Solutions, Vuppula also serves as one of the key faculty members for TCS' leadership development programs. He teaches leadership courses for senior managers and higher-level staff.

"The way he relays his story and the training material is very compelling," says Ed Dunn, head of talent development for North America for TCS. "He's able to intertwine his flight, his journey, into the training, and that makes him a good presenter for leaders."

Vuppula also speaks to youth groups and writes about his experience turning his life around. His first book, the inspirational semi-autobiography *I Will Survive: Comeback Stories of a Corporate Warrior*, was published in 2009. He released his second book, *Bound to Rise: Radical Ideas for the New Corporate World*, in New Delhi in 2014 at the Indian Confederation of NGOs' REX Conclave, which Vuppula says is similar to a TED conference. In fact, Vuppula was one of the speakers. He also was awarded a REX Karmaveer Global Fellowship during the event for his efforts to inspire others.

Vuppula's success allowed him to continue providing for his family in India. He supported his two younger sisters and his brother while they attended college and began their own careers, as well as his parents until they passed away several years ago. "It gave me tremendous satisfaction to see my siblings settle and my parents gleam with pride," he says.

Today, both at work and outside the office, Vuppula strives to motivate people to reach their goals. In addition to teaching leadership skills to his colleagues, he speaks at colleges in India and in the United States about topics such as overcoming adversity and finding one's calling.

Vuppula also mentors students and others who reach out to him for advice. While he enjoys addressing large audiences, he says helping individuals, especially young people, is what matters most.

"If you can make a difference in one person's life, I think you've fulfilled your calling," he says. ■

---

**Missy Sheehan** is a freelance writer, copy editor and proofreader. For more information, visit her website [www.sheehanwriting.com](http://www.sheehanwriting.com).

# What to Do When Your Audience Takes Offense

Address criticism outright to avoid later conflict.

BY JESSE SCINTO, ACS, ALB

It was meant to be a fun activity for our club. At officer training one year, our president heard about something called a “backward” meeting, in which members go through the normal agenda but in reverse order. Closing remarks are given at the beginning of the meeting; the welcome message comes at the end. Evaluators deliver feedback pretending to have already heard the speeches. It keeps people on their toes.

We decided to give it a try. Things went awry, however, when one member strongly objected, concerned that her prepared speech would get short shrift. She stormed out of the room, and we didn’t know if she’d be back.

In Toastmasters, we cherish our mutually supportive environment and the opportunity to learn and grow in a safe place. Mentors, evaluators and grammarians do their best to provide constructive feedback. Fellow members cheer each other on. Most of the time, things go without a hitch. But what happens when someone objects to something we’ve said or done?

As we transfer skills from Toastmasters to the outside world, public criticism can come our way. Maybe we misspeak or make an innocent error. Maybe we hold a controversial view. Or maybe we offend someone. What we say next can shape the way people see us and determine the outcome. Sometimes a good *mea culpa* goes a long way to restoring trust. It helps to know our options.

Public criticism can be handled in four ways: avoid it, pivot, deny it or own it. Each has its uses.

## Avoid It

Avoidance means refusing to either confirm or deny our words or actions, like when people say “no comment” in response to criticism. This approach makes sense when there is a legal necessity involved, but reputation experts generally advise against avoidance. The reason is simple: If we don’t tell our side of a story, people will make up their own story about us, and it’s usually not a good one. They assume we’re hiding something. Social psychologists call this tendency to

Sometimes a good *mea culpa* goes a long way to restoring trust.

malign others’ intentions a “fundamental attribution error.” It arises when people don’t have enough context, or backstory, to understand our actions.

Even when we feel we’ve done nothing wrong, avoidance closes off opportunities for discussion and leaves aggrieved parties feeling unacknowledged. For these reasons, addressing criticism outright is often the way to go.

## Pivot

Pivoting is when we switch to a more comfortable subject. Politicians and pundits do it all the time, usually so they can deliver talking points they’ve planned and rehearsed.

Pivoting has its advantages. It allows speakers to coordinate messaging and run

down the clock on hostile interviewers. Sometimes it reduces gaffes and unfortunate soundbites. The main drawback to this kind of subject-related pivot is that alert listeners may recognize the avoidance of the issue.

Other kinds of pivots, however, are less risky and more useful. One is the pivot toward the future. Here attention is shifted away from past failures and blame, with a focus instead on possible solutions. Aristotle called this “deliberative rhetoric,” and conflict-resolution experts agree it’s the most fruitful arena for compromise and consensus. It can be as simple as asking, “How do we fix this?”

The other pivot is one of perspective—examining the problem from the viewpoint of a different set of stakeholders. For instance, in the case of the backward meeting, our president could have shifted focus from the individual member’s needs to the needs of the club as a whole. New activities help keep members engaged, which can lead to better attendance, stronger evaluations and more durable relationships. From this perspective, the backward meeting is a good thing.

## Deny It

Denial is just how it sounds: “I didn’t do what they say.” If you’ve really done nothing wrong, then go ahead and deny the accusations. If you can muster some righteous indignation, all the better.

A recent example of strong denial came from Gianni Infantino, president of FIFA (the Fédération Internationale de Football Association), the ruling body of



global soccer. Responding to corruption charges earlier this year, he said, “My enemies want to make me look greedy. I have not stolen anything. And everything that I have earned in my life has been thanks to work. I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth.” Strong emotion lets people know you’re willing to stake your reputation on what you’re saying. (Infantino was later cleared of wrongdoing.)

Framing, or word choice, is important in denials. If you repeat the charges, using the same words, what may stick in people’s minds are the charges, not the denial.

For instance, in 1973, when United States President Richard Nixon famously said, “I’m not a crook,” people remembered the “crook” part. A more positive framing would be: “I’m a good citizen.”

If you really have done what people say, don’t publicly deny it. The truth may eventually be revealed, and when people find out you lied, they stop trusting. You lose your credibility and your ability to persuade—or even tell your story.

Instead, consider owning it.

### Own It

Owning it means taking responsibility for your words and deeds, whether right or wrong, and saying you’re sorry if you’ve done something wrong. Audiences see

an apology as a sign of good will. It shows you care enough about them to admit the harm you’ve caused. It’s often the only way to put things to rest.

Going a step further, owning it also means taking responsibility for how others interpret your words. It’s not just about what you say; it’s about what *they hear*. If you’re careless, you may unintentionally offend someone. Nothing alienates an audience more than feeling discounted or belittled. The only way to get them back on your side is to apologize for the unintended harm.

Finally, there’s a third type of owning it that has nothing to do with remorse. When you really think you’re in the right, owning it can mean standing by your position, no matter the consequences.

Politicians call this doubling down, as when President Obama responded to critics of Obamacare by proclaiming, “I have no problem with people saying Obama cares. I do care. If the other side wants to be the folks who don’t care—that’s fine with me.” Doubling down shows conviction and rallies support, but it can get under an opponents’ skin, so use it with care.

In each of these cases, the rhetorical power of owning it comes from the alignment between words and deeds.

Influence researchers have found that when we demonstrate commitment and consistency, audiences perceive us as trustworthy, which enhances our reputation. Alignment between emotions and body language is also important, as Amy Cuddy notes in her book *Presence*. It’s all about integrity.

### Looking Back

Trying new activities was a priority for our club, and because of that our president decided to double down on the backward meeting instead of addressing the member’s concerns. We stayed true to our mission but we lost a member.

Was there another way to handle it? Perhaps. An apology and a perspective pivot may have smoothed things over. Audiences can be very forgiving when we admit our faults—especially in Toastmasters. ■

---

**Jesse Scinto, ACS, ALB**, is a member of the Greenspeakers club in New York, New York, and a lecturer in Columbia University’s Strategic Communication programs, where he teaches media, public speaking and persuasion. Follow him on Twitter: @jessescinto. This article was adapted from one previously published in the July 2016 issue of *Fast Company* magazine.

it's a

# special occasion

Be prepared to speak up!

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

“It was the most important advanced manual!” Leah Cox says of the *Special Occasion Speeches* manual. Like Cox, ACG, ALB, a member of Crosswinds Toastmasters, in Marshalltown, Iowa, members around the world have high praise for the manual, calling it one of the most enjoyable and valuable in the current Toastmasters education program.

Distinguished Toastmaster Karen Armour of the Modderfontein Breakfast club in Johannesburg, South Africa, initially thought she wouldn’t like *Special Occasion Speeches* much. Now, she says, it’s the one manual she would choose to do over again, calling it her “all-time favorite.”

What makes this manual so popular? For one thing, it reflects real situations. We all gather for special occasions to celebrate and commemorate. Speeches at these events reinforce the camaraderie of everyone attending. Special occasion speeches are a special occasion in themselves because they confirm within all of us the beauty, dignity and joy of being human.

Maybe at some point you’ll need to “say a few words” at a special event, accept an award or give a toast. This manual will help you develop top-notch skills for these unique and touching events.

Its five projects are short, but like any speech, they require good preparation. Fortunately, the projects are fun; preparation and execution lead to quick improvement of your skills. And when a project has a direct impact on life events, it’s rewarding.

“I’ve enjoyed seeing members benefit when preparing for speeches at family occasions or other events,” says Gael Price, DTM, a former division director and a member of the Gourmet Toastmasters club in Wellington, New Zealand. “This is where Toastmasters really comes into its own—when people can explicitly link the learning to their real-life challenges.”

## Origin of Special Occasion Speeches

Special occasion speeches, or “epideictic oratory,” are one of several types of speeches defined by the ancient Greeks. The Greek word *epideictic* means “fit for display.” Such speeches are delivered at public events of praise and commemoration. They include award presentation and acceptance speeches, tributes, toasts and roasts, eulogies, commencement addresses and nom-

inating speeches. They inspire people with uplifting ideas and words. Cicero, the ancient Roman philosopher and politician, wrote, “The epideictic oration ... has a sweet, fluent and copious style, with bright conceits and sounding phrases ... it is fitter for the parade than for the battle.” In other words, these speeches sound wonderful and build people up.

Let’s take a look at each project in the manual.

## Mastering the Toast

Non-members often think that we just give toasts—or eat toast. That’s amusing, but not absurd. In the 16th century, wine was so foul that pub owners added toasted bread to vats of wine to soak up the acidity and improve the flavor. The bread was usually stale, so the wine would improve the bread’s flavor as well. The practice of eating wine-soaked bread was called “toasting.” In the 17th and 18th centuries it became so popular, even raucous, that referees or “toastmasters” were employed to keep order and make sure everyone got a fair turn at eating and drinking. Who knew?

Today, toasting is more refined. Toasting customs vary from country to country, but in many cultures around the world, people honor someone by raising a glass (often filled with champagne) and speaking words of praise or offering good wishes, concluding with a colloquial phrase such as “Cheers!” or “Dry the cup!” In some countries, the closing phrase mirrors the sound of clinking glasses, such as “*Tchin Tchin*” (French) or “*Cin Cin*” (Italian.)

Toasts are offered for a variety of occasions, including weddings, engagement parties, anniversaries and retirement banquets, to name a few. When planning a toast, include a few words about the person (or people) being honored, your association with them and a closing phrase.

Here are more tips:

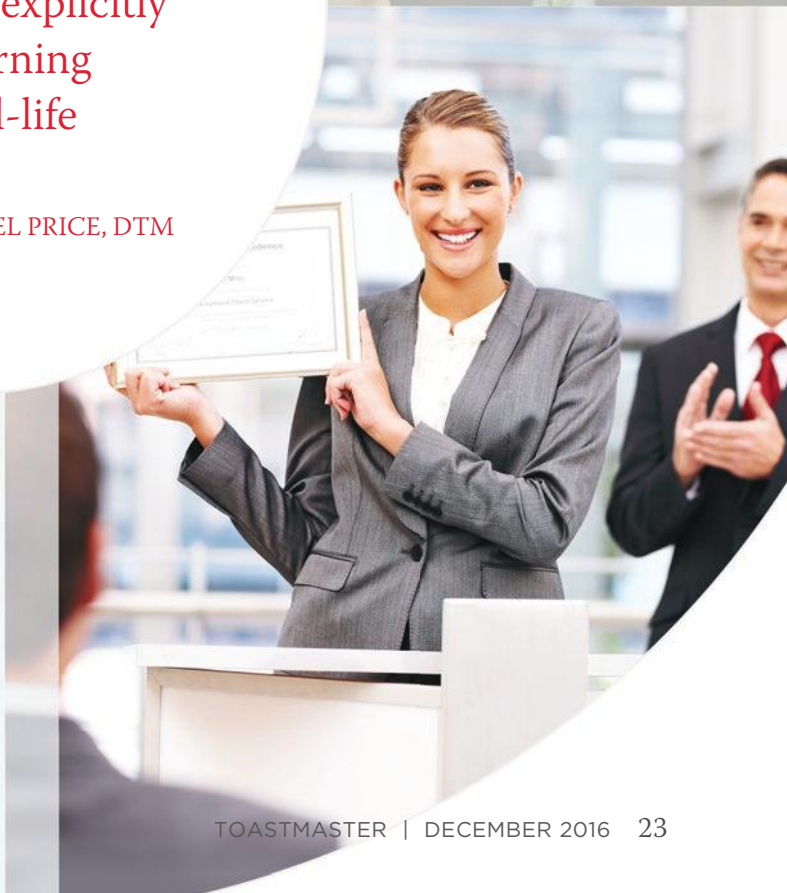
- ▶ Consider the audience. Make the toast relevant or interesting to them, not just to you.
- ▶ Use humor, decorum and language appropriate to the formality or informality of the setting.

ion



“This is where Toastmasters really comes into its own—when people can explicitly link the learning to their real-life challenges.”

— GAEL PRICE, DTM





- ▶ Keep it to two to three minutes. Droning on and on will bore your audience, irritate the host and embarrass the honoree. Su Brooks, DTM, a member of five clubs in New Jersey, says the two-to-three-minute time limit for the “Mastering the Toast” project in the manual “helped me be very selective with what I highlighted—my editing skills were put to good use.”
- ▶ There is no “I” in Toast. Avoid focusing on yourself.
- ▶ Use *your* words, not those lifted from a hurried internet search.
- ▶ Write out your speech ahead of time to stay focused.
- ▶ Close with a short sentence and invite guests to raise a glass before saying the concluding phrase. Example: “We appreciate Susan, and we’ll miss her. Let’s toast to her new adventure. Cheers!”

### Speaking in Praise

This type of speech praises someone, either living or dead. It includes the eulogy, as well as speeches at anniversaries, retirement parties, community events or corporate meetings. These speeches inspire a deep appreciation of the honoree. When speaking in praise of someone, try focusing on some biographical facts or noteworthy character traits of that person. Describe the personal impact they had on you. Don’t use boring platitudes or clichés; don’t stretch the truth or exaggerate.

The eulogy is probably the most challenging praise speech because it can be so emotional. It’s daunting to encourage hurting hearts while honoring the life of the deceased. Patrick Donadio, ATM, of the OCLC club in Dublin, Ohio, is a Certified Speaking Professional and Master Certified Coach who coaches leaders on communication skills. He offers these tips: 1. Focus on the deceased. It’s not your time to shine. 2. Write it out and read it word for word, especially if you get emotional. 3. Share from your heart. 4. Practice the lines that are particularly emotional to help you get through the most difficult parts. 5. Rehearse out loud, preferably on-site.

Peggy Carr, DTM, a Pathways Ambassador and member of several clubs in and around Ogden, Utah, says, “I completed this manual never thinking that it would help me give the eulogy for my Toastmasters mentor.” No doubt she echoes the sentiments of many.

This project is not limited to eulogies or actual events. Use your club meeting as your own special occasion. Kevin Baggs, DTM, of East Herts Speakers in Hertford, Hertfordshire, England, says, “I chose to honor the great musician Bo Diddley on the anniversary of his death. It was terrific!”

**When a project has a direct impact on life events, it’s rewarding.**

Or do the project at a real event and invite another Toastmaster to evaluate it. Division Director Tania Fraser, ACB, ALS, of the Wellington Region of New Zealand, says, “I did this project at my grandmother’s 100th birthday party. My husband, also a Toastmaster, was my evaluator.”

### The Roast

The roast is similar to the toast but honors someone by poking fun at them. Poking fun seems a paradoxical way to honor someone, but done well, it’s an affectionate show of admiration. The humor should not be cruel or insulting, but rather entertaining and lighthearted. Special care is needed to conduct a roast that’s not hurtful or offensive.

A roast includes brief stories about the individual, made funnier with exaggeration, one-liners and absurd twists. It often unites the group, especially if the one being roasted is a person in authority. A roast can make someone seem more human and approachable, because they demonstrate that they can take a joke gracefully.



For an effective roast, choose someone of rank or familiarity. Identify characteristics or facts about them that are easy to poke fun at. Tie the jokes and comments to the event, a retirement party for example. Be cautious. If you're not sure a specific joke is appropriate, run it by someone for their opinion.

Many districts and regions roast outgoing officers. You can also create your own special occasion. Michael Proudlock, DTM, of Bolton Banter club in Bolton, Ontario, Canada, took an especially fun approach with this project: He roasted the TV cartoon character Fred Flintstone. "I had cutouts of Fred, Wilma, Barney, Mr. Slate, etc., at the head table. I played Fred's co-worker at Slate Construction, roasting him on his retirement."

### Presenting an Award

It's an honor to present an award to a worthy recipient, but it's a skill to present it with dignity and grace. A sloppy or ill-planned presentation will detract from the award's value, lessen the impact on the audience and make the recipient feel crummy. This presentation is best done with great enthusiasm, positive words and a high regard for the award itself.

When crafting this speech, confirm the correct pronunciation of the award recipient's name. Briefly describe the meaning or history of the award and why the recipient was chosen. Include a short story or interesting fact about the person as related to the award or the organization. Maybe include a personal observation about the person. The speech should be three to four minutes long. As Franklin D. Roosevelt once said of public speaking, "Be sincere, be brief, be seated."

Past Area Governor Teppei Ikeda, CC, of Tokyo Toastmasters, recalls praising club and district leaders at his club's year-end party. "My challenge was keeping the speech short because I was so appreciative. But if I covered everything, my speech would be too long. So I edited it to emphasize the *most* memorable things done by our VPE and area governor."

### Accepting an Award

This speech is the sibling of the previous one, and it requires the same dignity and grace. "Accepting an award is like walking a tightrope," says executive speech coach Patricia Fripp. "You need to be gracious grateful, and humble—but not so humble or self-deprecating that the audience thinks you are trivializing the honor."

Chances are you will at some point receive an award. When you give your acceptance speech, be humble, not prideful, boastful or entitled. Don't go overboard with false humility because audiences can spot contrived modesty. Keep it to about three minutes. Long, rambling thank-you speeches are a bore to everyone, except the person speaking and the people being thanked. And unless you're receiving an Academy Award, you won't have an orchestra start playing to signal you're going on too long.

Start by thanking the people who sponsored the award, the person who nominated you (if that's applicable) and the key people who helped you directly or indirectly along the way. Thank some people by name, but don't recite a long list because that dilutes the impact of the thanks. Mention things like your connection to the organization or how its goals resonate with you or a positive experience you've had with the group.



*Maryum Ali, the eldest of the late boxing great Muhammad Ali's nine children, delivers a eulogy for her father in front of more than 15,000 people at the KFC Center in Louisville, Kentucky, on June 10, 2016.*

Because these two projects are so closely related, they're perfect for a partner project. Jing Humphreys, DTM, a Pathways Learning Master and member of the Earlybirds club in Butler, Pennsylvania, has tag-teamed with other members to do them. "One time," she says, "I was the presenter for the Toastmaster of the Year award. After the banquet, the recipient and I gave our speeches again at our club to get credit. The second time, to prepare for presenting a Communication and Leadership Award to a community member, the presenter practiced the presenting speech and I role-played the recipient speech."

**"Being able to deliver these speeches well is a great way to honor someone. What a great gift we can give to others."**

— TK O'GEARY, DTM

So if you want to tackle a fun, practical and rewarding manual, choose *Special Occasion Speeches*. As TK O'Geary of the Albuquerque Challenge club in New Mexico notes, the opportunities to give such speeches come up often.

"Being able to deliver these speeches well is a great way to honor someone," says O'Geary, DTM. "What a great gift we can give to others." ■

**Maureen Zappala, DTM**, is a former NASA propulsion engineer. Today she's a professional speaker, author and presentation skills coach, as well as founder of High Altitude Strategies, a coaching and speaking service. She belongs to the Aerospace Toastmasters club in Cleveland, Ohio. Visit her website at [www.MaureenZ.com](http://www.MaureenZ.com).

# Online Connection

Meeting remotely links members around the globe.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

In July 2016, Elissa Quesada, ACG, ALB, attended her first club meeting since being away from Toastmasters for more than two and a half years. The Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, member had wanted to attend before that, but multiple sclerosis had left her unable to walk or stand. Then she found Netizens, Toastmasters' first chartered online club, and re-connected.

"I saw it as the perfect opportunity for me," Quesada says. "Now I can participate in Toastmasters without having to worry about standing up."

What began in 2012 with a group led by Ron Clark, DTM, that pilot-tested a potential online club, has resulted in a significant policy change for Toastmasters International and a new opportunity for people around the world. Members can now charter online Toastmasters clubs—a policy that took effect in March of this year.

Members have moved quickly. As of September 30, six chartered online clubs exist and at least five more are prospective clubs. Netizens—meaning "net community"—chartered on March 25. Five other online clubs followed: Firebirds Collective, Buddies, Great White North Online, Witty Storytellers Online and Huron Consulting Group.

In addition, traditional, brick-and-mortar Toastmasters clubs can integrate online participation into meetings. In such clubs, some members can attend the meetings online as long as the majority of members meet in person. More than 190 clubs around the world have taken



*Members of the Firebirds Collective Toastmasters club attend the chartering ceremony with Immediate Past International President Jim Kokocki (bottom left). The advanced online club chartered in March and has over 40 members.*

this step, and more clubs are expected to follow suit in the future, according to Toastmasters International's August 2016 CEO Report.

## A Range of Benefits

In online meetings, all members connect remotely using a software platform that allows everyone to see and hear each other in real time. People like Quesada, who have health issues that limit their mobility, are not the only ones to benefit. Online clubs are for people with busy travel schedules or those who don't live close to a meeting site.

Six years ago, Yi Qu, a resident of Nepean, Ontario, Canada, wanted to attend a Toastmasters meeting. Even though a club was nearby, he couldn't participate because of family responsibilities. He recently decided to start an online club, not only so he could join but also to make

it easier for others. Hoping to recruit fellow Toastmasters in China, he used the WeChat app—a social media instant-messaging service—to spread the word there about the potential club. Within two days, he found 19 other interested people and the Buddies club was chartered.

Online clubs are also valuable for people looking to practice and polish their online presence. "There are a lot of professionals whose business or public success and branding depends on the quality of their video message," says e-learning specialist Svetlana Rakhimova, CC, CL, a member of both the Firebirds Collective and Witty Storytellers clubs. "Online Toastmasters clubs are a natural medium for ameliorating this space." Speech evaluations are expanded to consider a person's online presence, including such factors as camera positioning, background composition and audio and visual distractions.

All online clubs record their meetings and post videos in a members-only library for non-attendees to see what they missed. Doing so also provides a means for members to review and critique their own online performance and learn from others.

Another benefit of online clubs is the global nature meetings can have. “I was surprised about the international appeal of the club,” says Quesada. “Some diehard members participate even though it is the wee early hours for them when the club meets.” In the six chartered online clubs alone, at least 17 countries are represented across five continents.

All these positive aspects make online clubs an interconnected, educational and cross-cultural experience for members. When Mariana Dachova, CC, ALB, moved from Prague to the Slovakian city of Bratislava, she initiated a traditional, in-person club there. The people she worked with during this process were new to Toastmasters. Joining Netizens gave Dachova regular interaction with more advanced speakers and leaders outside of her area. For her, the online experience is a profound dynamic.

“Every meeting is a wonderful reminder of our mutual interest in effective

communication, our desire in breaking the boundaries and shortening the physical distance via an online presence and also our shared experience on one planet,” says Dachova.

“One person gave a speech about swimming in the bay and used two cameras: one to show him and one for the slide show.”

— LARRY J. MILLER OF  
THE NETIZENS ONLINE CLUB

### Similar Yet Different

Online meetings have the same core structure and roles as in-person club meetings, but some might have additional meeting roles. For example, online clubs might have a logistics manager to help with the technical aspects of meetings. Strong internet connection is important, as are quality devices and up-to-date settings. The online platforms used may not be intuitive to everyone and members may become discouraged. To help,

clubs use tutorials, articles and individual instruction to mitigate any problems. And, similar to traditional clubs, online clubs can encounter attendance or agenda-scheduling issues; therefore, organization is essential.

In addition, Netizens co-founder Larry J. Miller, DTM, emphasizes that it’s important to think of delivering speeches as you would in traditional clubs. While it might be more challenging to show gestures and body language via a webcam, it’s not impossible. Miller has seen creative approaches that really work. “One person,” he says, “gave a speech about swimming in the bay and used two cameras: one to show him and one for the slide show.”

### Engaging Online

Word of mouth is one of the most successful ways that online clubs market themselves. Social media—particularly WeChat, in China, and Facebook—are also important communication tools. Additionally, people find chartered online clubs using the Find a Club search function on the Toastmasters website, [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

Just like in-person meetings, online clubs present a range of opportunities

## TIPS FOR ONLINE MEETING PARTICIPATION

The following tips for maximizing your online meeting experience were gathered from members of online Toastmasters clubs.

**Ensure your equipment meets the technology requirements** of the software application used for meetings.

**Reboot your computer before logging in** to the meeting to clean up memory and any processes running that would decrease your bandwidth.

**Log in early.** You never know when technology—or user error—might present a problem.

**Include your name, Toastmasters educational designation and location** so people can see who and where you are.

**Be aware of how you appear on camera,** and consider the background and lighting.

**Level your camera as much as possible with your eyes** so you are looking forward rather than up or down.

**Project and maintain good energy when talking.** Don’t feel restricted in terms of the size of the computer screen.

**Turn off your video and mute your microphone when not talking.**

**Log out of other computer programs** to remain focused.

**Remember that meetings are recorded.**

**Be ready to learn and enjoy the meeting!**

## ONLINE CLUBS




*The Witty Storytellers Online gather for a meeting earlier this year. The club encourages the practice of personal storytelling with humor for the 25-plus members who meet remotely.*

and cultural variety. All six currently chartered clubs are English-language-based. Netizens and Buddies are community clubs; Firebirds Collective, Witty Storytellers and Great White North

are advanced clubs; and Huron Consulting Group is a corporate club. Among the prospective clubs are those that hold meetings in languages other than English and others that focus on specific speaking

styles. It's important to select the right type of club for you, so check for prerequisites before joining. As with all clubs, it's also a good idea to visit—in this case, online—and see if the group is a good fit for you.

Online clubs are already making their mark and helping people around the world develop their communication and leadership skills. Their contributions to the Toastmasters mission are sure to grow in scope and impact. In response to her experience in online clubs, Rakhi-mova says, "I like the way Toastmasters shatters the inner walls—gently and profoundly—through the collective meeting organization and participation. We are pushed out of our comfort zones when we perform roles and deliver speeches."

*To find an online Toastmasters club, go to the "Find a Club" tab on the Toastmasters website, click and then click on the "Find Online Clubs" link. *

*Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, is a member of the Conestoga Toastmasters club in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and a regular contributor to the Toastmaster magazine.*



Adrienne McLean  
Toastmaster - Australia

*"...a brilliant International Speakers' Training opportunity."*



Dan Olivas  
Toastmaster - Texas

*"...so easy to make money with this program."*

## Train to be a Public Speaking Coach & Presentation Skills Trainer

Are you passionate about helping other speakers and presenters? Turn your skills into a training and coaching business. Set your own fees and schedule. Attend our three-day workshop and you can become a certified SpeakersTrainingCamp® Trainer. You'll be ready to teach the same award-winning workshop that has been top-rated by Fortune 500 companies for over 30 years. We provide the training, the materials, and the roadmap for your success.

**March 21-23 – Atlanta, GA • November 14-16 – Portland, OR**

**Become a SpeakersTrainingCamp® Certified Trainer**  
**Toastmaster discounts - U.S. and International**

**Contact Us Today!**

[info@successworksusa.com](mailto:info@successworksusa.com)

**1-800-473-1969**

[www.successworksusa.com](http://www.successworksusa.com)



**SpeakersTrainingCamp®**

# Online Mentoring

Delivering feedback remotely goes a long way toward helping members.

BY JENNIFER L. BLANCK, DTM

Soon after moving to Budapest in the fall of 2013, I started mentoring a new Hungarian Toastmaster—László (Laci) Szűcs. Today, I continue to mentor him even though I moved from Hungary to France last year and to the United States this year.

We're a good fit, but he has additional reasons for maintaining our mentoring relationship. "I feel like I'm on a fast track for my goals, so I really need someone who has known me from the beginning, with all the ups and downs I've had," says Laci, who has earned his Advanced Communicator Bronze award.

Our mentoring sessions include speech-content brainstorming, review and feedback; video and live performance reviews and feedback; and coaching sessions, all via email and Skype.

In today's world, it's easier to connect because of the range of technologies available. We have email, instant text messaging and webcam platforms for online mentoring sessions, which afford connections with a wider variety of individuals. Not only can people stay in touch wherever they are, they can develop relationships to address even the most specific goals.

Both traditional and online Toastmasters clubs give members opportunities for one-on-one mentoring. Even if your club doesn't have a formal mentoring program, you can ask another Toastmaster—in your club or beyond—to be your mentor, like Laci did. The key is to find someone who will be a good fit, someone with the skills or experience you are seeking to strengthen in yourself. With online mentoring, you must be willing to engage with technology to make it work. When I knew I was moving from Hungary, Laci and I talked about our mentoring relationship and what it might look like moving forward, and we decided to continue on.

## Online Dynamics

The concept of "meetings" can become blurred in online mentoring. Emailing can be even more substantive and important. Responsiveness and message tone also become more significant. For me, it helped that Laci and I had known each other for two years before moving to an online mentoring relationship. However, knowing each other well isn't a must. Some online club members say they feel just as close, or even closer, to Toastmasters in their online club than in their traditional one.

In addition to assigned one-on-one pairs, individuals can be mentored in peer-to-peer engagements where there are no permanent mentor-mentee relationships. "There are multiple mentor/mentee clusters," says Svetlana Rakhimova, CC, CL, a member of the online club Firebirds Collective. "It's still one person mentoring another person, but there are as many pairs as there are skills and needs for them."

Online mentoring isn't just for individuals. It can happen with groups and clubs. Firebirds Collective hosts "after-parties" for its members, in which anyone can stay online after the meeting to talk about specific issues or exchange information. In the mentor/mentee clusters, if multiple mentees want to talk with the same mentor, it can turn into a small group talk or workshop.

## Offering Assistance to Clubs

Online mentors can also help entire clubs. When Muhammad Habibul Islam, CL, moved from the city of Chittagong in Bangladesh to Dhaka, the country capital, he established the Dhaka Toastmasters club—a challenging endeavor considering he didn't yet know many people there. His online mentor, Shuvo Hridayesh, CC, CL, in Sri Lanka, volunteered to help get the club on firm footing. Together, they decided they needed one more strong, support-



Jennifer L. Blanck (left) and her mentee László (Laci) Szűcs.

ive and globally minded mentor to help build a sustainable club and determine the benchmarks for its success.

Islam posted a request via the Official Toastmasters Members Group on Facebook and Alicia Curtis, DTM, from Australia, responded. From the chartering process to regular meetings, the club has benefited from the expertise and dedication of both these mentors.

"It creates a good impression when new members learn that the club is supported by mentors from Sri Lanka and Australia," says Islam.

Whether done online or face to face, mentoring is a mutually beneficial relationship. Mentees hone their skills and gain inspiration, motivation and moral support. Mentors benefit from the emotional rewards and skill development they receive from mentoring other members. Clubs become healthier as members grow and become more satisfied.

In all mentoring, it's important to establish parameters and discuss expectations at the beginning. It's also helpful to set a time frame for the relationship and revisit it when the time comes.

Don't let geography limit you. If you want a mentor, find the best one for you, whether that person is next door or half-way around the world. **T**

*Jennifer L. Blanck, DTM, is a member of the Conestoga Toastmasters club in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and was a charter member of the Skylarks Toastmasters club in Budapest, Hungary.*



## Dog Tales

Watch what you say around your pooch. He just might understand.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I wish researchers would stop researching. Extrapolating from the rate of new discoveries being made every day, in 14 years, three months, four days, 17 minutes and 23 seconds we'll know everything there is to know—and then everybody in the entire world will be just like my brother-in-law, who already knows everything. Or thinks he does. The latest research—and all research is the latest; if it's old research it's the research that's been discredited by the latest research—tells us that dogs understand words. You may not think that's news, but I'm not talking about “catch,” “fetch” and “heel.” I'm talking about animals with 200-word vocabularies that can learn and remember words as well as a human 3-year-old. If they had opposable thumbs they'd be texting instead of barking. And that's my point: Any research that proves dogs and toddlers are smarter than I am is *not* something I really care to know about.

But I do know. How could I *not* know? We live in an information-saturated society where you know things you don't want to know and don't even *know* you know. It seeps in through your pores. How do I know the chancellor of Germany likes plum cake? I don't know.

This is what happened with the dog thing. Somebody asked me if dogs are smarter than cats. Without thinking I said, “The average dog can understand 165 words. Cats only know about 30.” I looked it up to see if I was right. I was. At that point I figured if I knew something I didn't know I knew, I should find out how I knew it. So I started doing my own research on dog research, of which there is quite a bit. Lots of studies, tests and dog brain MRIs to see how dogs learn words. The answer is—pretty much the way humans do. They may even do it better. If my brother-in-law knows 165 words I'd be surprised.

Some of these mutts are truly uncanny canines. There was, for instance, a collie named Rico who was sort of a celebrity in the dog world. He could identify up to 200 objects by name. Researchers then asked: Could Rico identify an object he didn't know? To find out, they placed 20 objects that Rico knew by

name in a room, plus one he'd never seen before. They spoke the unfamiliar object's name to Rico—which he was hearing for the first time—and told him to find it among all the others. He did. Apparently, Rico used the process of elimination to figure out the new name had to be for the one object he didn't know. A lot of 3-year-olds can't do that. My brother-in-law couldn't do it.

Skeptics think it's just your tone of voice that dogs understand. Call Fido an “idiot” in a happy, chirpy tone and he'll wag his tail and lick your face, right? Actually, no. Because dogs process speech like humans, they know when you're not being sincere. That's why a dog gives you that cute little cocked-head look. It's his way of saying, “You're making a complete fool of yourself with that ridiculous doggy talk and *I'm* the idiot? Really?”

Abstract concepts are another matter. Yes, dogs can learn the names for concrete objects, but there's nothing to suggest they understand words like “honesty” and “courage.” Tell a dog she's getting a “treat” and she sits up and begs. Tell her you “love” her and you get a blank stare. She doesn't get it. Or maybe she does and she's saying, “Don't tell me you love me, show me. Fork over the treat.”

Apparently, it all comes down to what we mean by “understand.” Does your dog understand that when you throw a stick he should retrieve it? Yes. Does he know the reason you're standing in the backyard on a Saturday afternoon throwing sticks is because your wife said to make yourself useful and playing with the dog is more fun than cleaning out the garage? Probably not.

So fine—dogs understand words. Does that really make them smarter than me, as I facetiously suggested earlier? Of course not. They know 200 words. I know at least 300—even more with a dictionary. Besides, I don't need a dog to make me feel superior. That's what my brother-in-law is for. **■**

Any research that proves dogs and toddlers are smarter than I am is *not* something I really care to know about.

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

# eBookIt!

Self-Publishing Solutions for the Independent Author & Small Press

- ✓ Ebook Creation/Conversion
- ✓ Print On Demand
- ✓ Audiobook Creation
- ✓ Author Websites
- ✓ Book Promotion

**TOASTMASTERS! GET 10% OFF ANY SERVICE! USE PROMOTION CODE: 37062-6176247**



**\$199 Ebook Conversion, Distribution, and Promotion Special!**

**Hello! Come See Our New Website at eBookIt.com!**



We have been providing authors and small presses with publishing services since 2010. We offer ebook creation and distribution, book/author promotion, print on demand services, audiobook creation, author websites, and even online courses designed to help authors make their books a best-seller.

We invite you to come by eBookIt.com and see not only our new website, but all the ways we can help you succeed with your self-publishing goals!

**Limited-time offer: includes FREE press release distribution!**



## Audiobook Creation and Distribution

Is your book right for an audiobook? If so, it can mean a whole new market and a new revenue stream. We can handle all aspects of production for you.



## Print On Demand

Let us take your ebook and convert it into a professionally-designed print book. With our retail distribution, virtually any bookstore can purchase your print book. Double your market!



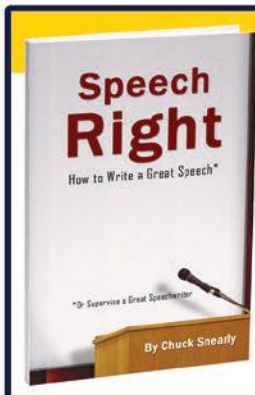
## Author/Book Websites

One of the best ways to promote your book(s) and yourself as an author is through your own website. We have developed software specifically for authors and their needs.



## Online Course

Take our online course to learn the strategies that will help make your book a best seller. For each strategy, a detailed audio and/or video explanation of the idea is included.



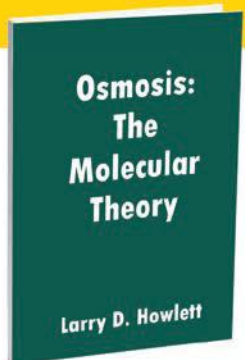
## CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

For more than three decades author Chuck Snearly has been writing highly acclaimed speeches for leaders around the world, including the top executives at Ford Motor Company, Royal Dutch Shell, the Bosch Group and Dean Foods. In his book *Speech Right* the award-winning speechwriter will show you how to write a great speech – one that engages emotions, shapes opinions and makes things happen. Whatever your current skill level, *Speech Right* will help you write the speech right.

Finally, after 250 years, a solution to this intriguing and important phenomena of osmosis has been found. Many other solutions have been proposed, no others fully explain the process and the many applications. This book introduces a new understanding of osmosis, solids, liquids, and vapor pressure and more...

For those that already understand osmosis, we suggest that you begin with the last chapter. The first chapters may sound like heresy. For others, beginning with the first chapter will take you through the many levels of understanding that we followed to develop the Molecular Theory of Osmosis.

*Speech Right* by Chuck Snearly and *Osmosis: The Molecular Theory* by Larry D. Howlett are available at 



We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.  
Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.

# Step out in style

Find the right Toastmasters apparel for every occasion at [www.toastmasters.org/Apparel](http://www.toastmasters.org/Apparel)

Save 10% off all apparel before December 16

Use promo code: APPAREL

Not valid with any other offer.



**TOASTMASTERS**  
INTERNATIONAL

WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE